

ACCOUNTABLE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

by

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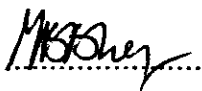
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of the
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at the
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Durban
January 2003

DECLARATION

"I declare that this dissertation "*Accountable parental involvement in primary school*" represents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T B Bhengu', written over a dotted line.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Henrietta Sbongisene Bhengu, and my grandfather, Nathan Bantubanjani Bhengu, for the love, encouragement and financial support they gave me from childhood until I reached my goal in education.

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to pursue an investigation into accountable parental involvement in primary schools

From the literature study it became clear that there are many areas and possibilities for parents to become formally and informally involved in the schooling of their primary school children. Formal involvement of parents in school activities is based on juridical, historical and educational grounds. Juridically, legislation in South Africa stipulates that parents must be involved in the school at least at the level of governance. Parents exert a lot of influence on their child's cognitive development in the early years and thus the contact between home and school should be maintained, especially during the primary school years, if the child is to succeed in formal schooling.

For the purpose of the empirical investigation a self-structured questionnaire, to be completed by primary school educators, was utilised. The completed questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics.

In conclusion a summary was presented on the findings of the literature and empirical study and the following are some of the recommendations that were made:

- Positive attitudes must be inculcated in parents to become actively involved in their children's formal schooling.
- Educators and parents must be trained to offer parental involvement programmes.

- Further research should be conducted concerning the accountability of parents regarding their involvement in primary schools.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The child's home is the primary educative milieu where education takes place spontaneously and informally. According to Munnik and Swanepoel (1990:76) family values, norms, knowledge and skills are conveyed to children in a spontaneous, unplanned and often haphazard fashion by the parents. Parents as primary educators have a great share in the child's education and the quality of his becoming an adult (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:3). When the child enters school, the educational help and support of the parents, who remain primarily responsible for the child's education, are complemented by that of the educators.

Schools are man-made, secondary institutions which were created because parents no longer felt fully competent to perform their educative task. The school can never replace the home but continue to build on the foundations laid by the parents at home. Griessel, Louw and Swart (1996:69) maintain that educators should fulfil their educative task *cum parente* (in partnership with parents). The relationship between the school and home must be seen as supplementary education and not substitutive education. Parents retain the primary responsibility for the education of their children and it is thus essential that they should be involved with the school. Heystek and Louw (1999:21) say it is expected that parents must be partners in the schooling of their

children and share the responsibility and accountability with the educators. Khan (1996:60) maintains that a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect, sharing of information, responsibility and accountability is important for the parent-educator partnership to succeed.

Munnik and Swanepoel (1990:81) acknowledge that the partnership between parents and educators is indispensable for the harmonious, functional and effective accomplishment, not only of educative teaching at school, but also of the education situation at home. Khan (1996:62) says parents must participate actively in their child's school activities with the aim of improving and maintaining the standard of education. Participation of parents in schools has a positive influence on the academic achievement of learners (Gene & Stoneman, 1995:596).

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

Legislation compels parents to participate in the governance of schools (South African Schools Act, 1996:14). Parents could also be members of parent-educator associations where they are involved in activities such as fundraising and assistance in school activities like the selling of food at sport and social functions. The question to be asked is whether this legislative participation is enough and adequate to be recognised as accountable and effective parental involvement?

Political and social changes that have occurred in South Africa since February 1990 have resulted in more people being interested in educational activities at schools (Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001:190). However, numerous

research studies and other practices have shown that parent-educator partnerships, which mainly relate to parental involvement, remain a crucial topic as schools still experience problems in this regard and do not succeed in obtaining optimal parental involvement.

Although the failure for forming sound parent-educator partnerships can often be laid at the door of school principals and educators, parents must accept co-responsibility for their involvement in their children's school activities (Griffiths & Hamilton, 1994:56). The fact is, however, that parents often lack the intuition or experience to know that their educational responsibilities extends beyond the school gates and into the classrooms (Munnik & Swanepoel, 1990:80).

Education was often not adequately realised in the homes where parents grew up and they lack a model of parenthood to direct their own educative activities. Swap (1993:11) and Editor (2001:6) cite the following reasons that may, *inter alia*, hamper accountable parental involvement:

- Parents lack confidence or do not have the desire to get involved with the school.
- Direct day-to-day contact or communication between parents and school is not possible.
- Educators are only seen at formal parents' evenings by the parents attending.
- Active involvement in the teaching programmes in schools by parents is not possible.
- The general understanding of the school by parents is almost entirely limited to what their children convey to them.

- Parents do not readily avail themselves for election on the school governing body or any other school committees.
- Sport and cultural activities at school are poorly supported by parents.
- Parents do not have the time and/or knowledge to assist their children in their schoolwork.

Pillay (1998:27) mentions the following problems of a more practical nature that effect parental involvement:

- Parents work long hours. They leave home early and come home late at night.
- Children often do not stay with their parents, but are in the care of grandparents, or older brothers and sisters.
- Poverty make parents afraid to become involved in school activities for fear that they have to spend money.
- Many parents do not have transport to the school, which makes it difficult to attend school functions.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem that will be investigated in this study pertains to the accountable involvement of parents in the formal education of their children in primary school. The following are questions that require answers in order to establish if parents are adequately involved in the schooling of their learners in primary school:

- What should be the nature of accountable parental involvement at primary school level?

- What are the reasons for parents' reluctance to become involved in their primary school child's formal schooling?
- Which programmes and methods can be employed to assist school principals, educators and parents in the improvement of parental involvement.

1.4 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

This study on the accountable involvement of parents in the formal education of their children in primary school will cover a wide spectrum of concepts. To ensure a clear understanding of the problem to be investigated it is deemed necessary to explain certain concepts.

1.4.1 Gender

In this study all references to any gender include references to the other gender.

1.4.2 Accountability

Accountability is the principle by which a person is responsible for his actions and expected to explain it (Farrant, 1991:43). That means to be accountable to someone for something. In an educational context accountability refers to the educator's (parent or teacher) duty to give an account of having executed his task of educating the child in terms of set criteria and determined standards, in other words, whether the educative task has been successfully completed (Hess, 1992:64). Parents are primarily accountable for the adequate education of their children.

1.4.3 Education

Education is a process in which the practice of education is involved: where a responsible adult leads, helps, supports and accompanies a child to self-actualization and ultimate adulthood (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:71). According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:366) education in its pedagogic form, may be defined as the conscious, purposive intervention by an adult in the life of a non-adult to bring him to independence. Education as pedagogic assistance is the positive influencing of a non-adult by an adult, with the specific purpose of effecting changes of significant value. Du Toit and Kruger (1994:5) say that education refers to the help and support which the child receives from an adult with a view of attaining adulthood.

1.4.4 Educator

An educator is one who educates, who takes the responsibility of leading the child to adulthood. Baldwin (1998:11) says the primary educators are the parents who from the earliest moments of the child's life are involved in his education. While the parents retain this responsibility, the secondary educators (school teachers and other concerned adults) supplement the primary educator's efforts as they together purposefully lead the child in every aspect of his becoming and through each stage of development. A professional educator (pedagogue) is a scientifically schooled educator practising education on a post-scientific level; he chooses education as an occupation and a vocation. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:73) state that an educator is concerned with the educand as a totality and not simply with the teaching and learning of a specific subject or

subjects. An educator is more than a mere teacher of a subject but seeks to impart to the child qualities which will enable him to reach responsible adulthood successfully.

1.4.5 Parent

In the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996, the concept parent is defined as follows:

- The natural(biological) parent of a child.
- A person legally entitled to custody (physical control) of a child.
- A guardian of a child.
- A person who undertakes to act as a parent of a learner for the purpose of the child's education.

1.4.6 Partnership

A partnership implies an agreement of co-operation according to which each partner will accept specific responsibilities and carry out commitments (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994:468). When each partner completely fulfills his obligations, the aim of the partnership has been realised. A partner has the right to expect that (Wolfendale, 1989:5):

- the other partners will entirely fulfil their obligations and carry out their tasks; and
- all tasks will be fulfilled in a co-ordinated manner.

Dekker and Lemmer (1998:157) see a partnership as an institutionalised confidential relationship between partners. Where there is equity (notwithstanding social differences, differing interests or personal or material inequality) a partnership embodies a social principle by means of which common aims can be achieved. The question of co-operation arises, but each party's sovereignty in its own field is recognised.

Within the partnership between parent and educator, each partner has a particular obligation, related to the different life tasks and roles which they as parents and educators are normally expected to fulfil within the community (Cicirelli, 1992:45).

1.4.7 Primary school learner

The period approximately spanning the ages of six to twelve or thirteen years is generally known as primary school years (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:103). Although the primary school child is referred to during this phase, the grade one child differs considerably from the grade seven child with regard to cognitive abilities, physical stature and social and emotional development. The primary school years are divided into (Vrey, 1990:78):

- the junior primary phase which extends from grade one (± 6 years) to grade three (± 8 years), and
- the senior primary phase from grade 4 (± 9 years) to grade seven ($\pm 12-13$ years) between the ages of six and thirteen years. Grades one to three represent the junior primary years and grades four to seven the senior primary years (South African Schools Act, No. 84 1996:14).

1.4.8 Theory of involvement

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:554) describe the concept 'theory' as a plan or scheme existing in the mind only, but based on principles verifiable by experiment and observation; a proposed explanation designed on account of any phenomenon. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:230) say to construct a theory certain facts are verified, reaffirmed under various conditions and universally agreed upon. The scientist (educationist) attempts to develop from particular observations a theory (generalization) that will explain the facts and lean toward one perspective or the other. The most useful theories are those that adequately and simply explain the greatest number of relevant facts.

According to Du Toit and Kruger (1994:17) involvement refers to the human physical and psychological act of being concerned with, or giving attention to a person or a matter because a person wants to do so. Involvement implies a belongingness, an association, an eye witness, an urgency to be drawn in (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:82). Involvement presupposes a willingness, an urge to participate or to be involved. It is an affinity-seeking strategy by which a person tries to we try to draw another person into a relationship, social activities, and our social circle. Drescher (1991:5) describes involvement and participation as bringing together those to be affected to help design and implement change in order to increase their commitment, so that they feel their ideas and attitudes are included in the change.

To want to become involved implies that the person who wills has a worthwhile goal to pursue as well as the anticipation that the goal can and will be reached (Vrey, 1990:36). Parents who want to become actively involved in their children's education have a worthwhile goal to attain, namely the successful education of the child. Involvement already requires some knowledge because a person cannot become involved in a matter or events of which he is ignorant and which are unimportant to him (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:18). For accountable involvement parents have to understand their children as school children and have adequate knowledge of how the school operates. A person becomes involved with the view to greater and deeper knowledge and understanding (Jenkins, 1991:22).

Parental involvement in the formal education of their children is a comprehensive term that is used to describe a wide variety of activities that range from occasional attendance at school functions to intensive efforts to help parents become better educators of their children. Griffiths and Hamilton (1994:89) as well as Griffore and Boger (1986:56) maintain that it is not yet known what type of involvement works best with different kinds of schools, communities, educators, families and children. There are many ways for schools and homes to co-operate and no one way is superior to the other, but simply accomplishes it.

The above theory forms the foundation on which this study is based.

1.5 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- To pursue a study of relevant literature in order to establish the nature of parental involvement in primary schools.
- To undertake an empirical investigation into accountable parental involvement in primary schools.
- To make certain recommendations that may serve as guidelines for the establishment of accountable parental involvement in primary schools.

1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research with regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

- A literature study of available, relevant literature.
- An empirical survey comprising a structured questionnaire to be completed by educators from primary schools.

1.7 FURTHER COURSE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 will be a literature review on the nature of parental involvement in primary schools.

In chapter 3 the planning of the empirical research will be outlined.

The data obtained from the empirical research will be analysed in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 will comprise a summary of the research, findings from the literature and empirical studies, shortcomings and certain recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in the education of their children can be described as the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school- based and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational (Pillay, 1998:78). It extends from supporting and upholding the school ethos to supervising children's homework at home (Swap, 1993:33). Parental involvement involves mutual sharing, co-operation and support. Involvement helps parents discover their strengths, potentialities and talents and to use them for the benefit of themselves, their children and the school. Dekker and Lemmer (1998:155) say that parental involvement can take the form of co-operation which leads to participation and partnership. According to Kruger (1998:23) and Wolfendale (1989:34) parental involvement means:

- The active, willing and supportive participation of parents in all aspects of the child's formal schooling.
- To be partners and allies of educators in the primary aspects of formal and informal education.
- Participation in an individual and/or collective way.
- Participation in a structured and orderly manner.

- Aiming to achieve the objectives of education as fully as possible.

Responsible parents consider their children's education as vital. They want to be kept informed of their child's progress in school and to be involved in their child's education. Griffiths and Hamilton (1994:45) state that parents' involvement in their children's school activities is based on the natural right of parents to educate their children. From various research done concerning the improvement and maintenance of home-school relationships, consistent findings emerged, such as the fact that accountable parental involvement is significantly related to the following (Dekker & Lemmer, 1998:154; Lemmer & Squelch, 1994:96):

- The improvement of learners' academic achievement.
- Improved school attendance by learners.
- Improved learner behaviour at school.
- Increased community support for the school which include human, financial and material resources.

The discussions to follow in this chapter will focus on the nature and extent of formal and informal parental involvement. Attention will be paid to the areas and possibilities for parents to become involved on the child's schooling.

2.2 REASONS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents and educators must be able to see the advantages for them in their mutual involvement in the formal education of the child. Improved academic

achievements and a healthy school community are seen as the biggest advantages of accountable parental involvement. Kruger (1996:33) cites, among others, the following reasons for parental involvement in order to contribute to the parent-educator partnership:

- ***Parental involvement is a matter of principal.*** Parents, on the strength of their parenthood, are the primary and natural educators of their children and therefore fully responsible for their informal and formal education. Parents are co-responsible for what happens to their children in formal school education.
- ***Parental involvement in formal education is compulsory by law.*** The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, makes provision for parental involvement. Parents are obliged to see that their children attend school for as long as they are of school-going age.
- ***Formal education alone cannot completely meet the needs of a rapid changing modern society.*** The school alone cannot satisfy all the requirements for complete, comprehensive, differentiated, normative and relevant education. For the sake of complete education parents need to play a supportive role in formal education.
- ***Guarantee for upholding community values.*** By becoming involved in their children's education, parents can ensure that the values, spirit, direction and character of the community are established and upheld in the school.

- ***The high costs of education require the best possible utilisation thereof.*** At present about a quarter of South Africa's national budget is allocated to education. Parents and the private sector also make large financial contributions. Hence, through their involvement, parents must ensure that effective education is taking place in the school.
- ***The mental development of the child demands parent-educator co-operation.*** The first seven years (preschool years) of a child's life are crucial in the development of his intelligence and parents play an important role in this regard. It is thus imperative that parents also become involved in the formal education of their children.

2.3 PARENT-EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP

The term "partner" derives from the Latin word *pars* which refers to a "part" or "piece" of a whole. It also indicates the nature of the relationship between the parts, namely that it is a confidential, considerate and deeply positive relationship. Partners are participants in the general activities, which includes tasks and responsibilities, shouldered on behalf of the common good, but they nevertheless remain separate "parts" with their own interests and goals (Dekker, 1995:39). In an institution like a school a partnership refers to an institutionalised confidential relationship between partners, parents and educators (Macbeth, 1999:31).

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:468) a partnership implies an agreement of co-operation according to which each partner will accept specific responsibilities and carry out commitments. When each partner completely fulfils his obligations, the aim of the partnership has

been realised. According to Hess (1992:22) a partner has the right to expect that:

- the other partners will entirely fulfil their obligations and carry out their tasks; and
- all tasks will be fulfilled in a co-ordinated manner.

In a modern and changing society education, and thus the school, cannot function without administration, financing and government contributions. So too, the parent community, the organised educator corps, the business world and industry, church, sport and cultural bodies and have specific responsibilities in respect of the education of the children of the community (Oosthuizen, 1992:132). Effective education cannot take place without sound partnerships among all the above stakeholders in the education of the child. In the following discussion the parent-educator partnership and the relationship between education and the working world (business and industry) are given attention.

Educators cannot perform their educational task without the full partnership of parents. Parents must be involved in the actuality of teaching, that is, the curricular, extra-curricular and management tasks of the school (Mitler & Mitler, 1992:53). Educators and parents are responsible for the same child which means that they accept responsibility for the child in partnership (Berger, 1987:34). Within the partnership between parents and educators, each partner has a particular obligation, related to the different life tasks and roles which they as parents and educators are normally expected to fulfil within the community (Pillay, 1995:59).

A parent-educator partnership can be described as a dynamic process whereby parents and educators work together for the ultimate benefit of the child (Clark, 1989:71). This involves collaboration on educational matters, setting goals, finding solutions, implementing and evaluating shared goals as well as inspiring and maintaining trust between parents and educators (Bond, 1993:41). The parent-educator partnership is intended essentially to promote and support the child's learning, school performance and general well-being. Wolfendale (1989:5) maintains that a partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision-making and accountability. Lemmer and Squelch (1993:96) say a parent-educator partnership is intended essentially to promote and support learners' learning, school performance and general well-being.

Kruger (1996:33) provides the following five aspects to explain the rationale for a harmonious parent-educator partnership:

- Parents are responsible by the law for their children's education.
- If most of the child's education happens outside the school, especially in the home environment, and if parents are educators of the child with teachers, then it seems logical to make the two elements of school-education and home-education compatible.
- Research has found that family-based learning influences the effectiveness of the school on the child.
- Educators, as agents of formal education, have a responsibility to ensure that parents fulfil their duties.

- In a democratic system, parents are major stakeholders and should be able to influence school policy through representatives.

2.3.1 Assumptions underpinning the relationship

The following assumptions can, *inter alia*, be seen as underpinning the parent-educator partnership (Kruger, 1998:9; Van der Vyver, 1997:167):

- Parents are the primary educators of their children and therefore the most important and influential persons in a child's life.
- Parents have a right to be involved in their children's formal education as they have the final responsibility for their children. They have a responsibility to support the school.
- Responsible parents care about their children's welfare and well-being.
- Parents want their children to succeed academically.
- Involved parents want to co-operate with the school. Co-operation between educators and parents is essential for positive home-school relations.
- All parents can make a contribution to the formal education of their children.
- Schools are more effective and do best when they involve parents.
- The skills of parents and educators can complement one another.

- Parents can provide vital information and offer valuable insights about their children to the educators. They can help educators in understanding their children.
- Involved parents can help improve their children's academic performance, attitudes and aspirations.
- Parent involvement reduces misunderstanding and possible conflict with the school.
- Isolation of schools can be prevented by involving the parents from the community it serves.
- Parent involvement improves communication between the school and the family.

2.3.2 Expectations of the partners

Parents are primarily responsible for the education of their children; however, the family environment is not always adequately equipped to unfold the child fully and in a differentiated manner (Kruger, 1998:11). The educators at school undertake this on the parents' behalf.

(1) Parents' expectations of the school

Parents remains primarily responsible for what becomes of their children and thus have certain expectations of the school. They may therefore require, *inter alia*, the following from the school (Van Schalkwyk , 1988:178; Pillay, 1998:64):

- Education in the school must be in harmony with the spirit and character of the family home. The school must build on the foundations laid by the parents and must strive to attain the same general educational goal. Should the school assume a more heterogeneous and multicultural character, it is still essential for the school and parents to be in agreement regarding the broad and general spirit and character of the community. The educators will then be concerned with instruction and learning in the sense of general community values while the parents will have to be responsible for education in the particular family values they wish to inculcate .
- The educators must instill acceptable principles and values in the learners and teach them to put them into practice.
- The school must provide education in accordance with the best and most educationally accountable educational principles, points of view and methods. The school may not, for instance, indoctrinate the child politically or religiously.
- Education must be of a generally formative nature, that is it must develop the child's general ability optimally in order to establish where the child's particular gifts lie.
- The school's education must gradually assume a differentiated character which will accord with the particular abilities and interests of the learner.

- Formal education must be balanced and not place undue emphasis on sport, cultural matters or academic schooling; it must, for example, not over-emphasise mathematics at the expense of language teaching. In school the learner must receive a balanced education.
- Education must be relevant, that is, it must mould and educate children to take their rightful place in a particular life-world in South Africa. Parents have the right to expect that the education system will prepare their children for the world of the future, for our multicultural society and for the information age.
- The level of education in the school must be of a standard which will develop the child's potential to the full.
- Education at school must further the career expectations of children and their parents.
- The school must provide for the right and just treatment of each child.
- The school principal and educators, as the *in loco parentis* during school hours, must discipline the child judiciously.
- As educational leader the principal must ensure that educators seek the wholehearted co-operation of the parents of the learners under their care. The educator therefore does not seek

to educate the child on his own, but must do so in co-operation with the parents. Wholehearted co-operation implies the removal of stumbling blocks, sympathy for parents' expectations, consultation, good communication, goodwill, mutual trust, loyalty, understanding of parents' problems, appreciation for parents' upbringing of the child and respect for the parents' authority and status. Educators must do everything in their power to uphold the parents' authority and to encourage learners to trust their parents.

- The principal and educators must keep the parents fully informed of the child's progress in school.

(2) School's expectations of the parents

For the partnership between parents and educators to be effective, parents themselves must assume certain responsibilities and keep in mind certain aspects about the school. The school is the seat of professional educative teaching and in order to increase its effectiveness, the educators expect the following from parents (Griessel, Louw & Swart, 1996:50; Griffiths & Hamilton, 1994:78; Heystek, 1998:29):

- Parents must ensure that the child receives maximum benefit from school education by:
 - ▶ offering the security and love which a child needs to enable him to venture out into the world;

- ▶ caring for the child's physical needs by providing sufficient wholesome food, clothing and shelter and looking after his health;
 - ▶ providing the best possible physical environment, for example, a desk with a light, own room where possible, books, magazines, etc.; and
 - ▶ supervising and exercising control over activities at home so that the child lives a balanced life and does not neglect important issues.
- Parents must see to it that the child attends school regularly.
 - To ensure that the child contributes in a positive way to his own education. The child is not a passive "pawn" in the educational vent but should participate actively. Parents must guide, help, support, motivate and stimulate the child's interest in school work.
 - Parents should not frustrate the educators' efforts or interrupt educators unnecessarily when they are teaching.
 - To exercise control over the life-view put forward in the school through critical evaluation of educational content, methods and activities. In this way parents can keep their partners, the educators, on their toes and contribute to the effectiveness of education.

- Parents must accept part of the responsibility for the management of the school. The parent can, for instance, play an important part in formulating local school policy (e.g. the homework, sport, cultural and school wear policy).
- To support and amplify the education provided by the school by following up and correcting the child's work, practising certain skills, revising and repeating work.
- The enrichment of the education provided by the school by creating additional learning opportunities for the child and then supplementing and extending such opportunities.
- Provision of specific services to the school in the form of improving the grounds, entertaining guests, raising funds, coaching sports, etc.
- To acknowledge and further the principal's and educators' professional status.
- Parents must co-operate wholeheartedly with the principal and the educators.
- This implies the removal of stumbling blocks, an understanding of the educators' and the principal's tasks and the problems this involve, consultations, communication, goodwill, mutual trust, loyalty, appreciation for the principal's and the educators' work

and respect for their authority and status. Parents must do everything possible to uphold the principal's and educators' authority and to further the child's trust in the educators.

- To respect the teaching profession and further its interest. The parent who runs down the principal or an educator in front of the child and the community is prejudicing not only his own child's education but that of future generations and thereby the life of the people and the community.
- To support his partner's (principals/educators) search for better conditions of service and to further his partner's interest. No community can flourish without good educators and school principals. The liaison and co-operation between the parent community and the school is usually controlled by bodies such as the school committee, parents' association, parent-educators' association and governing body. Through structures such as these, the parents and the school with their particular interest are connected to one another and the family (as a structure with an interest in education) becomes part of the fabric of the education system.

2.3.3 Conditions for genuine partnership

Educative teaching should be a unified action in which parents and educators are both concerned with the informal and formal education of the same child, and in the interests of the education of the child, contact and co-operation should assume the form of a partnership. Griffore and Boger (1986:139)

and Henderson (1998:151) say there is no better way to cement the parents' and educators' joint work and responsibility in the child's education than in a harmonious partnership. In this regard Kruger (1996:37) identifies, *inter alia*, the following characteristics that are required for a true partnership between parents and educators:

- Mutual trust that the goals and intentions of each are sincere, honest and pure.
- Mutual understanding and acceptance of each other's particular possibilities and limitations to achieve their goal.
- Mutual respect for each other's position, situation and expectations.
- Frankness towards each other for the sake of what is best for the child.
- A relationship in which parents and educators stand together and support each other wholeheartedly.
- Supporting, complementing and enriching each other's work.
- Equality between the partners in the midst of their differences.
- Task division that enables each partner to specialise in the areas or facets of the educative task that the parent or the educator is best qualified to perform.

- The expertise and specialised knowledge of each partner which can serve the partnership.
- Effective and efficient communication between the partners with a view to optimal communication.
- Mutual encouragement and assistance to ensure that the partners play their role to the best of their abilities.
- Cordial co-operation between parents and educators as partners.
- Mutual loyalty between partners.

Lemmer and Squelch (1994:91) refer to four conditions which they see as necessary for the effective functioning of a partnership between parents and educators. These four conditions are:

1. The first condition for a genuine partnership is that of gain. This gain is not aimed directly at financial gain but refers to a joint effort aimed at forming the child into a productive adult of the society to which the partners (parents and educators) belong.
2. Secondly, the common activities of the partners should be aimed at their "joint benefit". The common benefit both partners derive from their years of input with regard to dedication, time and money, is the child becoming a responsible adult.

3. Thirdly, the agreement should be placed on a legal basis to confirm the structured division of mutual rights and duties according to common and statutory law.
4. In the fourth place, each partner is expected to make a contribution to the partnership. The parent may, for instance, make a financial, advisory or supporting contribution, while the educators, because of their professional preparation, make inputs regarding the contents of subjects.

2.3.4 The need for a partnership

Modern society has been caught up in a process of rapid change and there is a demand for more specialization, skills and knowledge than the family situation as primary education situation can supply (Griessel, Louw & Swart, 1996:50). Schools were created because parents no longer felt fully competent to perform their educative task (Corner, 1986:445). Education at school is supplementary to that of the parents and they cannot and may not delegate to the school their privilege and responsibility of educating their children. Consequently it is essential that parents must be involved with the formal education of their children in school (Atkin & Bastiani, 1988:67).

Successful education of children necessitates a partnership between home and school (Letsie, 1994:23). The act of educating children is indivisible and cannot be split into two isolated spheres of home and school as this would be detrimental to the child's social, emotional and cognitive development. Dekker (1995:55) points out that parental education and school education

do not represent two opposing worlds, but that school education activities accord with and build upon the foundations of home education.

Neither the parent nor the educator alone can fulfil the education task completely but as partners they can supplement each other. As partners in the education of the child parents and educators should collaborate in the closest possible way (SAOR, 1995:3). Parents as the primary educators of the child and teachers as secondary educators, are in a state of mutual interdependence, a partnership which has to develop, or even better, a partnership which has to evolve (Sandfort (1997:100).

Responsible parents consider the education of their children as very important. They want to be kept informed of their child's progress in school and to be involved in their child's education (Stone, 1994:19). Parents also need and are interested in other kinds of information concerning the school. Research has found that the maintenance and improvement of home-school relations which are dependant on the quality of the parent-educator partnership is significantly related to the following (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993:154; Pillay, 1998:75):

- The improvement of the academic achievement of learners.
- Better school attendance by the learners.
- Improved learner behaviour at school.
- Increased community support for schools, including human, financial and material resources.

If anything worthwhile has been established about a true parent-educator partnership, it is that there are many ways for co-operation in the partnership and that no one way is superior to the other, but that they simply accomplish different purposes. Schools, parents and learners almost always benefit from a harmonious parent-educator partnership.

2.4 AREAS AND POSSIBILITIES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.4.1 Formal parental involvement

Parents can serve on formal parent bodies, for example school committees, governing bodies and management councils which are statutorily constituted bodies whose membership requirements and functions are stipulated.

(1) School governing bodies

The governing body system at schools that has been introduced in 1997 by the new government in South Africa, is a direct result of the policy of democracy. Parliamentary legislation has given rise to the existence of the present school governing bodies and they thus are qualified as statutory bodies, which means they are legal structures charged with powers as determined by parliamentary law (DoE, 1997:14)

(a) Constitution of the school governing body

The governing body of an ordinary public school is made up of three groups of people:

- The school principal.
- Members who are elected.
- Members who are co-opted but not elected. They are people from the community who are invited by the governing body to assist in fulfilling its functions. They do not have the right to vote and may not be more than five.

The members who are elected must consist of:

- Parents of learners at the school, excluding parents employed at the school. There must be one more parent in a school's governing body than the combined total of the other members with voting rights. The chairperson of the governing body must be a parent.
- Educators at the school:
 - Members of the staff at the school who are not educators (such as the secretarial staff and those who work in the school garden).
 - Learners at the school who are in grade eight or a higher grade.

(a) Functions of the governing body

The powers, functions and duties of governing bodies are grouped according to the governance duties that have to be carried out by all governing bodies, and a list of tasks that may be allocated to governing bodies that have the ability or means to fulfil the tasks. The list of compulsory tasks are listed in

the Schools Act and stipulates that the governing body of a school must (Vos, 1997:9):

- Promote the best interests of the school and ensure its development.
- Adopt a constitution for the school.
- Adopt a mission statement for the school, which is a brief document that sets out goals for the school based on shared values and beliefs.
- Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school.
- Help the principal, educators and other staff perform their professional functions.
- Administer and control the school's property, buildings and grounds, including school hostels.
- Encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to offer voluntary services to the school.
- Make recommendations on the appointment of educators.
- Make recommendations on the appointment of non-educators.
- Allow the school facilities to be used for educational programmes not offered by the school.

- Carry out all other functions given to governing body members by the Schools Act.
- Carry out functions that are set out by in a Provincial Gazette.

Parents can be selected for *non-formal parent bodies*, for example parent-educator associations and register class committees, which are non-statutory, free and autonomous associations or committees which are instituted by parents and educators to coordinate and arrange a variety of school functions and activities (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:37).

(2) Parent-educator associations

Parent-educator associations are non-statutory, free and autonomous associations or committees which are instituted by parents to co-ordinate and arrange a variety of school functions and activities. Although parent-educator associations do fulfil a very valuable service in arranging fund-raising events, doing tuck-shop duty, organising social events and assisting in sport events, they can fulfil other important functions which relate more to fundamental educational matters.

2.4.2 Informal parent involvement

Participation in the governance of the school or the parent-educator associations mentioned above is limited to a small percentage of the parent community. Pillay (1998:94) is of the opinion that many parents feel that they are not able to be considered for election to such bodies but are still interested in becoming involved. Such parents can be included in other :

informal ways, so that they may be of assistance to the school.

(1) Classroom assistance

Although this aspect is controversial, volunteer parents can effectively assist with classroom activities, especially in primary schools. Involving parents in classroom activities positively influences educators' interactions with parents. However, parents' assistance in the classroom do require sound planning and organisation. Examples of classroom assistance in primary schools include the following (Tiddy, 1997:52; Pillay; 1995:63):

- Reading to learners especially in primary schools.
- Listening to reading, spelling, etc. of learners.
- Supervising classes when educators are absent.
- Assisting with art work and teaching displays.
- Assistance in the media centre.
- Preparing material and equipment, for example in science and biology laboratories.
- Invigilation during examinations.
- Serving as an interpreter for learners whose mother tongue is not the medium of instruction.

(2) Extra-curricular activities

Parents can be invited to assist in the organisation and management of extra-curricular activities. Even working parents can be involved in evening activities and week-end events. Examples of extra-curricular activities are (Van der Linde, 1993:51):

- Supervising activities at school.
- Running societies.
- Coaching sport.
- Organising sport and cultural events.
- Transporting pupils.
- Catering.
- Fund-raising.

(3) Day-to-day running of the school

Parents as well as other members of the community can perform a variety of routine tasks which are essential for the day-to-day running of the school. Examples of help with day-to-day running of the school include the following (Khan, 1996:59):

- Maintenance and repair of school facilities.
- Protection of school facilities.

- Gardening.
- Assisting with school newsletters and school magazines.
- Helping with playground duty.
- Help to notify other parents of important events.
- Accompanying pupils on field trips and excursions.
- Help arranging parent talks, information evenings, etc.

(4) Learning activities at home

A very important part of parent involvement is assisting with learning activities at home. The following activities may be co-ordinated by parents with or without the knowledge of the educator (Stone, 1994:81):

- *Creating a suitable learning environment.*
- Supervising homework.
- Help with homework problems.
- Listening to reading and spelling.
- Playing educational games.
- Reading or telling stories (primary school learners).
- Checking that homework assignments are complete.

2.5 VALUE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement cannot be seen as a luxury. There is an urgent need for schools to find ways to support the success of all children. One element that is known to contribute to more successful children and more effective schools across all populations is adequate parent involvement in their children's education (Swap, 1993:1). When the focus is on improving the achievement of those children at academic risk, a sound parent-educator partnership is not just useful, but critical for effective school education (Wolfendale, 1992:69).

The value of parent involvement for themselves, the educator and the learners is undisputed. The following are, *inter alia*, some of the advantages of parental involvement (Vos, 2001:14; Pillay, 1998:98):

2.5.1 Value for educators.

(1) The parent-educator partnership will facilitate a positive attitude between parents and educators.

Educators who know parents by virtue of their participation in school activities treat these parents with greater respect. The opposite is also true. Parents who understand the aims, nature and functioning of the school, will be less likely to criticise the educators, and more likely to contribute positively to the education of their children.

(2) Co-operation leads to trust

Where there is good co-operation between parents and educators, they are more likely to trust each other. This means a healthy parent-educator partnership which will contribute positively to the education of the child.

(3) A parent-educator partnership is mutually beneficial

In a sound partnership parents and educators will no longer feel alone when dealing with difficult learners and situations. A close partnership enables parents to develop their own skills and understanding in supporting their own children through the schooling process. Educators need to know how a learner functions in his home and family with the aim to a better understanding of the learner in class.

(4) Knowledge of the learner's home and school situation can influence his or her education in a positive way

As primary caregivers parents can provide useful information concerning their children to educators, for example the child's strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, medical details, etc. Such information can help educators to better assist the child in the school situation.

(5) Parental involvement can lessen educators' workload

Parents who are willing to assist with sporting activities in the afternoons and over weekends, invigilation during examinations, care taking during school excursion, etc. can help to lessen the educators' workload.

2.5.2 Value for learners

(1) Improvement of academic achievement

Academic and other later achievements are closely linked to the interest that parents take in, and the value they attach to, the child's schoolwork. Just

sitting down for a few minutes to talk about a homework problem gives encouragement to a child and helps him realize that if parents can spend time

helping in a constructive way, then homework really must be important.

(2) Increased security and emotional stability

Learners who are aware that their parents are in partnership with their educators and thus interested in their schoolwork, experience emotional stability and security. These learners are better able to adjust to the formal education in school and better able to overcome any problems they may encounter, such as behavioural and learning problems'

(3) Improved behaviour of learners in school

Research has shown that a sound relationship between parents and educators and resultant parental involvement is the most successful way of combatting disruptive behaviour by learners. Parents can make the child's school life meaningful by supporting him in his academic and extra-curricular activities, and by attending school functions. Parental support counteracts unacceptable behaviour or the possibility of leaving school early.

2.5.3 Value for parents

(1) Increased interest in the education system

Being in partnership with educators helps parents to a better understanding of how schools work which lead to an increased interest in the education of their children. The interest parents show in the child's schoolwork can have a powerful impact on the success of his schooling.

(2) Fulfilment

All responsible parents, regardless of their socio-economic status, are interested in their children's formal education and would like to contribute in

some way. When parents become involved in the school they can be taught how to become a partner in their child's school education. This partnership with educators in the education of their children leads to a sense of fulfilment for many parents.

(3) Increased self-esteem and confidence

The level of parents' education often lead to a feeling of inferiority towards the education of their children. This feeling can be greatly aggravated by and *uninviting atmosphere in a school*. Where parents become partners in their children's education and are shown how important their contribution is, their self-esteem and confidence are greatly increased.

2.5.3 Value for the school

(1) Financial support

Parents with specialised skills who offer their services free to the school can save the school expenses, for example, maintenance of buildings, class equipment, sports facilities, etc. Parents take responsibility for fundraising activities and may also help in the collection of outstanding school fees. The more involved parents are, the less reluctant they are to pay their children's school fees.

(2) Improvement of the school

In offering their services parents can contribute in many ways to the improvement of the school. This can include improving the school-grounds, repairs to buildings, protecting of school property, etc.

(3) Improved community support

A sound parent-educator partnership can lead to feelings of ownership, which can lead to increased support for the school. This may manifest itself in greater support from other sectors of the community, for example, support from private businesses, political parties, etc.

(4) Increased communication between parents and educators

The establishment of formal school governing bodies and informal parent-educator associations increase communication between the home and school because they consist of both parent and educator representatives.

2.6 SUMMARY

Parents who are involved in their child's formal schooling will learn to know more about their children's school and the process of education in the school. Knowledge about the school and its working should produce a spin-off for the learner to do better academically and socially. The active involvement of parents in the child's formal education will enhance parental interest and orientation, which are vital links in the chain that lead to the stimulation of the parents' ability to co-operate effectively with the school.

Parental involvement in the primary school must acknowledge that wide variations exist in both parental expectations of the school and the school's expectations of parents. Although both parties have a vested interest in the well-being and success of the learners in the school, they may not hold similar views on the school's priorities, resources, time allocations or even fundamental philosophy. Despite these differences the allocation of responsibility for the child's educational success or failure is a central identifiable theme in home-school relations.

Parents retain the primary responsibility for the education of their children and may not delegate their responsibilities to the school. To parents the education of their children is just one among many upbringing tasks; to educators it is their profession; but to both parties it is essential to achieve maximum and optimal co-operation, co-ordination and continuity in their common task. It is thus imperative that parents and educators become partners in the education of children in the true sense of the concept "partnership". In such a partnership parents and educators are equal partners with their action directed at the same goal: the successful education of the child to adulthood. This common goal can only be achieved if the partners fulfil their respective obligations and ensure that a relationship of mutual trust, respect and understanding exists between them.

The next chapter deals with the research method used and how data was obtained from the respondents.

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the nature and extent of parental involvement in primary schools was described by means of literature research. The areas and possibilities of parental involvement, obstacles to accountable parental involvement and the value of this involvement were looked at. The literature study revealed that a healthy parent-educator relationship is a prerequisite for accountable parental involvement. In the literature study specific reference was made to primary schools situated in rural areas.

This chapter will focus on the planning of the research in discussing the questionnaire as research instrument and the processing of data.

3.2 PREPARATION FOR THE RESEARCH

3.2.1 Permission

With the aim of administering the questionnaire to primary school educators it was required to first request permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC). A letter to ask the necessary permission was drafted (Appendix B) and directed to the Scottburgh District Manager being the area where the research sample would be selected from. A copy of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent with the letter for

approval by the department. After permission was granted by the Senior Education Manager (SEM) for the intended research to be undertaken (Appendix C) the researcher visited the principals of the randomly selected primary schools with the letter of approval in order to ask their permission to administer the questionnaire to the educators of the school.

3.2.2 Selection of respondents

Schools were selected from the list of primary schools in the Scottburgh District on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast. The district comprises predominantly rural areas. This provided the researcher with a random selected sample of 160 primary school educators as respondents which can be considered an adequate sample for reliable data analysis by means of descriptive statistics.

3.3 DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

3.3.1 Quantitative research

The purpose of research design is to provide the most valid, accurate answers possible to research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:34) say that since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the questions.

Quantitative research methods collect data to be translated into a statistical format. The responses of respondents to the questions in a questionnaire are recorded in coded format, presented in frequency tables, graphs and/or chart

formats, analysed and interpreted (De Vos, 2001:208). The simplest form of data analysis is univariate analysis, which means that one variable is analysed, mainly with the view to describing that variable (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:100). It can thus be stated that where information is required by a first time researcher, quantitative data collection and analysis seem to be the most suitable method. The researcher selected the quantitative approach because:

- it is more formalised:
- better controlled;
- has a range that is more exactly defined; and
- uses methods relatively close to the physical sciences.

3.3.2 The questionnaire as research instrument

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:504) a questionnaire is a set of questions dealing with some topic or related group of topics, given to a selected group of individuals for the purpose of gathering data on a problem under consideration. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) say the questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view to obtaining information. Churchill and Peter (Schnetler, 1993:77) have shown that the measuring instrument has the greatest influence on the reliability of research data. The characteristics of measurement are best controlled by the careful construction of the instrument. There is, however, insufficient appreciation for the fact that a questionnaire should be constructed according to certain principles (De Vos, 2001:89).

A well-designed questionnaire is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objective, formulating the problem, generating the hypothesis, etcetera. A questionnaire is not simply thrown together. A poorly designed questionnaire can invalidate any research results, notwithstanding the merits of the sample, the field workers and the statistical techniques (Huysamen, 1989:2). In their criticism of questionnaires Berchie and Anderson (Schnetler, 1993:61) object to poor design rather than to questionnaires as such. A well-designed questionnaire can boost the reliability and validity of the data to acceptable tolerances (Schumacher & Meillon, 1993:42).

It therefore stands to reason that questionnaire design does not take place in a vacuum. According to Dane (1990:315-319) the length of individual questions, the number of response options, as well as the format and wording of questions are determined by the following:

- The choice of the subject to be researched.
- The aim of the research.
- The size of the research sample.
- The method of data collection.
- The analysis of the data.

Against this background the researcher can now look at the principles that determine whether a questionnaire is well-designed. It is thus necessary to draw a distinction between questionnaire content, question format, question order, type of questions, formulation of questions and validity and reliability of questions.

3.3.2 Construction of the questionnaire

Questionnaire design is an activity that should not take place in isolation. The researcher should consult and seek advice from specialists and colleagues at all times during the construction of the questionnaire (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). Questions to be taken up in the questionnaire should be tested on people to eliminate possible errors. A question may appear correct to the researcher when written down but can be interpreted differently when asked to another person. There should be no hesitation in changing questions several times before the final formulation whilst keeping the original purpose in mind. The most important point to be taken into account in questionnaire design is that it takes time and effort and that the questionnaire will be re-drafted a number of times before being finalised. A researcher must therefore ensure that adequate time is budgeted for in the construction and preliminary testing of the questionnaire (Kidder & Judd, 1986:243-245). All of the above was taken into consideration by the researcher during the designing of the questionnaire for this investigation.

An important aim in the construction of the questionnaire for this investigation was to present the questions as simple and straightforward as possible. Reasons for this were that not all members of the target population under investigation might be adequately literate to interpret questions correctly or familiar with the completion of questionnaires. The researcher further aimed to avoid ambiguity, vagueness, bias, prejudice and technical language in the questions.

The aim of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was to obtain information regarding primary school educators' views on parental involvement. The questions were formulated to establish the nature of parental involvement in primary schools with regard to the following:

- Formal parental involvement.
- Informal involvement.

The questionnaire was sub-divided into the following sections:

- Section one, which dealt with the biographical information of the respondents, namely primary school educators, and consisted of questions 1 to 6.

Section two and three of the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions. The respondents were requested to indicate their responses to the statements pertaining to formal and informal parental involvement in primary schools. The primary school educators have to state their views concerning formal and informal parental involvement in three ways, namely agree, disagree and uncertain. The questions were grouped as follows:

- Section two contained questions on the areas of formal parental involvement.
- Section three consisted of questions relating to possibilities and areas of informal parental involvement.

3.3.4 Characteristics of a good questionnaire

Throughout the construction of the questionnaire the researcher had to consider the characteristics of a good questionnaire in order to meet the requirements necessary for the research instrument to be reliable. The characteristics of a good questionnaire that were considered by the researcher are, according to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190), Mahlangu (1987:84-85) and Norval (1990:60) the following:

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one the respondent will recognize as important enough to warrant spending his or her time on. The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and in the accompanying letter.
- It must seek only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to get the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.
- Questionnaires should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated or printed.
- Directions for a good questionnaire must be clear and complete and important terms clearly defined.
- Each question has to deal with a single concept and should be worded as simply and straightforwardly as possible.

- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses.
- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses. Leading questions are just as inappropriate in a questionnaire as they are in a court of law.
- Questions should be presented in a proper psychological order, proceeding from general to more specific and sensitive responses. An orderly grouping helps respondents to organise their own thinking so that their answers are logical and objective. It is preferable to present questions that create a favourable attitude before proceeding to those that are more intimate or delicate in nature. Annoying and/or embarrassing questions should be avoided if possible.

3.3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire

Data can be gathered by means of a structured questionnaire in, *inter alia*, the following ways: a written questionnaire that is mailed, delivered or handed out personally; personal interviews or telephone interviews (Kidder & Judd, 1986: 221). Each mode has specific advantages and disadvantages which the researcher need to evaluate for their suitability to the research question and the specific target population being studied, as well as relative cost. The researcher used the written questionnaire as research instrument taking into consideration the following advantages:

1 Advantages of the written questionnaire

Written questionnaire as a research instrument, to obtain information, has the following advantages (Bless & Higson Smith, 1995:110; Cooper, 1989:01):

- Affordability is the primary advantage of written questionnaires because it is the least expensive means of data gathering.
- Written questionnaires preclude possible interviewer bias. The way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or interaction may influence respondent's answers. Such biases can be completely eliminated with a written questionnaire.
- A questionnaire permits anonymity. If it is arranged such that responses were given anonymously, this would increase the researcher's chances of receiving responses which genuinely represent a person's beliefs, feelings, opinions or perceptions.
- They permit a respondent a sufficient amount of time to consider answers before responding.
- Questionnaires can be given to many people simultaneously, that is to say a large sample of a target population can be reached.
- They provide greater uniformity across measurement situations than do interviews. Each person responds to exactly the same questions because standard instructions are given to the respondents.

- Generally the data provided by questionnaires can be more easily analyzed and interpreted than the data obtained from verbal responses.
- A respondent may answer questions of a personal or embarrassing nature more willingly and frankly on a questionnaire than in a face to face situation with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger. In some cases it may happen that respondents report less than expected and make more critical comments in a mail questionnaire.
- Questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable respondents to consult documents in the case of the mail questionnaire approach.
- Respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- Questionnaire design is relative easy if the set guidelines are followed.
- The administering of questionnaires and the coding, analysis and interpretation of data can be done without any special training.

(2) Disadvantages of the questionnaire

The researcher is also aware of the fact that the written questionnaire has important disadvantages. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) and Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:112) the

disadvantages of the questionnaire are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews. In an interview an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge how people are interpreting the question. If questions asked are interpreted differently by respondents the validity of the information obtained is jeopardized.
- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.
- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.
- The mail questionnaire does not make provision for obtaining the views of more than one person at a time. It requires uninfluenced views of one person only.
- Answers to written questionnaires must be seen as final. Re-checking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answer for a clarification of ambiguous answers. If respondents are unwilling to answer certain questions nothing can be done about it because the mail questionnaire is essentially inflexible.
- In a written questionnaire the respondent examines all the questions at the same time before answering them and the

answers to the different questions can therefore not be treated as "independent".

- Researchers are unable to control the context of question answering, and specifically, the presence of other people. Respondents may ask friends or family members to examine the questionnaire or comment on their answers, causing bias if the respondent's own private opinions are desired.
- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that the respondents may have. Respondents might answer questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

3.3.6 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

There are two concepts that are of critical importance in understanding issues of measurement in social science research, namely validity and reliability (Huysamen, 1989:1-3). All too rarely do questionnaire designers deal consciously with the degree of validity and reliability of their instrument. This is one of the reasons why so many questionnaires are lacking in these two qualities (Cooper, 1989:15). Questionnaires have a very limited purpose. In fact, they are often one-time data gathering devices with a very short life, administered to a limited population. There are ways to improve both the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Basic to the validity of a questionnaire is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous way. In other words, do the items sample a significant aspect of the purpose of the investigation? Terms must therefore be clearly defined so that they

have the same meaning to all respondents (Cohen & Manion, 1989: 111-112).

Kidder and Judd (1989:53-54) mention the fact that although reliability and validity are two different characteristics of measurement, they "shade into each other". They are two ends of a continuum but at points in the middle it is difficult to distinguish between them. Validity and reliability are especially important in educational research because most of the measurements attempted in this area are obtained indirectly. Researchers can never guarantee that an educational or psychological measuring instrument measures precisely and dependably what it is intended to measure (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). It is essential, therefore, to assess the validity and reliability of these instruments. Researchers must therefore have a general knowledge as to what validity and reliability are and how one goes about validating a research instrument and establishing its reliability.

(1) Validity of the questionnaire

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:560) define validity as the extent to which a measuring instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. It also refers to the extent to which it correlates with some criterion external to the instrument itself. Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to determine what it was designed to determine. In general terms validity refers to the degree to which an instrument succeeds in measuring what it has set out to measure.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:237), Mouton (1996:85-87) and Dane (1990:257-258) distinguish between three types of validity:

- Content validity, where content and cognitive processes included can be measured. Topics, skills and abilities should be prepared and items from each category randomly drawn.
- Criterion validity, which refers to the relationship between scores on a measuring instrument and an independent variable (criterion) believed to measure directly the behaviour or characteristic in question. The criterion should be relevant, reliable and free from bias and contamination.
- Construct validity, where the extent to which the test measures a specific trait or construct is concerned, for example, intelligence, reasoning, ability, attitudes, etcetera.

The validity of the questionnaire indicates how worthwhile a measure is likely to be in a given situation. Validity shows whether the instrument is reflecting the true story, or at least something approximating the truth. A valid research instrument is one that has demonstrated that it detects some "real" ability, attitude or prevailing situation that the researcher can identify and characterize (Schnetler, 1993:71). If the ability or attitude is itself stable, and if a respondent's answers to the items are not affected by other unpredictable factors, then each administration of the instrument should yield essentially the same results (Dane, 1990:158).

The validity of the questionnaire as a research instrument reflects the sureness with which conclusions can be drawn. It refers to the extent to which

interpretations of the instrument's results, other than the ones the researcher wishes to make, can be ruled out. Establishing validity requires that the researcher anticipates the potential arguments that sceptics might use to dismiss the research results (Cooper, 1989:120).

The researcher employed the questionnaire as an indirect method to measure primary school educators' views of parental involvement. Because of the complexity of the respondents' attributes one is never sure that the questionnaire devised will actually measure what it purports to measure. Items in the questionnaire cannot be measured like height, mass, length or size. From the interpretation of the results obtained and the sureness with which conclusions could be drawn, the researcher is convinced that the questionnaire, to a great extent, did measure that which it was designed for.

(2) Reliability of the questionnaire

According to Mulder (1989:209) and Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994: 512) reliability is a statistical concept and relates to consistency and dependability. Consistency of obtaining the same relative answer when measuring phenomena that have not changed. A reliable measuring instrument is one that, if repeated under similar conditions, would present the same result or a near approximation of the initial result. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:194) and Kidder and Judd (1986: 47-48) distinguish between the following types of reliability:

- Test-retest reliability (coefficient of stability) - consistency estimated by comparing two or more repeated administrations

of the measuring instrument. This gives an indication of the dependability of the results on one occasion and on another occasion.

- Internal consistency reliability - this indicates how well the test items measure the same thing.
- Split-half reliability - by correlating the results obtained from two halves of the same measuring instrument, one can calculate the split-half reliability.

In essence, reliability refers to consistency, but consistency does not guarantee truthfulness. The reliability of the question is no proof that the answers given reflect the respondent's true feelings (Dane, 1990: 256). A demonstration of reliability is necessary but not conclusive evidence that an instrument is valid. Reliability refers to the extent to which measurement results are free of unpredictable kinds of error. Sources of error that effect reliability are *inter alia*, the following (Mulder, 1989: 209; Kidder & Judd, 1986:45):

- Fluctuations in the mood or alertness of respondents because of illness, fatigue, recent good or bad experiences, or temporary differences amongst members of the group being measured.
- Variations in the conditions of administration between groups. These range from various distractions, such as unusual outside noise to inconsistencies in the administration of the measuring instrument such as omissions in verbal instructions.

- Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, chance differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores.
- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

When the questionnaire is used as an empirical research instrument there is no specific method, for example the "test-retest" method, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Therefore, it will be difficult to establish to what extent the answers of the respondents were reliable. The researcher, however, believes that the questionnaires in this investigation were completed with the necessary honesty and sincerity required to render the maximum possible reliability. Frankness in responding to questions was made possible by the anonymity of the questionnaire. In the coding of the questions it was evident that questionnaires were completed with the necessary dedication.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practises or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project (De Vos, 2001:178). For the purpose of the pilot study in this research project ten educators were selected from amongst the researcher's colleagues and educator friends. The pilot study is a preliminary or "trial run" investigation using similar questions and similar subjects as in the final survey. Kidder and Judd (1986:211-212) say the basic purpose of a pilot study is to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved and to

- Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, chance differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores.
- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

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identify flaws in the measuring instrument. A pilot study gives the researcher an idea of what the method will actually look like in operation and what effects (intended or not) it is likely to have. In other words, by generating many of the practical problems that will ultimately arise, a pilot study enables the researcher to avert these problems by changing procedures, instructions and questions.

The number of participants in the pilot study or group is normally smaller than the number scheduled to take part in the final survey. Participants in the pilot study and the sample for the final study must be selected from the same target population. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted a pilot run on his colleagues.

According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1991: 49-66) the following are the purposes of a pilot study, and these were also the aim of the researcher in this survey:

- It provided the researcher with the opportunity of refining the wording, ordering and layout and it help to prune the questionnaire to a manageable size.
- It permitted a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data.
- It greatly reduced the number of treatment errors because unforeseen problems revealed in the pilot study resulted in redesigning the main study.

- It saved the researcher major expenditures in time and money on aspects of the research which would have been unnecessary.
- Feedback from other persons involved were made possible and led to important improvements in the main study.
- The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire was established in the pilot study.
- Questions and/or instructions that were misinterpreted were reformulated.

Through the use of the pilot study as "pre-test" the researcher was satisfied that the questions asked complied adequately to the requirements of the study.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

If properly administered the questionnaire is the best available instrument for obtaining information from widespread sources or large groups simultaneously (Cooper, 1989:39). The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the selected schools in the Scottburgh District and collected them again after completion. This method of administration facilitated the process and the response rate. A satisfactory return rate (62,5%) was obtained with 100 out of 160 questionnaires completed and collected.

3.6 THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

Once data was collected, it had to be captured in a format which would permit analysis and interpretation. This involved the careful coding of the 100 questionnaires completed by the randomly selected primary school educators. The coded data was subsequently transferred onto a computer spreadsheet using the Quattro Pro 6.0 programme. The coded data was analysed using the same programme in order to interpret the results by means of descriptive statistics.

3.6.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics serve to describe and summarise observations (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994:355). Frequency tables, histograms and polygons are useful in forming impressions about the distribution of data.

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:65) frequency distribution is a method to organize data obtained from questionnaires to simplify statistical analysis. A frequency table provides the following information:

- It indicates how many times a particular response appears on the completed questionnaires.
- It provides percentages that reflect the number of responses to a certain question in relation to the total number of responses.

- The arithmetic mean (average) can be calculated by adding all the scores and dividing it by the number of scores.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This investigation was constrained by a number of factors. The following are likely factors that might have influenced the reliability and validity of the questionnaire:

- Although anonymity was required in the questionnaire the possibility exists that, because of the primary school educators' cautiousness, they might not have been frank and truthful in their responses.
- The sensitive nature of items in the questionnaire might have elicited *false or misleading responses* and influenced the reliability of the results.
- The formulation of the questions in English, which is not the mother-tongue of most of the respondents, might have resulted in the misinterpretation of questions which could have elicit incorrect responses.
- To restrict the investigation to manageable proportions, the researcher limited the study to primary school educators of schools which are easily accessible.
- The number of completed questionnaires returned (62,5%) could have been higher to render more valid findings.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the planning and design of the empirical research was discussed and a comprehensive description of the questionnaire as research instrument was given.

In the following chapter the data obtained from the completed questionnaires will be analysed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH

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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data which was collected from the completed questionnaires will be analysed, findings will be interpreted and some comments will be presented. The data comprised biographical information and formal and informal parental involvement in primary schools. One hundred questionnaires were completed by educators.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) state that the purpose of research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person. Descriptive research is one of the methods of research used to study a person or persons scientifically in the educational situation. It attempts to describe the situation as it is, thus there is no intervention on the part of the researcher and therefore no control. Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:355) say descriptive studies do not set out with the idea of testing hypotheses about relationships, but want to find the distribution of variables. In this study nomothetic descriptive research was employed with the aim of describing educators' perceptions pertaining to accountable parental involvement. The researcher was primarily concerned with the nature and degree of existing situations in schools.

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

Table 1 **Frequency distribution according to the gender of educators**

	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Male	30	30%
2	Female	70	70%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 1 shows that the majority (70%) of the educators are females. Possible reasons for this phenomenon are the following:

- The research sample involved only primary schools and not secondary schools (cf. 3.2.2). Primary schools tend to appoint more female than male educators.
- A female educator represents a motherly figure and is more acceptable by younger children as *in loco parentis*.
- Van der Linde (1993:42) believes that female educators have special qualities to care for the grade ones in the junior primary phase.

4.2.2 Age of respondents

Table 2 Frequency distribution according to the age group of the educators

	Age group	Frequency	%
1	20 - 25 years	2	2%
2	26 - 30 years	17	17%
3	31 - 35 years	22	22%
4	36 - 40 years	26	26%
5	41 - 45 years	14	14%
6	46 - 50 years	8	8%
7	51 - 55 years	5	5%
8	56 - 60 years	6	6%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Close to fifty percent (48%) of the educators in the research sample are in the age group 31 to 40 years (Table 2). The table also shows that most of the educators (67%) are younger than 40 years which means that they have more to offer in terms of energy and productivity. The possibility also exists that younger educators may stay in the education profession for a longer period of time to gain more experience with the aim of possible promotion.

4.2.3 Qualifications

Table 3 Frequency distribution according to the qualifications of educators

	Qualifications	Frequency	%
1	Degree and diploma or certificate	21	21%
2	Diplomas and certificates	79	79%
	TOTAL	100	100%

From Table 3 it emerges that the minority (21%) of the educators possess academic and professional qualifications which are by many perceived as being better qualified for the teaching profession. However, the finding that most (79%) of the educators have diplomas and certificates may be because they are teaching in primary schools. The contents (curricula) of teaching diplomas and certificates are more practical than theoretically orientated courses and therefore more appropriate for teaching younger primary school children (Griessel, Louw & Swart, 1993:71). In order to be an effective educator a person should have obtained the most suitable qualifications.

4.2.4 Years of service as an educator

Table 4 Frequency distribution according to the educators' years of completed service as educators

	Completed years of service	Frequency	%
1	1 - 5 years	19	19%
2	6 - 10 years	32	32%
3	11 - 15 years	21	21%
4	16 - 20 years	14	14%
5	21 - 25 years	9	9%
6	26 - 30 years	3	3%
7	30 years and more	2	2%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 4 shows that more than fifty percent (51%) of the educators in the research sample have less than 10 years teaching experience while 72% have less than 16 years teaching experience. Experience together with adequate training is needed for the responsibilities and the demands imposed on educators (Gorman, 1989:21). The more experience and training an educator

have the more confidence and expertise he will have acquired to be an effective educator. Marsh (1992:88) says continuous professional development and experience are prerequisites for educators to keep up with the rapid pace of change in knowledge, advancement of technology and increasing demands imposed upon educators.

4.2.5 Type of school

Table 5 Frequency distribution according to the classification of respondents' schools

	School	Frequency	%
1	Junior primary	35	35%
2	Senior primary	65	65%
	TOTAL	100	100%

In accordance with the focus of the research the schools where the questionnaire was administered is composed of senior and junior primary schools (Table 5).

4.2.6 Area in which schools are situated

Table 6 Frequency distribution according to the area in which respondents' schools are situated

	Area in which school is situated	Frequency	%
1	Urban area	2	2%
2	Semi-urban area	10	10%
3	Rural area	88	88%
	TOTAL	100	100%

The majority of schools (88%) selected for administration of the questionnaire are situated in rural areas and therefore resulted in the findings in Table 6. The Scottburgh district from which the primary schools for the research sample were selected is situated on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal and includes large rural areas (cf. 3.2.2). Poverty, illiteracy and lack of transport are characteristic of many rural areas and parents in these areas often experience difficulties to become actively involved in their children's formal schooling for, *inter alia*, the following reasons (Vos, 2002:1):

- Lack of transport prevent parents from being able to actively support their children's sport and/or other activities.
- Illiterate or semi-literate parents feel overwhelmed and intimidated by educators and do not readily avail themselves for election on the school governing body.
- Educators are only seen at formal parents' evenings if parents have transport to attend.
- For parents who are illiterate or semi-literate, understanding of the school is limited to what their children convey to them.
- Active involvement in the teaching programmes in schools by illiterate parents is not possible.
- Parents who do not speak the language of the school are excluded because they are unable to communicate with the staff.
- Assistance and control of schoolwork by illiterate parents are not possible.
- Parents enrol their children in boarding schools and have no day-to-day contact or communications with the school.

4.2.7 Formal parental involvement

Table 7 Frequency distribution according educators' perceptions
of formal parental involvement
N = 100

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
2.1	There is enough parents who readily avail themselves for election to the governing body	64%	25%	11%	100%
2.2	The majority parents attend meetings to elect members to the governing body	60%	34%	6%	100%
2.3	Parents elected to the governing body attend meetings regularly	59%	28%	13%	100%
2.4	Most of the parents are willing to serve on parent-educator associations.	30%	54%	16%	100%
2.5	The majority of parents support the implementation of a code of conduct for learners	43%	42%	15%	100%
2.6	Meetings where important decisions are made are well attended by parents	51%	37%	12%	100%
2.7	The majority of parents attend parent evenings	15%	65%	20%	100%
2.8	A large number of parents are willing to serve on school committees, e.g. register class committee	19%	61%	20%	100%
2.9	Most parents respond to circulars/notices from the school if required	38%	49%	13%	100%
2.10	A significant number of the parents enquire about the aspects of educational law that concern them	30%	45%	25%	100%
2.11	Most of the parents honour payment of the prescribed school fees	42%	44%	14%	100%
2.12	The majority of parents obey the rules of the educational law e.g. abolishment of corporal punishment	37%	48%	15%	100%

The benefit of formal parental involvement in schools is not only for the school, as having a close partnership with the school enables parents to further develop their own skills and understanding in supporting their children through the schooling process (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999:56). By virtue of their majority representation on school governing bodies in schools in South Africa, parents have a central role to play in developing local school policy and governing the school in such a way that the principles relating to effective schooling are developed and pursued in practice (South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996).

The value of parental involvement is undisputed. What is a challenge, however, is how to foster this involvement in rural areas with obstacles like poverty, illiteracy and certain cultural aspects. The following findings in Table 7 confirm the problems experienced with parental involvement in rural areas:

Availability for election (2.1)

Most of the respondents (64%) said that enough parents readily avail themselves for election to the school governing body. Being available to serve on the governing body reflect parents' willingness to be involved in the child's schooling. Formal parental involvement enables parents to learn more about the school their child attend and the process of education there (Wolfendale, 1989:35). A better understanding of the functioning of the school will produce a spin-off for the learner to better academic achievement (cf. 2.5.2).

Attendance of meetings (2.2; 2.6)

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents agreed that the majority of parents attend meetings to elect members on the governing body to represent them.

A high attendance of parents at election meetings show that they want to be involved in the election of governors to represent their interest in the school.

Parents put their trust in the elected governors and hope they have the abilities and/or means to adequately fulfill their functions and duties (Mzulwini, 2001:31). It is also important that parents attend meetings where important decisions about the schooling of their children are taken. Responses showed, however, that only slightly more than half (51%) agreed that these meetings are well attended by parents. The 34% (question 2.2) and 37% (question 2.6) represent more than a third of the respondents that disagreed that meetings are well attended by parents. In research done by Van der Westhuizen and Mosogo (2001:193) on parental involvement it was found that parents in rural areas fail to attend school meetings. They cite the following reasons for the poor attendance of meetings:

- Parents who live far away from school regard getting to school as an extra burden on their already depleted finances to keep their children in school.
- Lack of own transport, inaccessible public transport and too long distances to walk.
- Illiterate parents do not want to come to school because they do not feel adequately qualified to make valid contributions to education.

Attendance of governing body meetings (2.3)

Regular attendance of meetings by parent governors show that they take their

responsibilities in school governance seriously. Fifty nine percent (59%) of the respondents said that parent governors attended governing body meetings regularly. A discouraging factor, however, is the 41% respondents that indicated that parent governors do not attend meetings regularly. Likely explanations for the non-attendance of governing body meetings by parent governors are, *inter alia*, the following (Mzulwini, 2001:96):

- Parent governors do not understand or are unable to perform the duties allocated to them.
- Lack of experience to serve on committees.
- Control (dominance) of community leaders (*amakhosi*) in rural areas.
- Manipulation of illiterate parents by principals or other “senior” members on the governing body.
- Intimidation.

Willingness to serve on parent-educator associations (2.4: 2.8)

According to the responses of the respondents the majority of parents (54%) are not willing to serve on parent-educator associations and an even larger percentage (61%) is not willing to serve on school committees, for example register class committees. The establishing of parent-educator associations as well as other school committees can serve to promote good parent-educator relationships. According to Legotlo (1994:109) the finding that poor and uneducated parents have a tendency of being reluctant to serve on parent-educator associations or any other committees, may be attributed to their

feelings of inferiority in working together with highly educated, knowledgeable and "rich" educators. Van Schalkwyk (1990:54) is of the opinion that parents feel that they should not interfere in school matters as educators are adequately trained to handle education matters. Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (2001:194) mention the following as responsible reasons for the lack of parental involvement in school activities:

- Serving in the governing body and/or a school committee place a heavy burden on parents because it takes away their time to spend on other matters concerning the family.
- For working parents the time spent on school activities may be the only free time they have and they may, therefore, prefer to spend it on other matters.
- When both parents work neither are able to serve on school committees.

Implementation of a code of conduct (2.5)

The very small difference of one percent (43 % agreed and 42% disagreed) between the respondents' reaction to parental support for the implementation of a code of conduct may possibly be attributed to, *inter alia*, the following (Letsie, 1994:24; Heystek, 1998:108):

- Parents' lack of knowledge of what a code of conduct entails.
- Parents do not fully understand their role in schools.
- Illiterate parents do not understand the new legislation for schools.

Attending of parent evenings (2.7)

The larger number of respondents (65%) said that the majority of parents do not attend parent evenings. The aim of formal parent evenings is for parents and educators to meet and share knowledge about their child. Aspects such as academic progress an/or problems may be the topic of discussion. According to Pillay (1998:162) most parents consider the information concerning their children that educators share with them during parent evenings, to be to the ultimate benefit of the child. If a child experiences problems in school the discussion thereof between the educator and parents should be honest, frank and candid. With authentic knowledge about their child's problem, parents are better able to assist the school in helping the child to the fullest. The opposite is also applicable, namely the information that parents can give to the educator about their child.

Circulars and notices from school (2.9)

Nearly half of the parents (49%) do not respond to circulars or notices from schools. Letsie (1994:44) found the lack of effective communication as one of the main problems in rural schools. The size of the school and limitations with regard to amenities at the school may seriously hamper effective communication between parents and the school. Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (2001:190) say in the absence of telephones, duplicating machines and computers, many rural schools have to rely on verbal communication or notices copied by the learners. The latter method of communication is subject to filtration, distortion and snowballing. These problems increase tremendously where schools have a large number of learners because the more the learners handle the messages, the more distortion occurs. Wrong messages, distorted information and forgotten messages give a poor image of the school and this undermines parental involvement.

Enquiries about aspects of educational law (2.10; 2.12)

Most of the respondents (45%) responded negatively to the statement that parents enquire about the aspects of educational law while nearly a quarter of the respondents expressed their uncertainty about the enquiries. Although the South African Schools Act, Act No 84 Of 1996 has contributed a lot to clarifying the rights and duties of parents in school they are still poorly informed and their involvement, where it exists, is limited to trivial issues such as fund-raising, organising of activities, etc. Only the parents on the school governing bodies are engaged in aspects of the educational law that concern the education of children. In rural areas the tradition of non-involvement, poverty and illiteracy are probably responsible for the lack of parental interest in aspects of educational law. Most of the respondents (48%) indicated that the majority of parents fail to obey the rules of the educational law (question 2.12). Parents' failure to obey these rules may possibly be attributed to the finding that most of them do not enquire about the law (question 2.10) and are thus uninformed about their rights as parents.

Payment of school fees (2.11)

The responses to the non-payment (44%) and payment (42%) of prescribed school fees are very close. The finding that most of the respondents (44%) said that parents do not honour payment of school fees, might possibly be ascribed to, *inter alia*, the following (Heystek & Louw, 1999:27):

- Poverty.
- Parents see school fees as money wasted because they are unable to visualise the positive results of a school career. Especially in rural areas it is more important for the parents that their children work to supplement the family's income.

4.2.8 Informal parental involvement

Table 8 Frequency distribution according educators' perceptions of informal parental involvement

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
3.1	Actively support their children's sport activities	32%	50%	18%	100%
3.2	Attend cultural activities in which their children participate.	35%	49%	16%	100%
3.3	Assist their children with their schoolwork	36%	42%	23%	100%
3.4	Consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress	39%	53%	8%	100%
3.5	Discuss problems experienced by their children with the educators	41%	51%	8%	100%
3.6	Are involved in the fundraising activities of the school	36%	61%	3%	100%
3.7	Volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds	19%	65%	16%	100%
3.8	Are willing to assist in providing security for the school property	36%	44%	20%	100%
3.9	Are agreeable to supervise classes when educators are absent	4%	79%	17%	100%
3.10	Offer to help with the coaching of sport activities	11%	76%	13%	100%
3.11	Are willing to assist in classes, e.g. in the media centre, reading to junior primary classes, etc.	8%	76%	16%	100%
3.12	Show willingness to assist with the organising of sport and cultural events	21%	76%	9%	100%

Formal parental involvement in their children's schooling is limited to a small percentage of the school's parent community. Many parents feel that they do not have the necessary expertise and/or knowledge to consider elections to

such bodies. Parents not eligible for formal bodies may, however, still be interested in becoming involved. Such parents should be included in other ways so that they may also be of assistance to the school (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:100).

The items and frequency of responses in Table 8 reflect the areas and possibilities of informal parental involvement in schooling.

Supporting children's sport and/or cultural activities (3.1; 3.2)

Only 32% of the respondents agree that parents actively support their children's sport activities at school while the majority (50%) disagreed with the statement. A nearly similar percentage (49%) of the respondents said that parents do not attend the cultural activities in which their children participate. Wolfendale (1992:15) mentions the following common obstacles to parental involvement in their children's sport and/or cultural activities:

- In modern society parents lead busy and often stressful lives and finding time to come to sport activities put additional pressure on them.
- Some parents feel that they are not officially invited to attend the child's sport activities.
- Parents cannot afford to pay the admission fees often asked for cultural events, school concerts, plays, etc.
- Problems with transport because of the long distances to schools.

Assistance with schoolwork (3.3)

From the responses it emerges that most of the respondents (42%) said that parents *do not* assist their children with their schoolwork. Wolfendale (1989:34) is convinced that parents should become more actively involved in the teaching programme in schools. When parents become involved in the instructional process, they are more likely to make school a priority for their children and their children are likely to perform better. With this knowledge, parents are better able to assist the school in helping the learner to the fullest. Vos (1997:17) is convinced that parents should become more actively involved in the teaching programmes in schools. When parents become involved in the instructional process, they are more likely to make school a priority for their children and their children are likely to perform better. A very important part of parent involvement in schoolwork is assisting with learning activities at home. The following activities may be co-ordinated by parents with or without the knowledge of the educator (Pillay, 1998:34):

- Creating a suitable learning environment.
- Supervising homework.
- Help with homework problems.
- Listening to reading.
- Playing educational games.
- Telling stories.
- Checking that homework/assignments are complete.

Possible reasons for the finding that the larger number of parents in rural areas fail to assist their children with their schoolwork are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Parents that work in cities and towns leave their children in the care of illiterate grandparents.
- Illiterate or semi-illiterate parents do not have the knowledge to help their children in their schoolwork.
- Parents that have to travel long distances to work come home late at night and are too tired or do not have time to give attention to their children.

Consultation with educators (3.4; 3.5)

According to more than half of the respondents (53%) parents do not consult with them regarding their children's academic progress while nearly the same percentage (51%) of the respondents said parents also do not discuss problems experienced by their children with them. According to Pillay (1998:162) most parents consider the information concerning their children, that the educators share with them, to be to the ultimate benefit of the child. If a child experiences problems in school the discussion thereof between the educators and parents should be honest, frank and candid. With authentic knowledge about their child's problem, parents are better able to assist the school in helping the child to the fullest. Regular communication between parents and educators is needed for the mutual exchange of information regarding the child.

Possible reasons to explain why parents avoid consultations with educators are, *inter alia*, the following (Letsie, 1994:55; Swap, 1993:71):

- Parents are unable to visit educators because of the inaccessibility of the school.
- Work commitments of parents.
- Unavailability of transport.
- Parents view themselves as non-professionals and that educators are adequately qualified to handle the education of the child in school without their interference.

Involvement in fundraising (3.6)

More than sixty percent of the respondents (61%) indicated that parents are not involved in the school's fundraising activities. Funding for education is seldom adequate and therefore schools need to explore all possible sources to supplement government funding. Farrant (1991:55) says that no matter how good the teaching and physical surrounding of a school, without enough textbooks, laboratory equipment and other teaching aids education is significantly impaired.

Frequencies in the schools surveyed in this study show that 88% of the schools are situated in the lower and middle income rural areas (cf. 4.2.6). The finding that most of the parents fail to get involved in fundraising activities of the school can thus possibly be explained by their low socio-economic status. These poverty related reasons might be, *inter alia*, the following (Van der Linde, 1993:35):

- Parents who are poor fear that when they get involved in fundraising activities, the school may require from them to also contribute financially.
- Poor parents who resultantly fail to provide their children with school requirements, do not want to get involved in any money matters concerning the school.
- Fundraising activities in poor communities are poorly supported because of the parents' low socio-economic status.

Maintenance of school buildings (3.7)

The majority of respondents (65%) disagreed that parents volunteer their services in the maintenance of school buildings and grounds. Parents from the middle to lower socio-economic levels do not easily volunteer their services to the school. Probably the main reason for this phenomenon is that these parents believe if they pay their school fees it is the school's responsibility to maintain the school buildings and grounds.

Security for school property (3.8)

Although not the majority, more than a third (36%) of the respondents agreed that parents are willing to assist in providing security for the school's property. This finding, despite the low percentage, is very encouraging because it shows that there are parents who realise the importance of the child's physical safety in the school. Du Toit and Kruger (1994:118) say that although fear related to physical safety diminishes during the primary school years, the child's fears are still linked to contemporary issues, such as violence, AIDS, pollution and war. Clark (1989: 149) says that physical security is the most important need of the child because it forms the basis of all the other needs.

The successful becoming of the child cognitively, affectively, conatively and socially, depends on the child's physical security.

The finding that most of the respondents (44%) indicated that parents are not willing to assist in the school's security can possibly be explained by the following:

- Parents that fear for their own physical safety when safeguarding the school.
- Parents believe that if they pay school fees the school must provide security.
- Parents feel they are used as "tools" by being asked only when nobody else wants to get involved.

Supervising and/or assisting classes (3.9; 3.11)

A very large percentage of the respondents (79%) said that parents are not agreeable to supervise classes when educators are absent and nearly an equally large percentage (76%) also disagreed that parents are willing to assist in teaching classes. Clark (1989:89) says that the supervising of classes in the absence of educators or assisting educators with their classes, especially in primary school, create possibilities for parents to become directly involved in their children's education in school. The direct involvement of parents in the classes of the child has a significant effect on the quality of the teaching and learning experiences in the school and the learner's results.

The finding that such a large percentage of parents are not directly involved in the education at school may possibly be largely ascribed to the low socio-economic status of parents in rural areas and the fact that poor or illiterate parents fail to get involved in school activities (Vander Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001:193).

Sport coaching and organising of activities (3.10:3.12)

More than three quarters of the respondents (76%) disagreed that parents offer to help with the coaching of sport activities as well as showing willingness to assist with the organising of sport and cultural events. A possible reason for this non-willingness might be the absence of an invitational school climate. Parents do not feel welcome and comfortable in the school environment and are reluctant to offer any assistance with sport and/or cultural activities. The school should convey warmth and sincerity in which parents will feel welcome and comfortable when they assist in any of the school activities. Van Schalkwyk (1990:121) see the following factors, *inter alia*, as contributing to an inviting school climate:

- Appropriate conduct on the part of the school staff, meaning the principal, educators and administrative staff.
- A positive attitude on the part of the school staff.
- A neat reception area/room for parents.
- School buildings and grounds that is neat and leaves parents with an impression of professionalism.

4.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher's aim was to give some order to the range of information provided by the primary school educators in their answers to the questions in the questionnaire. Some of the data collected were of a demographic nature which enabled the researcher to construct a broad profile of the sample selected for the investigation. Data collected regarding the nature and extent of parental involvement in primary schools, were organized in frequency distribution tables to simplify statistical analysis. The responses to the questions were interpreted and the findings thereof discussed.

The last chapter of this study will consist of a summary of the literature study and the empirical investigation, findings from both the literature and empirical study and certain recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter a summary of the previous chapters will be given. This will be followed by recommendations and criticism that emanates from the study, and a final remark.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Statement of the problem

In essence this study investigated parental involvement in primary schools. It is expected of parents to be actively involved in the schooling of their children. Parents have equal strengths and equal expertise, they contribute and receive services on an equal footing and finally share responsibility and accountability with the educators in schools. Accountable parental involvement is much needed in many South African schools with the aim of improving the standard of education. To be involved a sense of purpose, respect for the school, sharing of information, responsibility and accountability is important. The negative attitude of parents towards the school seems to be the most important reason why parents do not participate in school activities. Other reasons for parents' reluctance to become involved in primary schools in rural areas are poverty, illiteracy and intimidation.

5.2.2 Literature review on parental involvement

Parental involvement in the formal schooling of their children can be described as the active and willing participation in a wide range of school and home based activities which may be educational or non-educational. It involves mutual sharing, co-operation and support. Participation in the child's school activities can help parents to discover their own potentialities and talents and to use them for the benefit of themselves, their children and the school. Accountable parental involvement means:

- The active, willing and supportive participation of parents in all aspects of the child's formal schooling.
- Being be partners and allies of educators in the primary aspects of formal and informal education.
- Participation in an individual and/or collective way.
- Participation in a structured and orderly manner.
- Aiming to achieve the objectives of education as fully as possible.

As the child's primary educators parents have the right to be involved in all aspects of education. Responsible parents consider their children's formal education important and they want to be kept informed of their child's progress in school and to be involved in the child's school activities. From research done concerning the improvement and maintenance of home-school

relationships, consistent findings emerged. Accountable parental involvement is significantly related to the improvement of learners' academic achievement, behaviour and school attendance. Parental participation also increase community support for the school which includes human, financial and material resources. The most important advantages of parental involvement are improved academic achievements and a healthy school community. Reasons for parental involvement are:

- It is a matter of principle.
- Parental involvement in formal education is compulsory by law.
- Formal education alone cannot completely meet the needs of a rapid changing modern society.
- It serves as a guarantee for upholding community values.
- The high costs of education require the best possible utilisation thereof.
- The mental development of the child demands parent-educator co-operation.

Effective education cannot take place without a sound partnership between home and school. Educators cannot perform their educational task without the full partnership of parents. Parents do not always have the time and expertise to educate their children in a rapidly changing society. Parents must be involved in the actuality of teaching, that is, the curricular, extra-curricular and management tasks of the school. Therefore, within the

partnership between parents and educators, each partner has a particular obligation, related to the different life tasks and roles which they as parents and educators are normally expected to fulfil within the community. A parent-educator partnership can be described as a dynamic process whereby parents and educators work together for the ultimate benefit of the child. The educator-parent partnership involves:

- collaboration on educational matters;
- setting goals;
- finding solutions;
- implementing and evaluating shared goals; and
- inspiring and maintaining trust between parents and educators.

The parent-educator partnership is intended essentially to promote and support the child's learning, school performance and general well-being. It is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision-making and accountability.

Parents can serve on formal parent bodies, for example school committees, governing bodies and management councils which are statutorily constituted bodies whose membership requirements and functions are stipulated. Participation in the governance of the school or the parent-educator associations is, however, limited to a small percentage of the parent community. Many parents feel that they are not able to be considered for election to such bodies but are still interested in becoming involved. Such parents can be included in one or more of the following informal ways:

- Classroom assistance.
- Extra-curricular activities.
- Day-to-day running of the school.
- Learning activities at home.

In a rapid changing society parental involvement in their children's formal schooling cannot be seen as a luxury. One element that has been shown as contributing to more successful children and more effective schools across all populations is adequate parental involvement in their children's education. The value of parental involvement for themselves, the educator and the learners is undisputed.

5.2.3 Planning of the research

This study utilised a questionnaire, constructed by the researcher, as a data base. The questionnaire was aimed at primary school educators in mainly rural schools in Southern KwaZulu-Natal. The information sought for this investigation was not available from any other source and had to be acquired directly from the respondents. When this situation exists, the most appropriate source of data is the questionnaire, as it is easily adapted to a variety of situations.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information regarding parental involvement in their children's primary school education. The questions were formulated to establish the extent of parental participation in primary school activities concerning, *inter alia*, the following aspects:

- School governance .
- Parent-educator associations.
- School committees.
- Consultation with educators.
- Sport and cultural events.
- Fundraising.
- Assistance to educators.

5.2.4 Presentation and analysis of research data

The purpose of chapter 4 was to discuss the data collected from the questionnaires completed by 100 primary school educators and to offer comments and interpretations of the findings. At the outset, an explanation and description was provided as to the methods employed in the categorisation of the responses and the analysis of the data. This was followed by calculating the data in percentages, known as relative frequency distribution. This was done in order to clarify the presentation of data in that it indicates the proportion of the total number of cases which were observed for a particular question. The findings from the frequency distribution were analysed.

5.2.6 Aim of the study

The researcher formulated specific aims (cf. 1.5) to determine the course of the study. These aims were realised through the literature study, together with an empirical survey consisting of a structured questionnaire. On this basis certain recommendations are now offered.

5.3 FINDINGS

5.3.1 Findings from the literature study

- Parental involvement in the education of their children can be described as the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational.
- Being involved in their children's formal education helps parents discover their own strengths, potentialities and talents and to use them for the benefit of themselves, their children and the school.
- Accountable parental involvement is significantly related to:
 - ➔ The improvement of learners' academic achievement.
 - ➔ Improved school attendance by learners.
 - ➔ Improved learner behaviour at school.
 - ➔ Increased community support for the school which includes human, financial and material resources.
- The school alone cannot satisfy all the requirements for complete, comprehensive, differentiated, normative and relevant education. For the sake of complete education parents need to play a supportive role in formal education.

- A parent-educator partnership is a dynamic process whereby parents and educators work together for the ultimate benefit of the child. This involves collaboration on educational matters, setting goals, finding solutions, implementing and evaluating shared goals as well as inspiring and maintaining trust between parents and educators.
- Parents may require that education in the school should be in harmony with the spirit and character of the family home. The school must build on the foundations laid by the parents and must strive to attain the same general educational goal.
- Neither the parent nor the educator alone can fulfil the educational task completely but as partners they can supplement each other. As partners in the education of the child parents and educators should collaborate in the closest possible way. Parents as the primary educators of the child and teachers as secondary educators, are in a state of mutual interdependence, a partnership which has to develop, or even better, a partnership which has to evolve.
- In formal parental involvement parents can serve on formal parent bodies, for example school committees, governing bodies and management councils which are statutorily constituted bodies whose membership requirements and functions are stipulated in the Schools Act.
- At present formal participation in the governance of the school or the parent-educator associations is limited to a small percentage of the parent community. Many parents feel that they are not able to

considered election to such bodies but are still interested in becoming involved. Such parents can be included in some of the following informal ways, so that they may be of assistance to the school:

- ➔ Classroom assistance.
 - ➔ Extra-curricular activities.
 - ➔ Day-to-day running of the school.
 - ➔ Learning activities at home.
- A sound parent-educator partnership can facilitate a positive attitude between parents and educators. Where there is good co-operation between parents and educators, they are more likely to trust each other. This means a healthy parent-educator partnership which will contribute positively to the education of the child.
 - Being in partnership with educators helps parents to a better understanding of how schools work which lead to an increased interest in the education of their children.

5.3.2 Findings from the empirical research

- It was found that (70%) of the educators in the research sample are females. Primary schools tend to appoint more female than male educators (cf. 4.2.1).
- The majority of the educators (79%) in the research sample have diplomas and certificates (cf. 4.2.3). A possible reason for this finding is that the research focussed on primary schools. The contents

(curricula) of teaching diplomas and certificates are more practical than theoretically orientated and therefore more appropriate for teaching younger primary school children.

- More than fifty percent (51%) of the educators in the research sample have less than 10 years teaching experience while 72% have less than 16 years teaching experience (cf.4.3.3).
- In formal parental involvement enough parents readily avail themselves for election to the school governing body as confirmed by 64% of the respondents.
- Sixty percent (60%) of the primary school educators indicated that the majority of parents attend meetings to elect members on the governing body to represent them.
- The majority of parents (65%) in rural areas do not attend parent evenings. The aim of formal parent evenings, namely for parents and educators to meet and share knowledge about their child, is therefore not adequately realised.
- It was found that effective communication between home and school is one of the main problems in rural areas. Educators said that nearly half of the parents (49%) do not respond to circulars or notices from schools.

- It appears that only the parents on the school governing bodies are engaged in these aspects of educational law that concern the education of children.
- Formal parental involvement in their children's schooling is limited to a small percentage of the school's parent community. Many parents feel that they do not have the necessary expertise and or knowledge to consider elections to such bodies.
- It was found that most of the parents (50%) do not actively support their children's sport activities at school and a nearly similar percentage (49%) of the parents do not attend the cultural activities in which their children participate.
- It emerged that most of the respondents (42%) said that parents do not assist their children with their schoolwork. Illiterate or semi-literate parents do not have the knowledge to help their children with their schoolwork. Parents that have to travel long distances to work come home late at night and are too tired or do not have time to give attention to their children.
- More than half of the respondents (53%) said that parents do not consult with them regarding their children's academic progress while nearly the same percentage (51%) of the respondents confirmed that parents also do not discuss problems experienced by their children with them.

- It was found that more than sixty percent of the respondents (61%) indicated that parents are not involved in the school's fundraising activities. Parents in rural areas and of low socio-economic status fear that when they get involved in fundraising activities, the school may require from them to also contribute financially.
- Although not the majority, more than a third (36%) of the respondents agreed that parents are willing to assist in providing security for the school's property. This finding, despite the low percentage, is very encouraging because it shows that there are parents who realise the importance of the child's physical safety in the school. Parents (42%) that are not willing to assist in the school's security is possibly because they fear for their own physical safety or they believe that if they pay school fees the school must provide security.
- It appears that a large percentage of the respondents (79%) said that parents are not agreeable to supervise classes when educators are absent and a nearly equal percentage (76%) indicated that parents are not willing to assist in teaching classes.
- It was found that more than three quarters of the respondents (76%) responded negatively when asked if parents offer to help with the coaching of sport activities as well as showing willingness to assist with the organising of sport and cultural events.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Inculcation of positive attitudes

(1) Motivation

The responsibility of parents to educate their children is of such a nature, content and character that it cannot be transferred. Parents are not exempted from this responsibility when the child goes to school. Parents' educational responsibility thus means to be actively involved in the child's formal school education. From the study it is evident that the negative attitude of parents towards the school in rural areas is one of the reasons for their lack of involvement. Parents in rural areas do not actively participate in the school activities of their children. For every five rural primary schools with good participation of parents in organised activities there will be ten rural schools with poor participation of parents in organised activities. The negative attitude of parents in rural areas may be contributed to, inter alia, the following factors:

- Parents are unable to visualise the positive results of a school career.
- Parents prefer that their children should start working as soon as possible to contribute to the income of the family.
- Feelings of inferiority towards educators.

- Educators are seen as more knowledgeable and competent.
- Parents live far from schools and have problems with transport.
- Work commitments.

The attitude of parents to education influences the child's attitude to his schoolwork. This implies that parents must show interest in the child's schoolwork. Parents must convey a clear positive evaluation of the school and educators, and the value of education to the child. Regular family discussions on school matters and consultation with educators should take place.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that in order to promote positive attitudes amongst parents, the Department of Education and Culture must:

- Convene seminars, workshops and training programmes for parents to provide guidelines in respect of, *inter alia*, the following:
 - To inform parents of the advantages for them if they become actively involved in the school.
 - To explain to parents how they can actively participate in the child's school activities.

- Identify the specific needs for parental involvement.
- Provide opportunities and structures for parents to become positively involved.
- The contribution of traditional leaders, the *amakhosi*, and the correct communication through the traditional leaders, may also motivate rural parents to become more positively involved in the schools.

5.4.2 Involvement programmes for parents

(1) Motivation

Today it is widely acknowledged that parental involvement in the child's schooling is a fundamental democratic and pedagogic necessity for a system of education to be effective. Responsible parenthood requires that the parent should become actively involved in the formal education of the child. Effective parental involvement is only possible in a well informed and diligent parent community which, through parent orientation under the leadership of the school governing body and/or other parental bodies, whether statutory or otherwise, has mobilised itself and is willing to render its services.

By means of parental involvement programmes, parents must be made aware that their rights in respect of their children's education only extend as far as the degree to which they realise and practice their duties. The responsibilities and duties of parents in formal education make guidance for parents essential. Schools and the various parent management bodies therefore have the

enormous task of alerting uninterested and uncaring parents to their role in this vital educational function. They need to inspire and equip parents to undertake a school-community relations programme that will attract parents to the school so that they will become acquainted with educators and learn to take an interest in the various facets of the school.

Parental training is becoming a necessity because parents have already relinquished too many of their responsibilities to the schools. Non-governmental organisations such as the Management of Schools Training Programme already indicated that it is possible to train educators and parents to involve parents in school activities.

(2) Recommendations

- The Department of Education must train educators and parents to involve parents in school activities. The training programmes for parental involvement should include the following:
 - Activities for informal parental involvement that do not only concentrate on the duties of parent governors (formal parental involvement).
 - Such training programmes must aim at eliminating ignorance of the rights and responsibilities of parents.
- Tertiary institutions should include parenting and parental involvement as courses in teacher training curricula.

- Principals should improve the way they communicate with parents. Within the constraints of large learner populations it may be necessary to use newspapers, radio and television to announce school activities and invite parents to take part. Announcements over the radio can reach even the remotest parents.
- Communication with parents should be in a medium and language that they understand because illiteracy may hamper a clear understanding.
- In rural areas principals should organise school meetings at appropriate times in consultation with employers (e.g. farmers) and also request the employer to provide transport for the parents. Farmers often provide transport for their workers to go to town and this can be arranged to coincide with school meetings.

5.4.3 Further research

The research has shown that accountable parental involvement, improved academic achievement and effective teaching go hand in hand and that co-operation between parents and educators is vital for effective teaching and learning to take place at schools. The parents and the educators each has a special and important role to play in the effective education of the child by becoming partners in the formal education of the child. Parental involvement in the acceptance of responsibility for their children's education is still unsatisfactory. In the interest of the education of the child, the contact and co-operation between parents and educators should denote a sound partnership.

However, the researcher is of the view that government, educators and parents are equally responsible for accountable parental involvement and this matter needs to be addressed urgently.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that further research of a quantitative and qualitative nature must be undertaken pertaining to parental involvement in primary schools. Due to the diversity of conditions under which parents and schools find themselves, it is necessary that research studies be conducted to find suitable models of parental involvement to optimise parents' participation in school activities in different settings such as a rural-urban differentiation.

5.5 CRITICISM

Criticism that emanates from this study includes the following:

It can be presumed that some of the primary school educators who completed the questionnaires formed their perceptions regarding effective parental involvement from the media. The probability therefore exists that these educators indicated what should be achieved in parental involvement and not what is really happening in primary schools.

The research sample comprised only primary school educators of schools from the former and Black department of education. Dissimilar responses might have been elicited from schools from the former white, coloured and Indian education departments.

The research mainly focussed on primary schools in rural areas. Different findings might have materialized from schools in semi-urban and urban areas.

5.6 FINAL REMARK

The aim of this study was to have a better understanding of the nature and extent of parental involvement at primary school level. It is hoped that this study will prove useful to all interested stakeholders in education, but more especially to educators in rural areas where the need for parental involvement is more pronounced. This is possibly the area where parents' participation in schools can make a significant contribution to the standard of education.

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APPENDIX A

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE

Accountable parental involvement

T B Bhengu
May 2002

Dear Educator

QUESTIONNAIRE: ACCOUNTABLE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my MEd (Master in Education) degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Proff. G. Urbani and M S Vos. The research is concerned with *Accountable parental involvement in primary schools*.

I have taken the liberty of writing to you, as one of the selected respondents, in order to seek your assistance in acquiring information about your experiences relating to the research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information will be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL, and no personal details of any educator/respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any of the results be related to any particular educator or school.

We deeply appreciate your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

.....

T B Bhengu

.....

Date

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RESPONDENT

1. Please read through each statement carefully **before** giving your opinion.
2. Please make sure that you do not **omit** a question, or skip any page.
3. Please be totally **frank** when giving your opinion.
4. Please **do not** discuss statements with anyone.
5. Please **return** the questionnaire after completion.

Kindly answer **all the questions** by supplying the requested information in writing, or by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block.

SECTION ONE: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**1.1 Gender of respondent?**

Male ☐
Female ☐

1.2 Age of respondent in completed years as at 2002-01-01**1.3 Qualifications of respondent?**

Academic qualification(s) (e.g. BA, MEd, etc.)

Professional qualification(s) (e.g. HDE, FDE, PTC, etc.)

**1.4 Total number of completed years in the teaching profession
as at 2002-01-01****1.5 Classification of respondent's school (e.g. SP, JP, etc.)****1.6 The school is situated in:**

Urban area ☐
Semi-urban area ☐
Rural area ☐

SECTION TWO: FORMAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	At the school where I am employed as an educator:			
2.1	There is enough parents who readily avail themselves for election to the governing body			
2.2	The majority parents attend meetings to elect members on the governing body			
2.3	Parents elected to the governing body attend meetings regularly			
2.4	Most of the parents are willing to serve on parent-educator associations.			
2.5	The majority of parents support the implementation of a code of conduct for learners			
2.6	Meetings where important decisions are made are well attended by parents			
2.7	The majority of parents attend parent evenings			
2.8	A large number of parents are willing to serve on school committees e.g. register class committee			
2.9	Most parents respond to circulars/notices from the school if required			
2.10	A significant number of the parents enquire about the aspects of educational law that concern them			
2.11	Most of the parents honour payment of the prescribed school fees.			
2.12	The majority of parents obey the rules of the education law e.g. abolishment of corporal punishment			

SECTION THREE: INFORMAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	<i>At my school most of the parents:</i>			
3.1	Actively support their children's sport activities			
3.2	Attend cultural activities in which their children participate.			
3.3	Assist their children with their schoolwork			
3.4	Consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress			
3.5	Discuss problems experienced by their children with the educators			
3.6	Are involved in the fundraising activities of the school			
3.7	Volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds			
3.8	Are willing to assist in providing security for the school property			
3.9	Are agreeable to supervise classes when educators are absent			
3.10	Offer help with the coaching of sport activities			
3.11	Are willing to assist in classes e.g. in the media centre/reading to junior primary classes			
3.12	Show willingness to assist with the organising of sport and cultural events			

APPENDIX B

University of Zululand:

DURBAN-UMLAZI CAMPUS



✉ Private Bag X10
ISIPINGO 4110
SOUTH AFRICA

☎ 031-9077000
Fax: 031-9073011

Ref:

31 January 2002

Mr R H Vali
SEM: Scottburgh District
Private Bag X0515
Umzinto

Dear Mr Vali

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my MEd (Masters in Education) degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Proff G Urbani and M S Vos. The research is concerned with *Accountable parental involvement in primary schools*.

For the purpose of the research a questionnaire was developed which I will need to administer to educators in primary schools. A copy of the is enclosed for your inspection. The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to administer. All information obtained from the questionnaires would be dealt with in the strictest confidence and anonymity is assured.

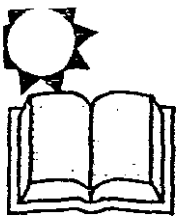
I request your kind written permission to administer the questionnaire to primary schools in the Dududu Circuit.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Thulani Brian Bhengu'.

Thulani Brian Bhengu
Student no. 987032)

APPENDIX C



KWAZULU-NATAL
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

SCOTTBURGH DISTRICT

Address/Kheli/Adres: Private Bag X0515, Umzinto, 4200
Telephone/Ucingo/Telefoon: 039/9740149

Fax/Isikhalilamezi/Faks: (039) 9740461
Enquiries/Imibuzo/Navrae: Mrs Z.P. Mthuli

30.04.02

Prof. Urbani and M.S. Voss
University of Zululand

Permission has been granted to Thulani Brian Bhengu to conduct the research in Dududu Circuit towards a M.Ed. Degree at the University of Zululand.


R.H. Yali
SEM

