

***Parent-educator partnership
in schools***

by

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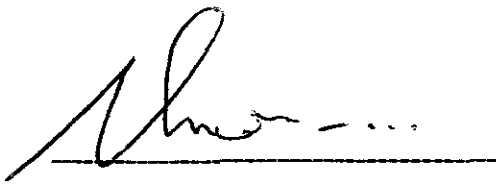
DURBAN
JANUARY 2006

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INNOCENT BHEKANI WANDA

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation *Parent-educator partnership in schools* 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 'I.B. Wanda', is written over a horizontal line.

I.B. WANDA
DURBAN
JANUARY 2006

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

- My wife NTOMBIFUTHI.
- My only son, MZAMOYENDODA.
- My late father J.V. WANDA and my mother, L.B. WANDA.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools are man-made, secondary institutions which were created because parents no longer felt fully competent to perform their educative task. Bhengu (2003:2) says the school can never replace the home but continues 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).

Vos (2002:2) is of the opinion that parent-educator partnership involves:

- Collaboration of educational matters.
- Setting goals.
- Finding goals.
- Implementing and evaluating shared goals.
- Maintaining trust between parents and educators.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

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 extend beyond the school gates and into the classrooms (Munnik & Swanepoel, 1990:80).

Swap (1993:11) and Bhengu (2003:3) 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.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In essence, the problem to be investigated in this study centres around the following:

- Are parents adequately involved as partners with educators in the education of their children?
- What role does an effective parent-educator partnership play in schools?

1.4 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

In the interest of clarity and understanding, important concepts in this study need to be elucidated.

1.4.1 **Gender**

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

1.4.2 **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 include 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).

Vos (2002:2) describes a parent-educator partnership as a dynamic process whereby parents and educators work together for the ultimate benefit of the child. A parent-educator partnership can be seen as an agreement whereby activities of both parents and educators are coordinated in order to achieve the best results in schools (Education Facilitator, 1997:80). According to Van der Westhuizen (1995:415) the parent-educator partnership can be seen as formal and informal relationships whereby both parents and educators are working together to achieve the common goal at school.

1.4.3 **School**

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No 84 of 1996, the school is a place where educators teach learners. Barnard and Van der Westhuizen (1997:405) defines the school as an institution where learning and teaching are taking place to meet the educational and

training needs of the community. Van Schalkwyk (1994:14) describes the school as a complex organisation characterized by uncertainty as a result of the ambivalent nature and outcome of its task.

1.4.4 **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-actualisation and ultimate adulthood (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1993:79). According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:366) education is a conscious, purposive intervention by an adult in the life of a non-adult to bring him to independence. 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.

1.4.5 **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 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.

1.5 THE AIM OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- To pursue a study of relevant literature on the parent-educator partnership.
- To undertake an empirical investigation concerning parents and educators as partners in the education of the child.
- To formulate certain recommendations that may serve as guidelines for the establishment of an effective partnership between parents and educators at 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 questionnaire to be completed by educators.

1.7 FURTHER COURSE OF THIS STUDY

Chapter 2 will be a literature review on the parent-educator partnership.

Chapter 3 will explain the planning of the empirical research.

Chapter 4 will be a presentation and analysis of the research data.

Chapter 5 will contain a summary, findings and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the past parents with children in school were perceived as clients as they did not have any say in the running of schools (Vos, 2002:1). This is contrary to the requirements of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, according to which parents are required to be partners in the formal education of their children.

Dekker and Lemmer (1998:157) state that nowhere in education is the principle of partnership more important than at the level where the question of how to provide the most effective education to all learners is addressed.

A successful partnership depends, among other things, on parents and educators trusting one another, being aware of and understanding one another's needs and aspirations, communicating effectively, and having a say in the education of the child, with due consideration of each partner's field of expertise (Marsch, 1992:92). In the education of the child partnership involves a two-way process of joint activities in which parents and educators come together on a basis of equality.

Richey and Wheeler (2000:7) maintain that the existence of a partnership between parents and educators should be collaborative toward a common goal. Dekker and Van Schalkwyk (1995:485) say that the culture of parent involvement in schools can play a growing role in the evolution of the South African education system.

2.2 PARENT-EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:468) a partnership implies an agreement of cooperation 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 coordinated manner.

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, extracurricular 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, 1995:1995:59).

A parent-educator partnership can be viewed as a dynamic process whereby parents and educators work together for the ultimate benefit of the child (Clark, 1989:71). This involved 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 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.

2.2.1 Assumptions underpinning the partnership

Griffiths and Hamilton (1994:19) have the following assumptions with regard to parents' involvement in the children's schooling:

- Parental involvement reduces misunderstanding and possible conflict with the school.

- Parents have a right to be involved in the child's formal schooling as they have the final responsibility for their children.
- All parents can make a contribution.
- The skills of parents and educators can complement one another.
- Schools do best when they involve parents.
- Parents can provide vital information and offer valuable insights about their children.
- Parents can help to improve their children's academic performance, attitudes and aspirations.

Berger (1987:95-96) sees parents as:

- Supporters, providing volunteer assistance to educators, the parent organisation and to other parents.
- Advisors and co-decision-makers, providing input on school policy and programmes through membership in *ad hoc* or permanent governance bodies.

2.2.2 **Conditions for genuine partnership**

According to Vos (2002:10) a genuine partnership is characterised by the following:

- Work takes place collaboratively.
- Relationships are positive.
- There is harmony between partners who view each other as equals.

- The information flows openly between partners.
- Conflict is used to build consensus.
- Partners willingly complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- Decisions are made and solutions found together, after considering and evaluating a range of possibilities and ideas in order to reach consensus.

Kruger (1989:1) and Lemmer and Squelch (1994:91-94) refer to four conditions which are necessary for the effective functioning of a partnership between parents and educators. These are:

- The first condition is that of gain. The "gain" referred to here is not aimed directly at financial gain – it is more of a joint effort aimed at forming the educand into a productive adult of society to which the partners belong.
- Secondly, the common activities of the parties should be aimed at their "joint benefit". The common benefit for both parties should be derived from their years of sharing ideas with regard to their partnership.
- In the third place, the agreement should be based on a legal basis to confirm the structured division of mutual rights and duties according to common and statutory law.
- 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 profession, give proper guidelines.

Van Schalkwyk (1988:33) sees the parents and educators as people who must work jointly. The community where schools are built are represented by the governing body, which is expected to work in close partnership with the educators.

2.2.3 The need for a partnership

Modern society has been caught up in a process of rapid change and there is a demand for more specialisation, 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. 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.

Successful education of children necessitates a partnership between home and school. 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, school education activities accord with and build upon the foundations of home education.

Neither the parent nor the educator alone can fulfil the educative 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.

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. 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 dependent on the quality of parent-educator partnership is significantly related to the following (Dekker & Lemmer, 1998:154; 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 has been established about a true parent-educator partnership, it is that there are many ways for cooperation in the partnership and that no one way is superior but that they simply accomplish different purposes. Schools, parents and learners almost always benefit from a harmonious parent-educator partnership.

2.3 VALUE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

A partnership between parents and educators cannot be seen as a luxury. There is an urgent need for schools to find ways to support the *success of all our children*. One element that we know contributes 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 of improving the academic achievement of children is at risk, a sound parent-educator partnership is not just useful, but critical for effective school education.

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 (Wolfendale, 1989:62-64; Pillay, 1998:98):

2.3.1 **Advantages for the educators**

Positive attitude. 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. Parents who understand the aims, nature and functioning of the school are more likely to contribute positively to the education of their children.

Trust. Where there is good cooperation between parents and educators, they are more likely to trust each other.

Mutually beneficial. In a sound partnership parents and educators will not feel alone when dealing with difficult learners and situations. 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.

Knowledge of the learner's home and school situation. 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.

Lessening 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.

2.3.2 **Advantages for parents**

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

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.

Increased self-esteem and confidence. The level of parents' education often leads to a feeling of inferiority towards the education of their children. This feeling can be greatly aggravated by an 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 is greatly increased.

2.3.3 **Advantages for the school**

According to Van Schalkwyk (1990:180) and Oosthuizen (1994:140) the school benefits as follows through partnership:

➤ **Financial support**

- Parents contribute to the running of the school by paying school fees, as well as taxes.
- The more involvement there is, the less reluctant the parent will be to fulfil his duty.

➤ Service to school

- Parents can contribute in many ways to improving the school.
- This can include improving the school grounds, undertaking minor repairs to buildings, transport of pupils, protecting school property, fundraising, etc.

➤ Improved community support

- Feelings of ownership by parents, which can lead to increased support for schools. This may manifest itself in greater political support and willingness to pay taxes to fund schools, which are important secondary effects.

2.3.4 **Advantages for the learners**

According to Van Schalkwyk (1990:182) and Oosthuizen (1994:140) learners benefit as follows from the partnership of educators and parents:

➤ Improved grades

- It has been proven that parental involvement leads to an improvement in the academic achievements of students. This is irrespective of the socio-economic class to which the family belongs.

➤ Increased security and emotional stability

- Those learners who are aware that their parents are interested in their schoolwork, experience emotional stability and security and are better able to adjust to school and better able to overcome

any problems, which they may encounter, such as behavioural and learning problems.

➤ Decreased dropout rates

- Research has shown that the likelihood of learners leaving school without completing their studies is greatly reduced when their parents are actively involved in their studies.

2.4 FORMS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

According to the Education Facilitator (1997:77-78) parents' involvement lay in the activities of the school and the education system. These activities can be divided into the following three main categories:

- Extracurricular activities.
- Curricular activities.
- School management.

According to Dekker (1993:155) the concept of parental involvement: entails the following:

- Cooperation.
- Participation.
- Partnership.

2.4.1 Cooperation

The effectiveness of parental cooperation depends on its nature, the level and the meaning of the activities taking place within the school and the education system. The purpose of cooperation lies mainly in (Dekker, 1995:6):

- reducing the gap between the educational institution and the parental home;
- giving the parents an insight into school activities, in order to counteract any sense of alienation; and
- assisting parents, to enable them to help their children.

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 the parent-educator partnership is the cornerstone of teaching and learning at school. Van der Westhuizen (1991:410) maintains that parent-educator partnership leads to:

- A healthy school community.
- Effective relationships.
- Good policy-making.
- Good planning.
- Problem solving skills.
- Good decision making skills.

2.4.2 **Partnership**

Through participation parents can exercise their natural right in the formal education of their children (Dekker & Lemmer, 1998:156). Participation does not mean that every parent participates in everything concerning the child's education, but rather that parents are represented sufficiently on all levels. The participation of parents in education should be viewed critically and analytically and those concerned must constantly *take stock of where participation needs to be reinforced* (Mitler & Mitler, 1992:49).

2.4.3 Areas and possibilities of a partnership

Vos (2002:4) maintains that many of the barriers to an effective parent-educator partnership can be eliminated by recognising the many roles parents can play and by involving them in school activities.

(1) Formal parental involvement

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1994 parents can serve on formal parent bodies.

(a) School 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 is listed in the Schools Act and stipulates that the governing body of a school must (DoE, 1997:14):

- 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 and 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.
- Fulfill functions that are set out by the Minister of Education responsible for education in a Provincial Gazette.

(b) Parent-educator associations

The parent-educator associations are non-statutory, free and autonomous associations or committees who are instituted by parents and educators to coordinate and arrange a variety of school functions and activities (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:91-96).

The parent-educator associations fulfil a very valuable service in arranging fundraising events, doing tuck shop duty, organising social events and assisting with sporting events. They can also fulfil other important functions which relate more to fundamental educational matters (Kruger, 1996:38), such as serving on the school governing body.

(c) Class register committees

Bray and Squelch (1996:230) see class register committees as an effective informal way of bringing parents and educators together to

discuss a variety of topics and issues relating to the education of their children.

Badenhorst (1995:117) maintains that register class committees provide opportunities for parents and educators to get to know each other, and for parents to support each other in various educational endeavours.

2.5 INFORMAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Lemmer and Squelch (1993:101) say that parent-educator organisations allow parents to become involved in the management of schools. Vos (2002:4) says that average parents who are not part of one or other body should be included in other ways, so that they may be of assistance to the school.

(a) Class assistance

Pillay (1995:130) maintains that volunteer parents can effectively assist with classroom activities, especially in primary schools. According to Dekker and Lemmer (1998:14-15) examples of classroom assistance include the following:

- Library assistance.
- Preparing material and equipment.
- Supervising classes when educators are absent.
- Assisting with artwork and teaching displays.
- Serving as an interpreter for non-English speaking learners.
- Giving talks to learners.
- Reading to groups of children.
- Invigilation during examinations.
- Listening to reading, spelling, etc.

(b) Extracurricular activities

According to the Education Facilitator (1997:79) extracurricular activities is an activity that indirectly support or serve educational training. The development of relationships between parents and educators is mutual, and makes for a richer and more diversified educational environment as well as a more balanced development of the child.

Pillay (1995:131) says that parents can be invited to assist in the organisation and management of extracurricular activities. Examples of extracurricular activities are:

- Fundraising.
- Coaching sport.
- Catering.
- Transporting learners.
- Organising sport and cultural events.
- Organising societies at school.
- Supervising activities at school.

(c) Help with the day-to-day running of the school

The parents, as well as the other members of the community, can perform a variety of routine tasks which are essential for the day-to-day running of the school (Shah, 1994:26-29). According to Van Schalkwyk (1988:181) examples of help with the day-to-day running of the school include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Administering financial affairs.
- Maintenance and repair of school facilities.
- Protection of school facilities.
- Gardening.
- Helping with playground duty.
- Assisting to notify other parents of important events.

- Accompanying pupils on field trips and excursions
- Attending school assemblies, sport and cultural events.
- Typing and editing newsletters.
- Arranging parent talks and information evenings.

2.6 SUMMARY

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 cooperation, coordination 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 and 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 that a relationship of mutual trust, respect and understanding exists between them.

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CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the parent-educator partnership was described by means of literature research. The literature study revealed that parent-educator partnerships maximise the effectiveness of parents' involvement in schools.

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 educators in the Umbumbulu District it was required to first request permission from the District Manager. A letter requesting the necessary permission was drafted and directed to the Umbumbulu District Manager, being the area where the research sample would be selected.

After permission was granted by the District Manager for the intended research to be undertaken the researcher visited the principals of the randomly selected schools with the letter of approval, in order to ask their permission to administer the questionnaire to the educators of schools.

3.2.2 Selection of respondents

Schools were randomly selected from the list of primary schools in the Umbumbulu District on the KwaZulu-Natal South coast. The district

comprises predominantly semi-urban areas. This provided the researcher with a randomly selected sample of 115 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 a research design is to guide the researcher in collecting, analysing and interpreting the observed facts (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:63).

Leedy (1993:125) sees a research design as the visualisation of the data and the problems associated with the employment of those data in the entire research project.

Quantitative research methods collect data to be translated into a statistical format (Leedy, 1993:143). Quantitative research specifies the variables, measures for those variables, and statistics to be used to analyse data as the researcher knows in advance what he is looking for (Ary, Jacobs and Ragavieh, 1990:448). Quantitative research has to do with the following (Leedy, 1993:145):

- Data collection, numerically.
- Experimental studies.
- *Quasi*-experimental studies.
- Statistical-analytical studies.

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 that the questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view to obtaining information.

3.3.3 Construction of the questionnaire

Questionnaires are a popular research tool because most investigators assume that they know how to ask questions (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:115). 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).

An important aim in the construction of the questionnaire for this investigation was to present the questions as simply and straightforward as possible. The researcher further aimed to avoid ambiguity, vagueness, bias, prejudice and technical language in the questions.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information regarding educators' views on parent-educator partnership in schools. The questions were formulated to establish the educators' responses with regard to the following:

- Parent-educator partnership.
- Formal parental involvement.
- Informal parental involvement.

The questionnaire was subdivided into the following sections:

- Section 1, which dealt with the biographical information of the respondents, namely school educators, and consisted of questions from 1 to 8.
- Section 2 dealt with the parent-educator partnership.

- Section 3 consisted of questions related to formal parental involvement.
- Section 4 comprised of questions concerning informal parental involvement.

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 are to be considered by the researcher are, according to Norval (1990:60):

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one the respondent will recognise as important enough to warrant spending his time on. The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and in the accompanying letter.
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to obtain the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.
- It must seek only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- 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 the 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. Embarrassing and annoying questions should be avoided, if possible.

3.5 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Data can be gathered by means of a written questionnaire that is mailed, delivered, or handed out personally (Kidder & Judd, 1986:221).

Each mode has specific advantages and disadvantages, which the researcher needs 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

The written questionnaire as a research instrument, to obtain information, has the following advantages (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:110):

- Affordability is the primary advantage of written questionnaires because it is the least expensive means of data gathering.
- Written questionnaires preclude possible interview bias. The way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or interaction may influence respondents' answers. Such biases can be completely eliminated with a written questionnaire.
- A questionnaire permits anonymity. If it is arranged such that responses are given anonymously, this will increase the researcher's chances of receiving responses that 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 analysed 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 face-to-face situations with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger.

- Questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable respondents to consult documents in the case of the mailed questionnaire approach.
- Respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- Questionnaire design is relatively 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

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) 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 respondents interpret questions differently the validity of the information obtained is jeopardised.
- 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 mailed 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 answers for clarification of ambiguous answers. If respondents are unwilling to answer certain questions nothing can be done about it because the mailed 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.

3.6 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).

According to Best and Kahn (1989:160) reliability and validity are essential to the effectiveness of any data-gathering procedure. Reliability is necessary but it is not a sufficient condition for validity. It is feasible through a variety of statistical treatments to quantitatively assess the reliability and validity of psychological tests and inventories.

It is more difficult to determine these qualities for some other data-gathering instruments or procedures, such as observation, interview or the use of the questionnaire, in which responses are more qualitative and yield data that are not always readily quantifiable. One should attempt to improve the reliability and validity of the procedures, but precise determination of the degree to which they are achieved is often elusive particularly in the case of validity (Best & Kahn, 1989:160).

Gay (1987:135) sees the question as not something “valid” or “invalid” but rather “valid for what and for whom?” Reliability is expressed numerically, usually as a coefficient; a high coefficient indicates a high reliability.

Some attention must be given to the validity question – that is, whether the interview or questionnaire is really measuring what it is supposed to measure (Ary, Jacobs & Ragavieh, 1990:434). Questionnaires have a very limited purpose and they are often one-time data gathering devices with a very short life, administered to a limited population (Madlala, 2003:57).

(1) Validity of the questionnaire

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:237) 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.
- Criterium validity, which refers to the relationship between scores on a measuring instrument and an independent variable (criterion), believed to measure directly the behaviour or characteristics in question. The criterion should be relevant, reliable and be 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, etc.

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. Madlala (2003:30) sees a valid research instrument as one that has demonstrated the real ability, attitude or prevailing situation. Cooper, (1989:120) maintains that establishing validity requires that the researcher anticipate the potential arguments that sceptics might use to dismiss the research results.

The researcher employed the questionnaire as an indirect method to measure the educators' views on parent-educator partnership in schools (Madlala, 2003:60). Some variables that influence the validity of a questionnaire are (Ary, Jacobs & Ragavieh, 1990:434):

- How important is the topic to the respondent? More valid responses may be obtained from individuals who are interested in the topic and/or are informed about it.
- Does the questionnaire protect the respondents' anonymity? It is reasonable to assume that greater truthfulness will be obtained if the respondents can remain anonymous, especially when sensitive or personal questions are asked.

(2) Reliability of the questionnaire

Reliability relates to consistency and dependability; consistency of obtaining the same relative answer when measuring phenomena that have not changed (Mulder, 1989:209).

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:194) 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
- 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 the degree of consistency with which it measures whatever it is measuring and this quality is essential in any kind of measurement (Ary, Jacobs & Ragavieh, 1990:268). It is generally accepted that all measurements of human qualities contain some error. Reliability procedures are concerned with determining the degree of inconsistency in scores due to random error (Ary, Jacobs & Ragavieh, 1990:271).

Gay (1987:217) maintains that determining reliability requires at least two observers and their recorded judgements as to what occurred, which can then be compared to see how well they agree. To estimate the reliability of scoring for a short answer test, the scores resulting from two independent scorings of the same answers can be correlated. In other words, all the tests would be scored twice and the correlation between the two sets of scores would be the estimate of the reliability of scoring.

According to Mulder (1989:209) reliability is affected by the following:

- 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.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

Gay (1987:90) maintains that the formal evaluation of a research plan involves a pilot study, which is a sort of dress rehearsal. In a pilot study the entire study is conducted, each and every procedure is followed, and the resulting data are analysed – all according to the research plan.

Ary, Jacobs and Ragavieh (1990:109) state that before the research is prepared, it may be helpful to try out the proposed procedures on a few subjects. This trial run or pilot study will help the researcher to decide whether the study is feasible and whether it is worthwhile to continue.

According to Ary, Jacobs and Ragavieh (1990:109) the pilot study has the following effects:

- It provides an opportunity to assess the appropriateness and practicality of the data collection instruments.

- It permits a preliminary testing of the hypothesis, which may give some indication of its tenability and suggest whether further refinement is needed.
- The pilot study demonstrates the adequacy of the research procedures and the measures that have been selected for the variables.
- Unanticipated problems that appear may be solved at this stage, thereby saving time and effort later.
- A pilot study is well worth the time required and is especially recommended for the beginning researcher.

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

- It provided the researcher with the opportunity of refining the wording and ordering the layout and helped to prune the questionnaire to a manageable size.
- It saved the researcher major expenditure in time and money on aspects of the research, which would have been unnecessary.
- Enough time to complete the questionnaires was established in the pilot study.
- It greatly reduced the number of treatment errors because unforeseen problems revealed in the pilot study resulted in redesigning the main study.
- Questions and instructions that were misinterpreted were reformulated.

3.8 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Best and Kahn (1989:191) maintain that questionnaires should be sent to those who possess the desired information so that they can respond conscientiously and objectively. Questionnaires are the best instrument for obtaining information if they are properly administered.

The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the selected schools in the Umbumbulu district and collected them again after they had been completed. This method of administration facilitated the process and the response rate. A satisfactory return rate was obtained with 115 out of 150 questionnaires that were sent to educators.

3.9 THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

Once the data had been collected, it had to be captured in a format that would permit analysis and interpretation. This involved the careful coding of the 115 questionnaires completed by the randomly selected educators. The coded data was 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.

3.10 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 organise 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.

3.11 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 acquired in the questionnaire the possibility exists that educators 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 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 elicited incorrect responses.
- To restrict the investigation to manageable proportions, the researcher limited the study to educators of schools that are easily accessible.
- The number of completed questionnaires returned could have been higher to render more valid findings.

3.12 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 and interpreted.

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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, the parent-educator partnership and formal and informal parental involvement in primary schools. One hundred and fifteen 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 respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	53	46%
Female	62	54%
TOTAL	115	100%

Table 1 shows that 8% more females than males completed the questionnaire. Statistical data of the department of education indicates that seventy percent (70%) of the teaching staff at schools are females (Chetty, 2004:95). Possible reasons for this finding are:

- The research sample involved 99% primary schools (cf. 4.2.8) which 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*.

4.2.2 Age of respondents

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

Age group	Frequency	%
20 - 25 years	1	1%
26 - 30 years	14	12%
31 - 35 years	30	26%
36 - 40 years	43	38%
41 - 45 years	17	15%
36 - 50 years	6	5%
50 - 55 years	4	3%
TOTAL	115	100%

According to the findings in Table 2 the larger number of respondents in the research sample are in the age group 36 to 40 years while more than three quarters (77%) are 40 years or younger. Younger educators may have more to offer in terms of energy and productivity while older educators have experiences to share.

The finding that only 1% of the educators fall in the age group 20 to 25 years can be explained by the following:

- Young people do not see teaching as a career with financial gain or opportunities for promotion.
- Prospective educators in this age group have not completed their studies.

The low percentage (8%) of educators older than 45 may be contributed to:

- Older educators opting for voluntary severance packages because of rationalisation and redeployment.
- Educators that changed their careers.

4.2.3 Qualifications

Table 3 Frequency distribution according to the qualifications of respondents

Qualifications	Frequency	%
Degree and diploma or certificate	9	8%
Diplomas and certificates only	106	92%
TOTAL	115	100%

From Table 3 it emerges that the majority of the respondents (92%) in the research sample possess professional qualifications only. The perception, however, exists that educators in possession of academic (degrees) and professional qualifications (education diplomas) are better qualified for the teaching profession than the ones with only diplomas and/or certificates (Maharaj, 2004:105).

A possible explanation for the high percentage of professional qualifications is that the research sample was drawn from primary schools (cf. 4.2.8). The contents of teaching diplomas and certificates are more practical than theoretically orientated courses and therefore more appropriate for teaching younger primary school learners (Griessel, Louw & Swart, 1996:71).

In order to be an efficient teacher, whether in a primary or high school, the educator must develop himself to his highest potential. Lack of suitable qualifications may result in inadequate execution of responsibilities by an educator, which may have a negative impact on teaching and learning in the school.

4.2.4 Years of service as an educator

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

Completed years of service	Frequency	%
1 - 5 years	9	8%
6 - 10 years	26	23%
11 - 15 years	44	38%
16 - 20 years	24	21%
21 - 25 years	10	9%
26 - 30 years	2	1%
TOTAL	115	100%

Table 4 reveals that most of the respondents (38%) in the research sample have between 11 and 16 years' teaching experience while nearly seventy percent (69%) have more than 10 years' experience as an educator. Experience together with adequate training is needed for the responsibilities and demands imposed on educators. Naidoo (2001:97) says more experience and training will give educators more confidence and expertise and thus equip them to be a more effective educator. Milton (Maharaj, 2004:106) 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 on them.

4.2.5 Post level of respondents

Table 5 Frequency distribution according to the post level of the respondents

Post level	Frequency	%
Principal	23	20%
Deputy principal	13	11%
HOD	12	10%
Educator (Level 1)	67	59%
TOTAL	115	100%

According to Table 5 the majority of the respondents (59%) who completed the questionnaire are level one educators. This finding is in accordance with the post structures in school as the staff composition consists mainly of level one educators and the promotion posts (management) forms the minority of the staff.

4.2.6 Type of post

Table 6 Frequency distribution according to the type of post held by the respondents

Type of post	Frequency	%
Permanent	104	90%
Temporary	10	9%
Part-time	1	1%
TOTAL	115	100%

Findings in Table 6 show that the larger percentage of the respondents (90%) who participated in the research are on the permanent staff. This high percentage can be seen as a favourable situation in a school. To be on the permanent staff have the following advantages (Chetty, 2004:114):

- Permanent staff are entitled to a housing subsidy which enables them to buy a house or flat.
- They enjoy job security.
- They can provide for their retirement as they are contributors to a pension fund.
- They can join a medical aid benefit to which the employer contributes a percentage of the monthly premium.

The above fringe benefits may act as motivators to educators in their teaching.

4.2.7 Respondents' employer

Table 7 Frequency distribution according to the respondents' employer

Employer	Frequency	%
Department of Education	111	978%
Governing body	4	30%
TOTAL	115	100%

The majority of the respondents (97%) in the research sample are employed by the Department of Education (Table 7). This finding may be attributed to the following:

- The schools targeted for the research are situated in townships and operated under the old Department of Bantu Education. These schools often do not have the necessary financial resources to employ additional educators.
- The school governing body is not in favour of appointing additional educators at the expense of the school.

4.2.8 Classification of respondents' school

Table 8 Frequency distribution according to the classification of the respondents' school

School	Frequency	%
Primary school	114	99%
Combined school	1	1%
TOTAL	115	100%

The findings in Table 8 are in accordance with the schools targeted for the research.

4.2.9 Parent-educator partnership

Table 9 Frequency distribution according to the partnership between parents and educators n=115

A successful parent-educator partnership depends on:		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
2.1	Parents and educators trusting one another	81 70%	29 26%	5 4%	115 100%
2.2	Mutual respect for each other's position (e.g. parents not to interfere with teaching)	72 63%	39 34%	4 3%	115 100%
2.3	Effective communication between the partners	84 73%	27 24%	4 3%	115 100%
2.4	Mutual loyalty between partners	75 65%	35 30%	5 4%	115 100%
2.5	Supporting each other in the education of the child	83 73%	30 26%	2 1%	115 100%
2.6	Cooperation between parents and educators	83 73%	31 27%	1 1%	115 100%
2.7	Mutual understanding of each other's possibilities	83 73%	30 26%	2 1%	115 100%
2.8	Partners accepting their responsibilities	85 74%	27 24%	3 2%	115 100%
2.9	As partners parents must contribute to the partnership (e.g. financially)	84 73%	26 23%	5 4%	115 100%
2.10	Educators must contribute to the partnership (e.g. contents of subjects)	77 70%	29 25%	9 7%	115 100%

In Table 9 most of the respondents were in agreement with the requirements stated for a successful parent-educator partnership. Nowhere in education is the parent-educator partnership more important than at the level where the question of how to provide the most effective education for all children is addressed (Dekker & Lemmer, 1998:157).

The importance of a healthy parent-educator partnership is substantiated by the response to the following questions in Table 9:

Trust (2.1): Most of the respondents (70%) agreed that a successful parent-educator partnership depends on mutual trust. Parents have to trust that the educators will (Dekker, 1995:70):

- Teach the child in harmony with the spirit and character of the family home.
- Build their teaching on the foundations laid by the parents at home.
- Instil acceptable principles and values in the learners.
- Provide education in accordance with the best and most educationally accountable educational principles, points of view and methods.
- Mould and educate children to take their rightful place in an adult life-world.
- Develop the child's potential to the full.

Educators have to trust that the learners' parents will (Macbeth, 1999:63):

- Provide the security and love which the child needs to enable him to venture into the unknown world.
- Take care of the child's physical needs.
- Supervise and exercise control over the child's activities at home so that the child lives a balanced life.
- See to it that the child attends school.

The findings that more than a quarter of the respondents (26%) disagreed with the statement might be one of the reasons for the absence of a healthy parent-educator partnership in many schools.

Mutual respect (2.2): More than sixty percent (63%) of the respondents said that mutual respect between parents and educators for each other's position is needed for an effective partnership. Shah (1994:30) and Smith and Pacheco (1996:92) see mutual respect as the key to a successful partnership between parents and educators.

According to Dekker (1995:34) mutual respect between parents and educators should have, *inter alia*, the following characteristics:

- Parents should show respect for the educators' authority and professional status, i.e. the teaching profession.
- Parents should respect the educators' expertise and knowledge and not interfere with the educators' teaching.
- Educators have to respect the general values of the community in which they teach.
- Educators must respect the career expectations parents have for their children.
- Educators must respect the parents' authority.

Bhengu (2003:45) is of the opinion that without mutual respect between parents and educators, the education of learners will not be successful (cf. 2). Mutual respect is the key to success in education.

Without the presence of the aspects of mutual respect between parents and educators the partnership will fail to be successful. Of concern, thus, is the finding that more than a third (34%) of the respondents in the

research sample does not see mutual respect as important for a successful parent-educator partnership. The possible reasons for this might be the following (Dekker & Lemmer, 1998:46):

- In multicultural situations educators have to work with parents from culturally diverse groups.
- Parents are from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Parents are often illiterate or semiliterate.

Effective communication (2.3): The majority of the respondents (73%) agreed that effective communication between parents and educators is necessary for a successful partnership. The following are essential methods of communication between the school and home (Education Facilitator, 1997:63):

- Letters to inform parents of learners' progress at school.
- Circulars to inform parents of important events and/or meetings, e.g. selecting governing body members.
- Letters to parents of learners that experience problems at school, e.g. frequent absenteeism, unacceptable behaviour, etc.

According to Dekker and Lemmer (1998:112) effective communication between the school and home has the following advantages:

- Learners develop a more positive attitude towards the school and the schoolwork.
- Improvement in learners' academic achievement.
- Better school attendance by learners.

Macbeth (1999:23) maintains that the school as a learning centre should prioritise communication as the first and foremost step to a successful parent-educator partnership.

Loyalty (2.4): More than sixty percent (65%) of the respondents agreed that a successful parent-educator partnership depends on mutual loyalty between the partners.

According to the Education Facilitator (1997:91) mutual loyalty between partners means, *inter alia*, the following:

- Parents should not speak ill about the educators.
- Educators should refrain from verbally insulting the learners' parents.
- Parents should not criticise the educators' teaching in the presence of their children.

According to Bhengu (2003:24) mutual loyalty between parents and educators has the following advantages:

- Educators and parents develop confidence in one another.
- The learners regard their educators and parents as helpers.

Support (2.5): Nearly three quarters of the respondents (73%) agreed that supporting each other is needed for a successful partnership.

Lemmer and Squelch (1993:101) see parents and educators as people who should support each other as follows:

- Parents must inform the educators about their children, e.g. problems the children experience at home, etc.

- Educators should inform the parents about problems the learners have in schools.
- Educators should suggest ways to the parents to help their children.

Cooperation (2.6): The majority of the respondents (73%) agreed that cooperation between parents and educators is a necessity. Dekker (1995:6) maintains that the purpose of cooperation is to help the children to learn effectively.

The educators have to enlighten the parents about new programmes in education, i.e. Outcomes-Based Education, etc. To achieve this, educators should organise certain days to meet with the parents, e.g. school award days, parents' days, etc.

Mutual understanding (2.7): Most of the respondents (73%) said that mutual understanding between parents and educators is needed for a successful partnership. The success of mutual understanding depends on the understanding of each other.

Educators must understand that the parents' responsibility in the education of their children, as set out in the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 is:

- To see that learners attend the school every day.
- To ensure that learners are well fed and clothed.
- To ensure that the learners' state of health is good.

Parents should understand that educators have to ensure that (Baldwin, 1998:102):

- Learners are taught.
- Learners' problems are attended to.

- Homework is properly done.
- Learners' work is promptly monitored.

Responsibilities (2.8): In this research sample, the larger number (74%) of the respondents agreed that parents and educators must accept their responsibilities as partners for the partnership to be successful.

The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 states the responsibilities of both the parents and the educators as follows (Bhengu, 1998:10):

- Parents should ensure that the school buildings are in good condition.
- The parents and educators should work together to create an atmosphere which is conducive to learning and teaching.

Contribution (2.9; 2.10): The majority of the respondents (73%) agreed that parents must fulfil their responsibilities to the partnership. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents indicated that educators contribute to the partnership.

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996:

- Parents should pay school fees for their children.
- Parents should avail themselves for election on the governing body (cf. 2).
- Teach the learners effectively as per agreement stipulated in the Education Employment Act of 1996 (cf. 2).

4.2.10 Formal parental involvement

Table 10 Frequency distribution according to educators' perceptions of formal parental involvement

In my school:		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
3.1	A sufficient number of parents avail themselves for election to the school governing body	42 37%	68 59%	5 4%	115 100%
3.2	Most of the parents attend meetings to elect members on the governing body	41 36%	72 63%	2 1%	115 100%
3.3	Meetings where important decisions are made are well attended by parents (e.g. school budget)	44 38%	65 57%	6 5%	115 100%
3.4	Most parents support the implementation of a code of conduct for learners	38 33%	70 61%	7 6%	115 100%
3.5	The majority of governors attend governing body meetings	37 32%	65 57%	13 11%	115 100%
3.6	Most parents are willing to serve on school committees	31 36%	69 60,5%	15 13%	115 100%
3.7	Most parents respond to circulars / notices from school when required	28 24%	69 60%	18 16%	115 100%
3.8	The majority of parents attend parents' evenings	26 23%	70 61%	19 16%	115 100%
3.9	Most of the parents honour payment of the prescribed school fees	27 24%	72 63%	16 13%	115 100%
3.10	The majority of parents obey the rules of education law (e.g. abolishment of corporal punishment.	30 26%	65 57%	20 17%	115 100%

Most of the respondents disagreed with the statements in Table 10 concerning formal parental involvement in their children's schools. The value of parental involvement for both the school and parents is undisputed. Formal parental involvement enables parents to learn more about the school their child attends and the process of education taking place 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. What is a challenge, however, is how to promote parental involvement in schools with obstacles like poverty,

illiteracy and certain cultural aspects. The following findings in Table 10 illustrate the problems experienced concerning formal parental involvement in schools.

Availability for election on the school governing body (3.1): More than half of the respondents (59%) in the research sample indicated that a sufficient number of parents do not avail themselves for election to the school governing body. Parents' unavailability to serve on the governing body reflects their unwillingness to be involved in the child's schooling. Possible reasons for this unwillingness of parents are:

- Parents do not see themselves as important stakeholders in their children's formal schooling.
- Parents feel they lack the necessary experience to serve on committees and cannot make any contribution.
- Illiterate parents feel intimidated by the educators and literate parents.
- Parents are not aware of their rights in the education of their children.

Attendance of meetings (3.2; 3.3): Most of the respondents (63%) said that parents do not attend meetings to elect members on the governing body. An unsatisfactory attendance of parents at election meetings may jeopardise the democratic election of governors to represent their interest in the running of the school. Governors that are not democratically elected may not have the ability and/or means to adequately fulfil their functions and duties.

If parents attend election meetings they show that they want to be involved in the election of governors to represent their interest in the school. Parents that partake in the election of governors put their trust in

the elected governors and hope they have the ability and/or means to adequately fulfil their functions and duties (Kruger, 1992:46).

It is important that parents also attend meetings where important decisions about the schooling of their children are taken. Responses showed, however, that more than half (57%) of the respondents said that these meetings are not well attended by parents. In research done by Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (2001:193) on parental involvement it was found that parents 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 distances too long to walk.
- Illiterate parents do not want to come to school because they do not feel adequately qualified to make valid contributions to education.

Implementation of a code of conduct (3.4): The more than sixty percent (61%) of the respondents that reacted negatively 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.

Attendance of school governing body meetings (3.5): Regular attendance of meetings by parent governors shows that they take their responsibilities in school governance seriously. The responses indicate,

however, that the perception of most of the respondents (57%) is that governors do not attend governing body meetings regularly. Likely explanations for the non-attendance of governing body meetings by parent governors are 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 school committees (3.6): According to the responses of the respondents the majority of parents (60%) are not willing to serve on school committees. The establishing of school committees on which parents serve (e.g. parent-educator associations) 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 possible reasons for the lack of parental involvement in school activities:

- Serving on the governing body and/or a school committee places a heavy burden on parents because they are then able to spend less time 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.

Circulars and notices from school (3.7): Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents in the research sample indicated that parents do not respond to circulars or notices from schools if required. Letsie (1994:44) found the lack of effective communication as one of the main problems in schools.

Sixty three percent (63%) of the respondents disagreed that parents honour the payment of the school fees. Bhengu (1998:61) is of the opinion that parents should support the school by:

- Paying the school fees timeously.
- Fundraising to generate the funds of the school.
- Organising social events that can promote and increase the funds of the school (cf. 2).

Bhengu (2003:96) says that most of the parents are reluctant to pay the school fees because of certain misconceptions and misinterpretations, e.g. that of free education.

Attending parent evenings (3.8): The larger number of respondents (61%) 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 children. Aspects such as academic progress and/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 children's problems, parents are better able to assist the school in helping their children to the fullest. The opposite is also applicable, namely the information that parents can give to the educator about their children.

Where parents do not respond to circulars, the possible reasons may be (Education Facilitator, 1997:98):

- Illiteracy.
- Parents do not have time to read the circulars, e.g. they only concentrate on their family work, etc.
- Educators use languages which are not understandable to parents, e.g. English, etc.

Obeying the rules of educational law (3.10): Most of the respondents (57%) indicated that the majority of parents fail to obey the rules of the educational law. Parents' failure to obey these rules may possibly be attributed to the following:

- Parents do not enquire about the law and are thus uninformed about their rights or obligations as parents.
- 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 fundraising, 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 disinterest in aspects of educational law.

4.2.11 Informal parental involvement

Table 11 Frequency distribution according to educators' perceptions of informal parental involvement

At my school:		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
4.1	Support their children's sporting activities.	55 48%	53 46%	7 6%	115 100%
4.2	Attend cultural activities in which their children participate.	44 38%	61 53%	10 9%	115 100%
4.3	Assist their children with their schoolwork (e.g. checking home-work).	48 42%	56 49%	11 9%	115 100%
4.4	Consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress.	43 38%	58 50%	14 12%	115 100%
4.5	Discuss problems experienced by their children with the educators.	35 30%	65 57%	15 13%	115 100%
4.6	Are involved in the fundraising activities of the school.	21 18%	81 70%	13 11	115 100%
4.7	Volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds.	32 28%	70 61%	13 11%	115 100%
4.8	Help with the coaching of sport activities.	30 26%	70 61%	15 13%	115 100%
4.9	Accompany learners on educational excursions.	34 30%	62 54%	19 16%	115 100%
4.10	Assist in the organising of sport and cultural events	34 30%	65 57%	16 13%	115 100%

Only a small percentage of parents are formally involved in their children's schooling because many parents feel that they do not have the necessary expertise and/or knowledge to consider elections to bodies such as the school governing body. Parents that do not consider themselves eligible for formal bodies in school may, however, still be interested in becoming involved. Such parents should be included in other, informal ways so that they may also be of assistance to the school (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:100).

The items and frequency of responses in Table 11 reflect the areas and possibilities of informal parental involvement in schooling.

Supporting children's sporting activities (4.1): Less than half of the respondents (48%) in the research sample agreed that parents support their children's sporting activities in school while 46% disagreed. When parents show interest in their children's sporting activities they are motivated to partake in sport and give their best in the activity in which they compete. Taking part in group sport is beneficial for learners' discipline. Wolfendale (1992:15) mentions the following common obstacles to parental involvement in their children's sporting activities:

- In modern society parents lead busy and often stressful lives and finding time to attend sporting activities puts additional pressure on them.
- Some parents feel that they are not officially invited to attend the child's sporting activities.
- Problems with transport because of the long distances to schools.

Attendance of cultural activities (4.2; 4.10): According to Papalia and Olds (1992:329) the parents of learners who do best in school are interested in more than homework and grades. They make time to talk to their children about school activities; they want to know what activities

they are taking part in at school and assure them that they are available to support these activities. The finding that more than half (53%) of the respondents indicated that parents do not attend cultural activities in which their children partake reflects negatively on parental involvement. Possible reasons for this may be:

- Parents cannot afford to pay the admission fees often asked for cultural events, school concerts, plays, etc.
- Not all learners partake in cultural activities and parents only support an event if their child is part of it.
- Transport problems.
- Long working hours.

Assistance with schoolwork (4.3): According to Vos (2002:17) parents should become actively involved in the teaching programmes in schools. From the responses it emerges, however, that most of the respondents (49%) said that parents *do not* assist their children with their schoolwork. Vos (2002:17) is convinced that When parents become involved in the instructional process, they are more likely to make school a priority for their children, which will likely result in a better performance from them. A very important part of parent involvement in schoolwork is assisting with learning activities at home. A research report published by Papalia and Olds (1992:266) indicates that the parents of learners that achieve at school do the following:

- They read, talk, and listen to their children.
- They play games, share hobbies and discuss news, television programmes and current events with their children.
- They provide a place to study and keep books and supplies.

- They set and insist on times for meals, sleep and homework, making sure that children meet school deadlines.
- They monitor how much television their children watch and they monitor what their children do after school.

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

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

Consultation with educators (4.4; 4.5): According to half of the respondents (50%) parents do not consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress while more than half (57%) of the respondents also said parents do not discuss problems experienced by their children with educators. Papalia and Olds (1992:266) say it is important that parents show interest in children's lives at school by talking about the problems and successes at school. Pillay (1998:162) maintains that 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 do not feel welcome to visit educators at school; they perceive the school as inaccessible.
- Due to work commitments parents do not have time during the day to visit schools.
- Many parents experience transport problems, especially single mothers.
- Parents view themselves as non-professionals and that educators are adequately qualified to handle the education of the child in school without their interference.

Fundraising (4.6): Most of the respondents (70%) 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.

The finding that most of the parents are not involved in the fundraising activities of the school can possibly be explained by their socio-economic status. This socio-economic status related reasons might be, *inter alia*, the following (Van der Linde, 1993:35):

- Parents who are of a low socio-economic status fear that when they get involved in fundraising activities, the school may require them to also contribute financially.

- Parents who cannot pay school fees or provide their children with school requirements, are also reluctant to get involved in any money matters concerning the school.

Maintenance of school buildings (4.7): The majority of respondents (61%) in the research sample 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. Possible reasons for this phenomenon are:

- Parents believe that if they pay their school fees it is the school's responsibility to maintain the school buildings and grounds.
- Parents do not volunteer their services to help with maintenance of the school because of work and other commitments.
- Parents feel they are used as "tools" by being asked to help when nobody else wants to get involved, or there is no money to pay for maintenance.

Sport coaching and organising of activities (4.8; 4.10): More than sixty percent (61%) of the respondents disagreed that parents offer to help with the coaching of sporting activities while more than half (57%) indicated that parents are not willing 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) sees the following factors, *inter alia*, as contributing to parents' reluctance in helping with sport coaching and organising of events at school:

- The negative attitude of school staff towards parents' participation in school activities. Educators feel that parents want to take over their responsibilities.
- Parents do not have time to get involved in sport coaching, because of their work.
- Educators feel threatened by parents with more knowledge about certain sporting activities and refuse their assistance.

Accompanying learners on educational excursions (4.9): Fifty four percent (54%) of the respondents in the research sample disagreed that parents accompany learners on educational excursions. Wolfendale (1992:60) says that parents do not accompany their children on excursions because they feel:

- intimidated by educators; e.g. educators undermine the parents.
- they are not professionals, only educators are professionals.
- parents are not invited to accompany their children (cf. 2).

Dekker (1993:6-8) maintains that parents should accompany their children on excursions to avoid:

- misbehaving of children, and
- unsafety of children.

5 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 organised 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.

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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 if parents are adequately involved as partners with educators in the education of their children. In the literature study and in the empirical research it was established that among other things the negative attitude of parents towards the school seems to be the most important reason why parents fail to form effective partnerships with educators. Other reasons for parents' reluctance to become involved in their children's formal schooling are low socio-economic status, illiteracy and intimidation.

5.2.2 Literature review

Effective education cannot take place without a sound partnership between home and school. Educators cannot perform their educational task without a full partnership with 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, extracurricular and management tasks of the school. Therefore, within these relationships, consistent findings emerged. Accountable parental involvement is significantly related to the

improvement of learners' academic achievement, behaviour and school attendance. Parental participation also increases 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 rapidly 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 cooperation.

Cooperation is important for an adequate 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 association 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
- Extracurricular 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 educators in schools in the Umbumbulu district on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast.

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 parent-educator partnership in schools concerning, *inter alia*, the following aspects:

- Parent-educator partnership.
- Formal parental involvement.
- Informal parental involvement.

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 115 educators and to offer comments and interpretations on 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.

5.2.5 Aims of the study

The researcher formulated the specific aims 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 will be offered.

5.3 FINDINGS

5.3.1 Findings from the literature review

- 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 foundation 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 a 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 consider 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.
 - Extracurricular 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 cooperation 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 more than ninety percent (92%) of the respondents in the research sample possess professional qualifications (diplomas and/or certificates) only (cf. 4.2.3). This finding can be explained by the target population of the research sample, namely educators in primary schools which comprise the majority (99%) of the research sample (cf. 4.2.8). The contents of teaching diplomas and certificates

are more practical than theoretical orientated and therefore more appropriate for teaching younger primary school learners.

- Most of the respondents (70%) agreed that a successful parent-educator partnership depends on mutual trust between parents and educators (cf. 2.1). Parents have to trust that the educators will provide education in accordance with the best and most educationally accountable principles, points of view and methods. Educators have to trust that parents will provide security and love and take care of the child's physical, cognitive and affective needs.
- More than sixty percent (63%) of the respondents said that mutual respect between parents and educators for each other's position are needed for an effective partnership (cf. 2.2). Parents should show respect for the educators' authority and professional status and educators have to respect the general values of the community in which they teach.
- The majority of respondents (84%) agreed that effective communication between parents and educators is necessary for a successful partnership (cf. 2.3). Effective communication between the school and home improves learners' academic achievement, school attendance and attitudes towards the school and school work.
- Less than sixty percent (59%) of the respondents in the research sample indicated that a sufficient number of parents do not avail themselves for election to the school governing body (cf. 3.1). Being unavailable to serve on the school governing body reflects parents' unwillingness to be involved in the child's schooling.
- Most of the respondents (63%) said that parents do not attend meetings to elect members on the governing body (cf. 3.2), while 57% said that meetings where important decisions about the schooling of their children are taken are not attended by parents (cf.

3.3). An unsatisfactory attendance of parents at meetings may jeopardise the effective running of the school.

- More than sixty percent (61%) of the respondents reacted negatively to parental support for the implementation of a code of conduct, possibly because they lack knowledge of what a code of conduct entails (cf. 3.4).
- According to the responses the majority of parents (60%) are not willing to serve on school committees (cf. 3.6). The establishing of school committees on which parents serve can promote good parent-educator relationships.
- Less than half of the respondents (48%) in the research sample agreed that parents support their children's sporting activities in school (cf. 4.1). This finding can possibly be explained by modern society in which parents lead busy and often stressful lives, and finding time to come to sport activities puts additional pressure on them.
- More than half (53%) of the respondents indicated the parents do not attend cultural activities in which their children partake, which reflects negatively on parental involvement (cf. 4.2).
- From the responses it emerges that most of the respondents (49%) said that parents do not assist their children with their schoolwork (cf. 4.3). A very important part of parental involvement in schoolwork is assisting with learning activities at home.
- According to half of the respondents (50%) in the research sample parents do not consult with them regarding their children's academic progress (cf. 4.4) while more than half (57%) of the respondents said parents also do not discuss problems experienced by their children with them (cf. 4.5). It is important that parents show interest in

children's lives at school by talking about the problems and successes in their schoolwork.

- Most of the respondents (70%) indicated that parents are not involved in the school's fundraising activities (cf. 4.6). Funding for education is seldom adequate and therefore schools need to explore all possible sources to supplement government funding.
- The majority of respondents (61%) said parents do not offer to help with the coaching of sport activities (cf. 4.8) while more than half (57%) indicated that parents are not willing to assist with the organising of sport and cultural events (cf. 4.10). It is possible that parents do not feel welcome and comfortable in the school environment and are reluctant to offer any assistance with sport and/or cultural activities.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Parent training for partnership in education

(1) Motivation

Effective formal education necessitates a partnership between the child's home and school as 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, extracurricular and management tasks of the school. Educators and parents are responsible for the same child, which means that they accept responsibility for the child in partnership. 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 should be a dynamic process whereby parents and educators work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner. 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. The parent-educator partnership is intended essentially to promote and support the learner's school performance and general well-being. 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.

From research done it is clear that, taking the present situation in South Africa into consideration, the potential of parents as partners in education is not being enhanced and put to use and there is still a wealth of potential waiting to be exploited as far as this is concerned. Therefore the orientation, education and training of parents for partnership in education should not be ignored and needs to be urgently addressed.

(2) Recommendations

The recommendation is that:

- The Department of Education should develop parent training programmes for partnership in education into a fixed and permanent part of the activities of schools. The training programme should train parents in, *inter alia*, the following:
 - Objectives and methods of education.
 - That preventative action is better than an attempt to cure.
 - To face and take into account changing demands and situations.

- To serve as filters against the onslaughts of modern technology via “secret educators” such as television and computers.
- Their primary role in the acquisition of cultural identity.
- Insight into healthy human relations.
- Knowledge and understanding of the phases of development through which the child passes.
- Awareness of their rights in respect of the education of their children.
- Acceptance of co-responsibility in the child’s education.
- The content of their child’s curriculum.
- Matters of school policy.

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 practise 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 larger 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 parents, even in the remotest areas.
- 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**

(1) **Motivation**

The research has shown that a healthy parent-educator partnership, accountable parental involvement, improved academic achievement and effective teaching go hand-in-hand. Cooperation 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 cooperation between parents and educators should denote a sound partnership.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that further research of a quantitative and qualitative nature must be undertaken pertaining to parent-educator partnerships and parental involvement in 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, semi-rural and urban differentiation.

5.5 CRITICISM

Criticism that emanates from this study includes the following:

It can be presumed that some of the educators who completed the questionnaires formed their perceptions regarding proper parent-educator partnership in schools from the media. The probability thus exists that these educators indicated what should be achieved through parent-educator partnership and not what is really happening in schools.

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

5.6 FINAL REMARK

The aim of this study was to obtain a better understanding of parent-educator partnerships in schools. It is hoped that this study will prove useful to all interested stakeholders in education, especially to educators who experience problems in involving the parents in the programmes and activities of the school.

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APPENDIX 'A'

Questionnaire

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE

**PARENT-EDUCATOR
PARTNERSHIP IN SCHOOLS**

Mr I B Wanda

June 2005

Dear Educator

QUESTIONNAIRE: PARENT-EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP IN 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 Prof M S Vos. The research is concerned with *Parent-educator partnership in schools*.

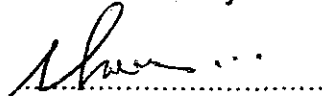
I have taken the liberty of writing to you, as one of the selected respondents, in order to seek your assistance in acquiring information about your experiences relating to the research.

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 appreciate your co-operation.

Yours sincerely



Mr I B Wanda

10/06/2005

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 a 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 (X) in the appropriate block.

SECTION ONE: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1.1 My gender is?

	Code
Male	1
Female	2

1.2 My age in completed years as at 2004-12-31:

Age group	Code
20 – 25 years	1
26 – 30 years	2
31 – 35 years	3
36 – 40 years	4
41 – 45 years	5
46 – 50 years	6
51 – 55 years	7
56 – 60 years	8
61 – 65 years	9
Older than 65 years	10

1.3 My qualifications are:

	Code
Academic qualification(s) (e.g. BA, MEd, etc.	1
Professional qualification(s) (e.g. FDE, HDE, PTC, etc.	2

1.4 Total number of completed years in the teaching profession as at 2004-12-31:

Number of years	Code
0 – 25 years	1
6 – 10 years	2
11 – 15 years	3
16 – 20 years	4
21 – 25 years	5
26 – 30 years	6
More than thirty years	7

1.5 My post level is:

Principal
Deputy principal
HOD
Educator (Level 1)

	Code
	1
	2
	3
	4

1.6 Type of post held by me:

Permanent
Temporary
Part time

	Code
	1
	2
	3

1.7 My employer is:

Department of
Education
Governing body

	Code
	1
	2

1.8 My school is classified as:

Primary school
Secondary school
Combined school

	Code
	1
	2
	3

SECTION TWO: PARENT EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	A successful parent-educator partnership depends on:			
2.1	Parents and educators trusting one another			
2.2	Mutual respect for each other's position (e.g. parents not to interfere with teaching)			
2.3	Effective communication between the partners			
2.4	Mutual loyalty between partners			
2.5	Supporting each other in the education of the child			
2.6	Co-operation between parents and educators			
2.7	Mutual understanding of each other's possibilities			
2.8	Partners accepting their responsibilities			
2.9	As partners parents must contribute to the partnership (e.g. financially and educators contents of subjects)			
2.10	Educators must contribute to the partnership (e.g. contents of subjects)			

SECTION THREE: FORMAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	At my school:			
3.1	A sufficient number of parents avail themselves for election to the school governing body			
3.2	Most of the parents attend meetings to elect members on the governing body			
3.3	Meetings where important decisions are made are well attended by parents			
3.4	Most parents support the implementation of a code of conduct for learners			
3.5	The majority of parents attend meetings where important decisions are made (e.g. school budget)			
3.6	Most parents are willing to serve on school committees			
3.7	Most parents respond to circular/notices from school when required			
3.9	The majority of parents attend parents evenings			
3.9	Most of the parents honour payment of the prescribed school fees			
3.10	The majority of parents obey the rules of the education law (e.g. abolishment of corporal punishment)			

SECTION FOUR: INFORMAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	At my school parents:			
4.1	Support their children's sporting activities			
4.2	Attend cultural activities in which their children participate			
4.3	Assist their children with their schoolwork (e.g. checking homework)			
4.4	Consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress			
4.5	Discuss problems experienced by their children with educators			
4.6	Are involved in the fundraising of the school			
4.7	Volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings			
4.8	Help with the coaching of sport activities			
4.9	Accompany learners on educational excursions			
4.10	Assist in the organising of sport and cultural events			

APPENDIX 'B'

Letter requesting permission to conduct research

APPENDIX 'C'

Letter granting permission to conduct research



**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMLAZI DISTRICT OFFICE**

Address: Next to Magistrate's Court
Ikheli: UMBUMBULU
Adres:

Private Bag X1022
Isikhwama Seposi: UMBUMBULU
Privaatsak: 4105

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Enquiries:
Imibuzo:
Navrae:

Reference:
Inkomba:
Verwysing:

Date:
Usuku:
Datum:

Attention : Mr I.B. Wanda
P.O. Box 132
UMBUMBULU
4105

Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The above matter refers,

On behalf of Umbumbulu Circuit Office I wish to inform you that a Permission to conduct Research in the Primary Schools is granted. Hoping that your study will be usefull to the Department of Education.

Wishing you a success in your Research study

Thank You

P.M. Mdabe (Ward Manager)

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL UMBUMBULU DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
2005-07-30
PRIVATE BAG X 1022 UMBUMBULU 4105 TEL: NO: 031 915 0001/36
UMBUMBULU DISTRICT OFFICE

P O Box 132
UMBUMBULU
4105
June 10 2005

ATTENTION: MR P M MDABE

The Ward Manager
Umbumbulu Circuit
P O Box 1022
UMBUMBULU
4105

Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby kindly request permission from the CSEM to conduct a research within schools of the Umbumbulu Circuit in respect of Parent-Educator partnership in schools.

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my M.Ed. (Master in Education) degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Prof M S Vos. The research is in respect of the parent-educator partnership in schools.

I have taken the liberty of writing to you Sir, as I have an interest in the primary schools of the jurisdiction of the Umbumbulu circuit.

As part of my research I will have to compile a questionnaire, which I would then circulate to some of the primary schools within the circuit to obtain the relevant information.

In anticipation I humbly pray that my request will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully



I B WANDA (Student)

Contact Nos.	Cell	083 507 3198
	After hrs	031 915 1884