

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with parent involvement as a theoretical framework for the discussion of parent involvement in the education of their children. Consideration is given specifically to the definition, nature and scope of parent involvement, reasons for parent involvement, advantages of parent involvement, ways in which parents become involved in education of their children, reasons for non-involvement of parents in education, and models of parent involvement.

The school is set apart from other societal institutions by its task, namely, educative teaching. For education in school to be effective, it must also contribute to the learner's education. The school and the educator are however merely the secondary educators of the learner while the parent is considered to be the primary educator (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:19). Because the education task is indivisible, the education managers and the parents are therefore jointly responsible for assuring that the education is effective.

The topic of parent involvement continues to be of national, political and local interest and is relevant to all professionals in education and to parents and parent representatives. The case for involving parents in their children's development and education has been established by innumerable studies and projects and many schools are committed to pursuing home-school links (Wolfendale, 1992:ix).

What exactly constitutes parent involvement is, however, difficult to determine. The phrase *parent involvement* is used to encompass a broad spectrum of activities, although one common theme is that all seek to bring together, in some way, the separate domains of home or community and school. The study of parent involvement is therefore complex, given the range of activities being undertaken, the differing perspectives held by participants on the desired aims and the *ad hoc* and desperate nature of much of the work (Jowett, & Babinski, 1991:4). Mkhwanazi (1994:24) concurs, stating that the involvement of parents in education can be seen as open to definition and redefinition as identity is created and recreated in interaction among educators, schools, politicians, and social forces, such as a changing technology.

2.2 PARENT INVOLVEMENT: A DEFINITION

Parent involvement is defined as the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities, which may be educational or non-educational. It extends from supporting and upholding the school ethos to supervising children's homework at home. Parent involvement implies mutual co-operation, sharing and support (Squelch & Lemmer, 1993:93).

The *UNISA METROPOLITAN LIFE project* (1994:2) for the training of educators in parent involvement, defines parent involvement as an active and supportive participation of parents and being partners and allies of the educators in the primary aspects of formal and informal education of their own child as well as a child of the school and of the broad education of their community in an individual and collective way in a structured and orderly manner in order to achieve the objective of education as fully as possible.

According to Van Wyk (1991:10) parent involvement refers to the realisation of a parent's joint responsibility for education, but in a more undefined manner and taking place in various areas and at various levels, without necessarily sharing in decision-making.

Dekker (1993:155) describes the concept of parent involvement as a process of helping parents to discover their strengths, potentialities and talents and to use them for the benefit of themselves, the family and the school. Parent involvement can take the form of co-operation and participation which leads to partnership.

According to Marcon (1999:395) parent involvement refers to a wide range of parental behaviours, such as communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with community. Griffith (2001:4) states that each type of parent involvement can lead to different outcomes for learners, parents and educators.

According to Feuerstein (2000:2) parent involvement encompasses a broad range of parenting behaviour, ranging from discussion with learners about homework to attendance at parent-organisation meetings. In a review of the literature, Dimmock, O'Donoghue, and Robbs (1996:5-20) identified five basic categories of parent involvement: school choice, decision-making through formal structures or site-based council, teaching and learning, effects on the physical and material environment and communication.

Edwards *et al.* (1998:13) describe parent involvement as the co-responsibility the parents must assume for essential concerns of the education of their children.

According to Lemmer (2000:60-75) parent involvement is a dynamic process whereby educators and parents work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner. The process

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. Parent involvement is intended essentially to promote and support learners' learning, school performance and general well-being (Lemmer, 2000:69).

Heystek and Louw (1999:21) define parent involvement as when parents share responsibility and accountability with the professional staff in schools, such as shared sense of purpose, mutual respects and sharing of information.

Parent involvement means sharing leadership, which means sharing of knowledge, responsibility and power (Nichols-Solomon, 2001:33).

Epstein (1996:224) defines parent involvement as an observable relationship between classroom-educators and parents with an aim of improving learners' academic performance.

In support of the definitions stated on parent involvement Blackstone (1999:81-98) states that a greater extent of overlap between educators and parents roles is desired for its own sake. The degree of overlapping between parent and educator roles in education is seen as positive for parent-educator partnership and is being recognized on all levels of education.

One is able to deduce from these definitions that parent involvement involves far more than serving on school committees or helping at school functions.

Parent involvement in this research should be understood to mean that parents, as partners, participate with educators in the interests of education of the learners for the

purpose of assisting the learners in their educational endeavours, by improving the learning conditions of the learners.

2.3 NATURE AND SCOPE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The importance of parent involvement in education of children cannot be over-emphasized. Parent responsibility in the education of children has been emphasized in various ways for many years. This is evident from the rapidly increasing academic literature on this topic as well as from the frequent references made in the media.

In discussing this topic, the focus will firstly fall on the dimensions for parent involvement, fundamental grounds for parent involvement in school activities, and educational grounds for parent involvement in school activities.

It will therefore be appropriate at this stage to illustrate that the fundamental grounds for parent involvement in school activities are based on religion. The religion that a community practices determines the extent and the characteristic of the involvement of parents in school activities. It will be vital to denote that parents act as primary educators according to the instruction of God. For this reason, parents have the obligation to look after the well-being of their children by caring for, loving, educating and disciplining them (Weeto, 1997:4).

Secondly, parents as primary educators have to ensure that the teaching children receive from school educators is in line with the one being offered at home. A school is an organised educational institution, therefore parent involvement should occur in an organised fashion. Because of the peculiar characteristics of these institutions (home and school), it will be necessary that they acknowledge the operational areas and

contribution that each has made in education. This is vital if the education of the child has to be conducted in an atmosphere of peace and stability (Weeto, 1997:4).

The concept "parent involvement" can be interpreted in various ways, from parents showing interest in their children's education to parents having a say in the administration of the school. According to Vandegrift and Greene (1992:57), parent involvement has two essential dimensions: firstly, it involves parents supporting their children in their school work and secondly, it involves parents participating actively in the education of their children.

Vandegrift and Greene (1992:58-59) use the above dimensions to divide parents into the following four categories according to their involvement in the education of their children:

Type 1: (++): These parents support their children at home and are also actively involved in school activities; they may even serve on management bodies. This type of parent is not necessarily the attainable, since many parents are not always able to be actively involved.

Type 2: (+, -): These parents support their children at home but are not actively involved in school activities. Newsletters, circulars and other forms of communication with the home are very effective in these cases.

Type 3: (-+): This type of parents is difficult to identify. They may attend parents' evenings and they may even participate actively in some school activities, but they do not give their children any support at home.

Type 4: (-,-): These parents do not support their children and nor do they participate actively in school activities. They are uninvolved parents and are difficult to reach.

2.3.1 Fundamental grounds for parent involvement in education

Parent involvement in education, according to Van Schalkwyk (1990:1), is important because parents have fundamental rights and interests in the education of their children. Parents have shed their parent obligations with regard to education. According to parents education is the educator's responsibility and they care very much about the progress of their children at school (Sondlane, 2000:13). A family as a primary institution has an obligation of supporting children so that they can do well at school. Barnard (1990:2) supports the above notion by stating that education starts at home. This implies that education that is conducted at school is a continuation of the aspirations of the parents at home, in order to make the children self-sufficient.

Van Wyk (1991:11) argues that parents are involved in school activities because they are intimately attached to their children. It is this relation that compels parents to ensure that their children receive only the best education. Kritzinger (1984:93) puts it in strong terms when he says that parents' educational task with regard to their children is to make sure that they are fully equipped for life. It is therefore on these grounds that, even if children are later referred to school, that parents fail to divorce themselves completely from their educative task (Lynch, 1992:304).

2.3.1.1 Parents as primary educators

A family is a primary educational institution. In a home, children receive their very first teaching from their parents. It is again here where children are given birth to, brought up and developed. Cheung *et al.* (1996:3) affirm this notion by stating that parents as primary educators have the obligation of developing a child into a whole person. They further maintain that parents' influence on a child's cognitive, affective, and social development greatly determines his performance at school. It is therefore vital that the

needs of children be met within a family first before they are exposed to the outside world (school). However, a secondary educator cannot be held accountable and responsible for the tasks that are family-orientated (Postma, 1986:93, Kruger, 1987:186). A child wishes to feel wanted and loved within a family. If parents give children the support they require within a home, they will be able to enjoy their education to the full. It should be borne in mind that parents educate their children so that they can lead to responsible life within the community (Postma, 1986:93, Kruger, 1987:186).

It is clear that the parent as the primary educator of the learner and the educator as the learner's secondary educator should collaborate in the possible way as allies or partners in education (Molepo, 2000:73).

Several authors (Van Schalkwyk, 1983:28, Van Wyk, 1991:19, Buys, 1986:115) maintain that education within a family takes place within the context of authority, confidence and love. All that happens to children within a family/home will greatly influence their attitude later towards life. A parent has to shape a child's character and religious inclination. As a result, children will learn to relate with others and learn from their parents to use their intellectual ability so that they can cope well with the expectations at school and the community of which they are part. In this way, a non-adult is gradually being guided towards adulthood by his/her parents (Gryffenberg, 1991:11).

A family is a primary institution that presumably conducts its educative tasks with love. Van Wyk (1991:11) confirms this idea by stating that parents are the only educators who stay with their children from birth until they attain adulthood. On the other hand, a secondary educator (school educator) is bound to time and as such is unable to meet

all the requirements of a learner in full. This does not imply that a educator as a secondary educator should deviate from goal-directed formal education started at home, but rather that he/she should ensure that the status quo be maintained. Secondary education should not be seen in isolation from home/family education, but that a concerted effort should be made to continue with the education started at home (Pieters, 1991:117). This should be done to ensure that a child is fully equipped morally, intellectually and culturally so that he/she can attach meaning to life (Prinsloo & Beckmann, 1988:5).

There appears to be an agreement that parent involvement is a positive idea. In fact, researchers state that the single fastest way to improve a learner's academic performance is to involve parents. Given this widespread agreement, it is perplexing that there is no more actual parent involvement in schools (Fuller & Olsen, 1998:128).

It is vital to realise that parents act and behave as primary educators on the instruction of God (Deuteronomy, 6:4-7). God expects of parents, as given in this text, to ensure that children are well-informed about the realities of life. Oosthuizen and Bondesio (1988:11) also see the primary task of parents as the teaching of their children in order that they can lead responsible life. Equally true, children are also expected to give a hearing to all the teachings of their parents for by so doing, God will bless them (Proverbs, 3:1-2). Schutte (1985:65) puts it in strong terms when he says that parents are instructed by God to unlock the unknown to the child.

From the above it can be concluded that parents are primary educators of their children and this responsibility cannot be transferred to the school. For this reason, parents must be involved in the school education of their children to ensure the continuation of home/family education (11 Timothy 3:16-17).

2.3.1.2 Parent discipline

Van der Westhuizen (1996:223) views discipline as an action that is taken against a person in order to correct deviant behaviour. Discipline may suggest chastisement or punishment. Another characteristic of discipline is that it may be negative or positive. He further says that a negative disciplinary measure may imply that one is being punished for wrongful behaviour or conduct. On the other hand, a positive disciplinary measure has as its goal the correction of behaviour by influencing a person to behave acceptably.

From the above statements it is evident that discipline is not intended to bring harm to an individual but to correct the behaviour so that order can be created. In Proverbs (1:8), discipline is explained as the correction of unacceptable behaviour. Discipline is therefore a necessity for the development of a child.

Van der Westhuizen (1996:13) argues that man is empowered by God to regulate and order His creation. In order to ensure that order may be maintained, it may be necessary to apply disciplinary measures. It is expected of parents to bring order by regulating the lives of their children so that educative processes can go on unhindered. Coetzee (1985:18-19), in support of discipline as a correction measure for an unacceptable conduct, lists the following requirements that should be met by a Christian parent:

A Christian parent should accept that he/she has been given an authority over a child by God, and a Christian parent should exercise his/her authority over a child with love, tact, loyalty and responsibility.

It is also expected that parents as primary educators and educators at school will ensure that discipline will occupy its rightful place within the family or school. An understanding parent and educator will see to it that disciplinary measures are applied with tact, love and responsibility (Schutte, 1985:71). This implies that one should not be unnecessarily harsh to a child without considering the fault that has been committed.

Section 8 of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) states that the ultimate responsibility for learners' behaviour rests with their parents or guardians, and it is also expected that parents will support the school, and require learners to observe all school regulations and accept responsibility for any misbehaviour on their part.

On reflection, it is abundantly clear that in administering discipline, it is guaranteed that the child's activity in his/her daily process of education will be ordered. For this reason, parents have an obligation to be involved in the school education of their children so that they can ensure that reasonable discipline is applied to their children. This means that their involvement in school education will ensure that school rules and regulations meet the requirements of learners to learn in an orderly way (Oosthuizen, 1994:59).

2.3.1.3 Conclusion

From the above discussion of the fundamental grounds for parent involvement in school education, it can be concluded that a parent as a primary educator influences the life and actions of his/her child. A family as a primary educational institution is characterised by this peculiar nature. It is this nature of a family/home that cannot be transferred to a school because family members are biologically related to one another. Members of a family learn to accommodate each other's feelings because they love one another.

Because parents love their children, they should see to it that they develop, guide, care for, nurture, maintain, love and discipline them so that they can be able to attain success in life. Even at school, parents should feature prominently to ensure that the education their children receive is in line with their cultural inclination. Because the unfolding of the educational potential of a child cannot be completed at home, schools are brought into the picture to continue with home/family education, since educators have more teaching skills and knowledge of subject content (Fuller & Olsen, 1998:116). It is therefore fitting that parents be involved in the education of their children. Thus, based on the fundamental grounds, it is apparent that parents must be motivated to be involved in the school education of their children.

2.3.2 Educational grounds for parent involvement in school education

For school to have any meaning for a child, there should be a purposeful contact between parents and educators. A school should not break the continuity of this contact by going its own way, but must make all possible effort to enhance it (Brownell, 1988:6). Van der Nesthuizen and Mentz (1996:25) confirm this notion by stating that the school has to contribute to the intellectual development of the child within a community in which teaching takes place. In their mutual relationship, the parent and educator must be able to identify goals and objectives jointly for the benefit of the child (Kruger, 1987:187).

Parents justify their involvement in school activities in line with the stipulations in the Education Act 70 of 1988 [Section 15 (a)]. However, due to the strenuous demands, complexities of life and the need for specialised knowledge, parents are unable to fulfil all educational requirements of their children (Coetzee, 1986:22). The task of educating children has therefore been entrusted to the school and educators by parents. This

transfer of the educative task does not imply that parents have relinquished their responsibility to educate their children.

Both parents and educators operate in areas that are drastically different from each other. These peculiar operational areas determine the contribution of parents and educators to education. In order that the education of a child be effective, parents and educators have to acknowledge the contribution they have to make in education (Postma, 1986:110).

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 [Section 42 (a)] (SASA, 1996:14), compels parents to participate in the governance of schools, and helping their children with school work. Other participation like fund-raising, assisting educators with academic or extramural activities are voluntary and parents must be motivated and trained to participate actively.

2.3.2.1 Parent obligations in education

Parent obligations in education should be seen against the background that parents are primary educators and this is the basis on which a school should build the education of children (Van der Linde, 1993:21). Parents have an obligation to ensure that children are socially, emotionally, physically and academically successful (Van Schalkwyk, 1983:116). The school's task is supplementary and supportive by nature because educators are secondary educators. The quality of education depends greatly on the influence parents are able to exercise on the school (Brownell, 1988:6).

A school is seen by Van Wyk (1991:12) as an institution where educators operate due to their qualifications and because parents are important stakeholders, schools cannot operate in isolation. It is therefore vital that a school must relate closely with the

community as it is charged to impart cognitive knowledge to the learners. Clase (1985:5) cautions that most schools wish to involve parents in organisational matters only. This behaviour is however, not approved by parents for they wish to become part of the education that is being offered to their children (Carrim & Sayed, 1990:22).

Meadows (1993:33) is of the opinion that the following are the educational grounds for parents to be involved in school activities:

- empirical research has shown that home background plays a prominent role in the child's scholastic performance
- children who are aware that their parents are concerned with their education are more stable and perform better than their counterparts
- parent involvement in school activities encourages joint decision-making about the child's development and his career
- parent involvement in school matters recognises that self-esteem in parents is integral to the development of the child and should be enhanced by parents' interaction with the school
- parent involvement in school activities encourages parents to observe and evaluate education freely.

2.3.2.2 Curricular activities

Curriculum is an important element of parent-educator contact for it has a direct bearing on the enhancement of children's education. The advantage of parent-educator contact is that parents with specific needs and expectations meet educators. Parents in this setting are free to express their views without fear of being irrelevant. It must be

realised that these classroom activities are educator-directed and parents are junior partners. For successful and effective parent involvement in curricular activities, parents must make inputs into the work that is being done at school (Hegarty, 1993:122-124).

Parent involvement that boosts learners' learning does not just happen. Thoughtful, co-ordinated plan and systematic actions must integrate with parent involvement in classroom programmes (Solomon, 1992:360). Dekker (1990:32) maintains that parent involvement would be meaningless unless class committees are established with particular aims/goals which have been jointly identified.

Several authors (Van Schalkwyk and Oosthuizen, 1994:137, Solomon, 1992:361, Cheung *et al.* 1996 and South African Schools Act No. 84 1996, [Section 42 (a)]) list the following possible areas in which parents may be engaged in curricular activities:

- parents may be trained by educators to assist in classroom activities such as writing and language exercises,
- parents may assist with vocabulary words, numbers, making teaching aids,
- educational trips, promotion programmes, library, needlework and woodwork,
- parents may be members of every committee that is directly linked with school policy or curriculum,
- parents may help with remedial education, learning enrichment, planning and preparation of lessons, and
- parents may assist in determining educational content and objectives of lessons.

Munn (1997:1) states that a number of studies of school effectiveness identify parent involvement as one of the keys linked with effectiveness of child education. Curriculum activities should meet the needs of the community if they are to be effective. It should be borne in mind that not all parents can be expected to perform all the listed tasks as some of them require extensive training. Only competent and willing parents can be organised to perform these tasks (Van Schalkwyk & Oosthuizen, 1994:138).

2.3.2.3 Extra-curricular activities

Parents should be involved operationally in school activities so that they can help in the realisation of earmarked objectives (Makoanyane, 1989:37-41). He further states that when children see their parents engaged in extracurricular activities, they will also follow suit. Van Schalkwyk and Oosthuizen (1994:138) feel that extracurricular activities indirectly support education. They further state that these activities contribute to the creation and the development of a healthy relationship between parents and educators.

South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 [Section 21 (1)] identifies the following areas where parents may feature in extracurricular activities:

Raising of funds:

This is the main responsibility of parents and should not be left in the hands of children. Through fund-raising, a school can be able to acquire the necessary equipment and teaching aids.

Care of buildings and grounds:

Well-cared for buildings and school grounds may have a tremendous impact on the education of children and their attitude towards life.

Learners learn to appreciate beauty and thus learn to keep themselves and their surroundings in good shape. According to South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 [Section 20 (1)] parents are empowered to manage the property of a school and exercise control over the school activities.

Sports grounds:

Parents are willing to draw up sports programmes and also to be involved in the training of children in various sports. Parents must allow their children to participate in sport as no education is complete without physical development.

Kritzinger (1984:66) views parents as the most important identification figures of their children. The presence of parents at school serves as a stimulant for children. In view of this statement parents cannot be left out of extracurricular activities. Edwards, *et al.* (2000:20) state that it is the prerogative of parents to determine which sport facilities may be established at school. Parents are therefore duty-bound to care for these facilities so that they can ensure that sport can go on unhindered.

It can be concluded that parent influence is very strong on children even if parents are not always physically present in all school activities. Leaving parents out of the extracurricular activities could be disadvantageous for the development of children.

2.3.2.4 Acknowledgement of parents' and educators' contribution in education

The education of a child is seen as a joint venture between a parent and a educator (Oosthuizen, 1989:102). Because parents and educators operate from different areas, they also contribute differently. This means that they should both agree that they are helping each other in different ways to develop a child educationally. A parent is a natural educator while a educator is an appointed educator (Buys, 1986:117-118).

Parents have the right to know what is being taught but do not have the right to decide how teaching should be conducted. While it is important that they should both plan and determine the direction of the education of a child, they have to respect each other's areas of operation for, by so doing, the education of a child will not be marred by conflicts (Kruger, 1987:189).

The South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 [Section 20 (h)] acknowledges parents' and educators' contribution in education by encouraging parents and educators to work together to ensure academic achievement of the learner, render voluntary services to the school and to administer and control the school's property and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable.

From the above statements made it can be deduced that both the educator and parent have rights in the education of the child. However, it is imperative that they should interact so that effective education can be provided. Parents are generally expected to uphold school values and render support when there is a need (Wolfendale, 1989:107).

2.3.2.5 Conclusion

Both parents and educators are partners in education and as such have to share information, skills, responsibilities, accountability and decision-making. Because parents and educators have rights in the education of a child, it is imperative that they work together.

Parents have an educational obligation towards their children. For that reason it would be a mistake to leave them out of curricula and extracurricular activities. Through their involvement in these activities, they would be in a very good position to evaluate the education objectively and should be able to make a meaningful contribution to the

teaching of their children. It is equally important that a parent and an educator should at all times acknowledge the operational areas of each other so that the education of a child can be effective.

2.4 REASONS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement not only has great advantages, but there are also several reasons why it is vital for parents to be involved in the education of their children. By combining the forces of the home, the school and the community the quality of education can be much improved. However, education is a task that no school can undertake on its own.

Van Schalkwyk (1990:19-24) refers to the following compelling reasons for parent involvement.

2.4.1 Parent involvement is a matter of principle

The parents are by virtue of their parenthood the primary and natural educators of their children and for this reason bear the chief responsibility for the children's instruction and education. The parents are fully co-responsible for what happens to their children in formal education.

2.4.2 Parent involvement in formal education is juridically prescribed

Two of the policy principles of the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act 76 of 1984 provide for parent involvement. Parents are also obliged to ensure that their children attend school for as long as the child is required by the law to do so [South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996, Section 3 (1)].

2.4.3 Formal education on its own cannot fully satisfy the demands of the twenty-first century

All the demands of providing instruction fully, comprehensively, normatively, relevantly and on a differentiated basis can no longer be met by the school alone. Parents must support and assist formal education in the interest of more comprehensive education (UNISA Metropolitan Life, 1994:4).

2.4.4 Guarantee for maintenance of community values

By becoming involved parents can ensure that the values, spirit, direction and character of the community are established and maintained in the school.

2.4.5 The high cost of education requires that funds be utilised in the best possible way

At present 25 per cent of the South African national budget is devoted to education. Parents and the private sector also make large financial contributions and parents should, through their involvement, ensure effective teaching and learning.

2.4.6 The intellectual development of the child calls for parent-educator co-operation

The first seventeen years of a child's life are the most important for the development of their minds and parents play an important role in this development. It is essential that a parent should be involved in the formal education of the child (Kruger, 1989:33).

According to Heystek & Louw (1999:21) principals of South African schools express the desire that parents must participate more actively in school activities and co-operate with the educators with the aim of improving the standard of education. Gene &

Stoneman (1997:569) mention that co-operation of parents with educators in school activities has a positive influence on the academic achievement of learners. Parents and educators must take note of these important reasons why it is vital for parents and educators to co-operate effectively when participating in school activities.

2.5 THE ADVANTAGES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

According to Galvin, *et al.* (1990:25-30), the influence of parents on the social and emotional development of their children is very strong. Children spend more time at home than they do at school, and their parents usually have primary responsibility, as well as real concern, for them. Moreover, children come to school with values, beliefs and knowledge that they have learned informally from their parents. Parents can thus make a valuable contribution to the educational process through their commitment to and knowledge of their children. Review of literature indicates that parent involvement programmes benefit all role-players, namely parents, learners, educators, school and the community as a whole.

2.5.1 Advantages for learners

There is widespread understanding of both the crucial and continuing role that parents play as educators in the education, welfare and development of their children (Bastiani, 1993:141). Research underscores that children are more successful learners at all grade levels if their parents participate in school activities and encourage education and learning at home, regardless of the educational background or social class of their parents (Dauber & Epstein 1993:53; Wanat, 1994:632).

Learners' attitudes about themselves and their control over the environment are critical to achievement. These attitudes are formed at home and are the product of myriad

interactions between parents, children and the surrounding community. In other words, when parents show an interest in their children's education and have high expectations for their performance, they promote the attitudes that are the key to achievement (Henderson, 1987:4). Haberman (1992:33) agrees that there is substantial evidence that changing the school climate and involving parents will substantially raise not only the achievement of low-income, at risk children, but will change their self-concept and motivation as well.

It is true that motivated learners have more positive attitudes toward schools, better homework habits, higher attendance, lower dropout rates and improved behaviour is supported by well-documented research (Hamby, 1992:54; Henderson, 1987:19; Swap, 1993:210). In one project, for example, fifth grade learners were surveyed for their reactions to educator practices of parent involvement and their parents' help at home. Learners whose educators and parents used frequent parent involvement practices reported more positive attitudes toward school; more regular homework habits; greater concurrence between the school and family practices; more familiarity between the educator and their parents; and more homework completed on weekends (Epstein, 1990:111). All these factors obviously contribute to improved learner achievement. Moreover, Hamby (1992:59) has found that increased achievement is sustained across grade levels for low-income learners as well as for middle-income ones.

2.5.2 Advantages for parents

When educators make parent involvement part of their regular teaching practice, parents increase their interaction with their children at home, and feel more positive about their own abilities to help their children (Epstein & Dauber, 1991:290; Hamby, 1992:59).

Parents benefit by being alerted to different and more effective ways of creating or developing learning opportunities and stimulating experiences for their children by parenting programmes (Wolfendale, 1992:9). However, most parents need help to know how to be productively involved in their children's education at each grade level (Epstein & Dauber, 1991:290).

Davies (1993:206) also lists many benefits for parents when they become involved in the education of their children, including greater appreciation of their own important roles, strengthened social network; access to information and materials; personal efficacy and motivation to continue their own education. The contact with other parents experiencing comparable problems often has very positive results. Moreover, by understanding their adolescents better, parents are in a position to work with the school in resolving other school-related issues.

Becher (Henderson, 1987:17-18) adds that parents actively involved in their children's education, develop more positive attitudes about school and school personnel; help gather support in the community for parent involvement programmes; become more active in community affairs and develop increased self-confidence. Most parents report the pleasure of getting to know educators as people and they find a new appreciation for the commitment and skill of educators as well as an increase in their own parenting abilities.

Collaboration between parents and children reduces the characteristic isolation of their roles. It is very reassuring for parents to know that educators share their concerns about their children. In turn it is comforting for educators to know that a parent recognises the complexity of their role in the classroom (Swap, 1993:11).

2.5.3 Advantages for educators and schools

Increased parent and community involvement can also bring multiple benefits to educators and schools. The educator's work can be made more manageable, parents who are involved have more positive views of the educator and the school, and the parents and others who participate are likely to be more supportive of the schools (Davies, 1993:206). This view is shared by Epstein and Dauber (1991:289) when they remark that parents rate educators higher overall, when they are involved with the school in any way. Moreover, educators come to know and understand parents better (Hamby, 1992:59). This obviously increases educators' understanding of the children in the family and provides information, which may be of value in the handling of specific children. Educators also report more positive feelings about their school when their children's education rate, all parents, including less educated and single parents as helpful (Epstein, 1990:112). Educators are impressed by the mutuality of interests and find that collaboration both broadens their perspective as well as increases their sensitivity to varied parent circumstances (Swap, 1993:10).

This is corroborated by the observation of Becker (Henderson, 1987:17-18) that educators become more proficient in their professional activities, devote more time to teaching, experiment more frequently, and develop a more learner-orientated approach when there is parent involvement. In programmes where parents and educators work together successfully, educators experience support and appreciation from parents and a rekindling of their own enthusiasm for problem solving (Swap, 1993:10).

Collaboration between the school and parents also increases the resources available to the school, for example, parents may contribute to school as volunteers or paid aides, thus helping to individualise and enrich student work. Parents' expertise may help a

school in the development or maintenance of the school buildings and grounds. Parents may also provide linkages to partnerships with businesses, agencies, cultural institutions, or other resources in the community. Moreover, parents can be a political asset, when they argue for the interests of children and schools at board meetings or in legislative sessions (Swap, 1993:11).

Increased linkages between school and community have been shown to have multiple positive results: increased access to school resources and facilities, cost saving and improved services through collaboration, increased capacity to solve community problems, and community pride (Davies, 1993:206).

Parent and citizen participation in the schools can also contribute to advancing the prospects of a more democratic and equitable society (Davies, 1993:206). For example, increased opportunities for participation in school decision-making contribute to skills of individual and collective empowerment. These are important ingredients for effective citizen action in all areas of civic life.

Van Schalkwyk (1990:25 - 32) describes the following advantages of parent involvement in terms of its value for the educator, the learner and the school.

2.5.4 Advantages for the educators

- Parent involvement can engender a more positive spirit between parent and educators.
- It can work to restore trust between the parental home and the educator.
- Parent involvement means that educators can rely on parents' support.
- Knowledge of the circumstances of learners at home can help the educator in his or her instructional task.

- It can work to improve the conduct of learners.
- Parents can lighten educators' workload.

2.5.5 Advantages for the learner

- Parent involvement can improve the learner's learning performance.
- It can improve school attendance.
- It can help to eliminate learning and behavioural problems.
- Parent involvement can increase the learner's sense of security and emotional stability.
- Advantages for the school
- Parent involvement can improve the unity and co-ordination of education.
- The involvement of parents can mean valuable service in the interests of the school.
- Parent involvement can lead to an improvement in the support from the community.
- Parent involvement can lead to greater financial support.

Clearly, therefore, parents who are involved in one way or another in the education of their children create a climate that is conducive to teaching and learning activities.

According to Squelch & Lemmer (1994:93) benefits of parent involvement include improved school performance, reduced dropout rates, a decreased in delinquency and a more positive attitude towards the school.

In summary the above literature indicates decisively that parent involvement increases learner achievement, improves their self-esteem, school attendance and behaviour. Collaboration generally results in increased individual support for educators and

parents, as well as a feeling of satisfaction at contributing to important changes in learners and in the school. Parent involvement also increases the resources available to learners, educators, parents, and the school, and often leads to collaboration with business of agencies within the community (Swap, 1993:12).

2.6 WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS BECOME INVOLVED IN EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

Engelbrecht, *et al.* (1996:301) and Le Roux (1994:73), offer the following methods to improve parent involvement in the education of their children.

- Homework assignments that invite parent participation by clarifying what the child may not understand.
- Parent books that the parent has to sign after he or she has gone through the schoolwork of the child as proof that the parent is aware of the child's performance at school.
- Parent meetings that provide or inform parents about the skills their children are learning and to show off the school, including learners' scholastic progress, equipment and materials. The parent meetings provide parents with an opportunity to experience directly what their children are learning and how instruction is imparted.
- The newsletter is an effective way of periodically communicating information to parents. A large majority of parents read and respond to the newsletter, as it serves as a medium for conveying specific, current information to parents.

- The parent-educator organisations are the most familiar non-statutory structures that bring families and schools together. The main purpose of these bodies is to unite the efforts of parents and educators when some service is required.
- Home visits are essential to acquaint the educator with the home environment and provide a relaxed setting for discussing common issues on school matters. Parents can be shown how they can help their children with their studies at home. Both parents and educators benefit from such visits as they get to know one another better.
- Parents or other members of the community can be invited to give talks to learners and educators on topics in which they have a particular interest or of which they have a specialised knowledge.

2.7 REASONS FOR LACK OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Although there is often a great deal of support for increased parent involvement in education, in practice it is generally poor. This can be attributed to various factors. Successful parent involvement depends on the educator's ability to reach the parents and to establish an inviting and non-threatening environment. Various barriers to effective and successful parent involvement can be identified, which can be categorised into educator obstacles and parent obstacles (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:98).

Involving parents in schools has become a major goal of education professionals, particularly those working with at-risk learners (Bermudez, 1993:1760; Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:98-100). In most cases, however, collaboration between the home, school and the community remains a distant reality. Factors limiting or impeding parent

involvement include the following (Heystek, 1998:21-23; Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:98-100):

2.7.1 Educator obstacles

2.7.1.1 Negative expectations about working with parents

Previous non-productive encounters between parents and educators often leave educators with the impression that trying to collaborate with parents is a waste of time and they doubt the support parents can give. They also sometimes have the impression that parents, especially those who for various reasons cannot attend or support school functions on a regular basis, are not interested in their children's education or the school.

2.7.1.2 Lack of training in working with parents

Educators are trained for teaching children and not for working with parents. Educators need to be trained to work with all kinds of parents, including those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

2.7.1.3 Feeling threatened by parents

Educators are particularly threatened by parents who might question or challenge their professional competence.

2.7.1.4 Interpreting parent involvement as parent interference

Educators resent parent involvement and regard it as interference rather than seeing it as a genuine concern for the learner's education.

2.7.2 Parent obstacles

2.7.2.1 Feelings of intimidation

Parents feel overwhelmed and intimidated by educators and the whole school environment, especially if the school does not have an inviting, open door policy

2.7.2.2 Parents who want to help but do not know how

Many parents would like to participate more in the education of their children but are unsure of their rights and the activities in which they can become involved. They are often afraid of being labelled as interfering parents and of their children being victimised as a result of this.

2.7.2.3 Parents' negative view of educator competence

There are those parents who for various reasons doubt and question the educator's ability and professional competence. These feelings towards an educator can be communicated in different ways, from outright aggression to subtle questioning. This can also severely affect the child's performance and break down home-school relations.

2.7.2.4 Difficult work schedules

Many parents simply cannot be involved in their children's education because of the nature of their occupations. Efforts need to be made to find ways of making it possible for involving these parents, especially in home-based activities.

2.7.2.5 Cultural barriers

Some parents are excluded from participation in school and home activities because of cultural aspects. For example, parents who do not speak the language of the school are often excluded because they are unable to communicate with staff.

2.7.2.6 Socio-economic barriers

Parents from lower income groups often do not get involved in school activities even though they are generally strong supporters of education. Low-income parents are often restricted in their ability to purchase books and educational games, and to pay for special educational excursions or extra-curricular activities. In these situations schools, through various community-oriented projects, can assist parents by providing educational material and by assisting with transport to and from school activities.

2.7.2.7 Single-parent families

While single parents may share the same interests and aspirations for the education of their children as two-parent families, circumstances might prevent them from attending and participating in school functions. They are thus often viewed as unsupportive and uncaring. Educators need to be sensitive to these parents and they should consider ways of making them feel wanted and needed, for example by arranging flexible times for parent-educator conferences. These parents can also be included in more home-based activities.

In conclusion it appears as if parents are available but untapped resource that educators can mobilise to help children master and maintain needed skills for school. But this requires educators' leadership in organising, evaluating, and continually building their parent involvement practices (Epstein, 1990:274).

2.8 PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical stance of the role players towards home-school relations is a modifying factor influencing the outcome of these relations. This is because the degree to which educators and parents are influenced by a specific theoretical stance will influence the extent to which collaboration between the home and the school exists.

Substantial theorising has been done on this topic to which attention will now be given.

2.8.1 The Comer approach to parent involvement

The Comer model (Emmons *et al.* 1996:21) holds that if you empower parents and educators to work in partnership with schools, and if the developmental needs of the whole child are addressed in the process, then learners will succeed in school. The programme developed by Comer to improve schooling, particularly within lower socio-economic groupings, has been in place since the 1970's and is currently being implemented in 563 schools in more than 80 districts in 21 states in the USA.

According to Comer (1988:13-14) educators responded to post second world war conditions by raising credential standards and improving course content and teaching methods, but paid little attention to the quality of relationships between educators and learners, among school staff, and between staff and community, particularly parents. In contrast Comer's School Development Programme promotes development and learning by building supportive bonds that draw together learners, parents and school (Comer, 1988:24).

The *School Development Programme* (SDP) can best be conceived of as a systematic process that targets the entire school for change. It includes nine basic components (three mechanisms, three operations, three guidelines) to ensure that all school

decisions are made in the best interest of learners (Borton, Preston and Bippert, 1996:1; Comer & Haynes 1991:272). The three mechanisms comprise: the School Planning and Management Team, the Parent Team, and the Learner and Staff Support Team (Comer *et al.* 1996:9). In his/her earlier publications the Learner and Staff Support Team was known as the Mental Health Team (Comer and Haynes, 1991:272).

2.8.1.1 The three mechanisms of the *School Development Programme*

The three mechanisms of the *School Development Programme* (SDP) are explained as follows.

- The School Planning and Management Team is the central organising body in the school and includes the principal, educators, parents, and support staff representatives (Comer *et al.* 1996:11). Among others, the School Planning and Management Team develops a comprehensive school plan, plans staff development activities, and assesses and modifies the school plan in order to improve learner achievement (Borton & Preston, 1996:1; Comer, 1988:15).
- The Parent Team involves parents in every facet of school life, including active daily participation in school endeavours, policy and management issues and general school support (Haynes & Comer, 1993:168). However, parent collaborators contribute mainly in the area of school climate, thereby helping to eliminate harmful stereotypes that staff members may harbour about the community served by their school (Perry & Tannenbaum, 1992:107). The Parent Team also bridges the gap between the school and the home and is actively involved in developing workshops for themselves and the learners (Flaxman & Inger, 1992:17). One such programme, implemented with great success, is the Social Skills Curriculum for Inner-City Learners (Comer & Haynes, 1991:275). According to Comer (1988:15) the need for

parent involvement programmes is greatest in low-income and minority communities or where parents feel a sense of exclusion, low self-esteem and/or hopelessness.

- The Learner and Staff Support Team includes staff with child development and mental health knowledge and experience, such as the school psychologist, guidance counsellor, school nurse, special education educator, attendance officer, learner personnel worker, and any other appropriate staff member (Comer, *et al.* 1996:12). The Learner and Staff Support Team work mostly preventively and prescriptively and share learner development and behaviour knowledge, skills and sensitivity with parents, educators, and administrators (Comer, 1988:15).

The three mechanisms (the School Planning and Management Team, the Parent Team, and the Learner and Staff Support Team) described above are driven by the following three operations:

2.8.1.2 The three operations of the *School Development Programme*

The three operations are (Haynes & Comer, 1993:168):

- A comprehensive school plan that delineates the social and academic goals and activities of the school;
- Staff development activities designed to address the goals and activities of the school; and
- Monitoring and assessment that generate useful data on programme processes and outcomes and recycles information back to inform programme modification where necessary and establish new goals and objectives.

In order to sustain a learning and caring community in which all adults feel respected and where all learners feel valued and motivated to learn and achieve, the work of the team is driven by three guiding principles, consensus decision making, genuine collaboration, and a no-fault approach to problem solving (Borton, Preston & Bippert, 1996:1).

2.8.1.3 The three guiding principles of the *school development programme*

- *Consensus* allows for brainstorming, in-depth discussions, cross-fertilisation of ideas, and a plan for trying different solutions in some sequence.
- *Collaboration* requires all concerned to respect the other person's point of view and to demonstrate a willingness to work as part of a team (Comer, *et al.* 1996:10).
- A *no-fault* philosophy puts the emphasis on problem solving rather than fault finding, ensuring that everyone accepts equal responsibility for change. Haynes, *et al* (1996:57) explain that accountability is accepted by the team, but time and energy are not wasted in acts of blaming.

2.8.2 The Epstein theory of parent involvement

In the 1980's, Epstein developed a theoretical model to explain parent involvement (Epstein, 1996:214). Underlying this, Epstein (1996:121) identified three perspectives, which guide researchers and practitioners in their thinking about family and school relations.

2.8.2.1 The three perspectives

Epstein (1996:121) enumerates three guiding perspectives for researchers and practitioners in their thinking about family and school relations:

- separate responsibilities of families and schools;
- shared responsibilities of families and schools;
- sequential responsibilities of families and schools.

Assumptions based on the separate responsibilities of institutions emphasise the inherent incompatibility, competition and conflict between families and schools. The Epstein's theory of parent involvement (Epstein, 1996:121) assumes that school bureaucracies and family organisations are directed by educators and parents respectively, who can best fulfil their different goals, roles and responsibilities. In other words, the distinct goal of parents and educators can best be achieved when educators keep a professional distance from and equal standards for learners in their classroom, in contrast with parents who develop personal relationships with and individual expectations for their children at home (Christenson, Rounds & Franklin, 1992:36).

The opposing assumptions based on shared responsibilities of the school and home, emphasises the co-ordination, corporation and complementarity of schools and families, and encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions (Epstein, 1996:121). In this opposing assumption, based on shared responsibilities, the schools and families share responsibilities for the socialisation of the learner. Educators and parents are believed to share common goals for learners that are achieved most effectively when educators and parents work together. This perspective is based on models of inter-institutional interactions and ecological designs that emphasise the natural and necessary connections between individuals and their groups and organisations.

In this perspective an overlap of responsibilities between parents and educators is expected (Christenson, *et al.* 1992:36).

Although educators may combine these perspectives, they tend to emphasise the precepts of one theory when organising their teaching practices.

Finally, in the third perspective, the sequential perspective, the critical stages of parents' and educators' contribution to learner development is emphasised (Epstein, 1996:121). Parents teach needed skills to children until the time of their formal education around the ages of five or six. At that time, educators assume the primary responsibility for learners' education. These major theoretical perspectives on home-school relations have a profound effect and either encourage or discourage parent involvement in the schools. Epstein (1996:122-123) points out that the three main theories explain the basic differences in philosophies and approaches of educators and parents and produce more or fewer, shallow or deep family-school connections.

The perspectives on family-school relations do not however explain motivations to reinforce or remove boundaries between schools and families, nor the changing patterns in home-school relations. They also fail to explain the influence families and schools have on each other or take cognisance of learner development and the effect thereof on home-school relations. To address all the variables, Epstein (1996:126) proposes an integrated theory of family-school relations characterised by a set of overlapping spheres of influences.

2.8.2.2 The theory of overlapping spheres of influence

In the 1980's Epstein (1996:214) developed a theoretical perspective called overlapping spheres of influence based on data collected from educators, parents and

learners. This was based on the needs, for a social organisational perspective that posits that the most effective families and schools have overlapping, shared goals and missions concerning learners, and conducted some work collaboratively.

The theory (model) of overlapping spheres of influence includes both external and internal structures. The external structure can, by condition or design, be pushed together or pulled apart by three main forces (Epstein, 1996:214). These forces created conditions, space, and opportunities for more or fewer shared activities of schools, families, and communities. The forces are (Epstein, 1990:103):

- time: to account for changes in the ages and grade levels of learners and the influence of historical period,
- the philosophies, policies, and practices of the family,
- the philosophies, policies and practices of the school.

These forces determine how much and what kinds of overlap occur at any given time, and affect the interactions among the members of these institutions.

The internal structure represents the patterns of interaction of the participants within context at the institutional and individual levels (Swap & Epstein, 1995:499). Institutional level interactions involve all members or groups within schools, families, and communities, individual interactions involve one learner, parent, or community member (Epstein, 1996:215). Combinations of these interactions may also occur within the areas of overlap.

Epstein's model of overlapping spheres assumes that there are mutual interests and influence of families and schools that can be more or less successfully promoted by the

policies and programmes of the organisations and the action and attitudes of the individuals in the organisations (Epstein, 1996:130).

The model argues that although some practices of families and schools are conducted independently, other practices reflect the shared responsibilities of parents and educators for the learners' learning and development. When educators and administrators adhere to the perspective of separate responsibilities of families and schools, they emphasise the specialisation of skills required by educators for school training and by parents for home training. With specialisation comes division of labour that pulls the spheres of school and family influences apart, decrease overlap and restrict interaction between parents and educators (Epstein, 1996:104). According to Epstein (1996:131) when educators and parents emphasise their shared responsibilities, they support the generalisation of skills required by educators and by parents to produce educated and successful learners. Their combination of labour pushes the spheres of family and school influence together, increases interaction between parents and school personnel about the developing learner, and creates school-like families and family-like schools. A family-like school recognises each learner's individuality and makes each learner feel special and included. Such schools welcome all families and not just those that are easy to reach (Epstein, 1995:702). A school-like family recognises that each child is also a learner and reinforces the importance of school, homework, and the activities that build learner skills and feelings of success (Epstein, 1995:502). Communities also create family-like settings, services and events to enable families to better support their children. Community-minded families and learners help their neighbourhoods and other families. Schools and communities talk about programmes and services that are family friendly. This means that they take into account the needs and realities of family life in the 1990's, are

feasible to conduct, and are equitable toward all families. When all these concepts combine, learners experience learning communities or caring communities (Epstein, 1995:702).

Across the grades, as learners, families and schools change, the nature and extent of overlap in practices and the interpersonal relationships among partners also change. For example, efforts to involve parents typically start to drop as early as grade 2 or 3 (Epstein, 1996:129).

The Epstein model illustrates that at any time, in any school, and in any family, parent involvement is a variable that can be increased or decreased by the practices of educators, parents, administrators, and learners (Christenson *et al.* 1992:36). Moreover, the overlapping spheres of influence recognise the multiple contexts and interpersonal relations of all participants.

Because it is assumed that the learner is the reason for the connections between home and school, the model focuses on the key role of the child as a learner in interactions between families and schools, parents and educators, or other influential participants (Hidalgo *et al.* 1995:499). The learners are the key to successful school and family partnerships. Epstein (1996:702) explains that the unarguable fact is that learners are the main actors in their education, development, and success in school.

Schools, family, and community partnerships cannot simply produce successful learners. Rather, partnership activities may be designed to engage, guide and motivate learners to produce their own success. According to Epstein (1995:702) the assumption is that if learners feel cared for and encouraged to work hard in the role of learner, they are more likely to do their best academically, and to remain at school.

Initially, a framework of five major types of involvement that fall within the areas of overlap in the spheres of the influence model were identified (Davies, 1991:377). These include: basic obligations of families, communication from the school, volunteers, learning activities at home, and decision-making (Epstein, 1992:503). When guided by schools, practices of all types help all families participate as acknowledgeable partners in their children's education. A sixth type of school and family partnership has now been added to this list: collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995:704).

2.8.2.3 Epstein's typology of parent involvement

According to Epstein (1996:215) there will be more or less overlap and shared responsibility depending on whether many or few practices of the six types of involvement are working, and each practice that is implemented opens opportunities for varied interaction of educators, parents, and others across contexts. Epstein (1996:215-216) briefly describes the six types as follows.

- Type 1 - parenting: Assist families with parenting and childbearing skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each stage and grade level.
- Type 2 - Communication: Communicate with families about school programmes and learner progress with school-to-home and home-to-school communication
- Type 3 - Volunteering: Improve recruitment, training, work and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school or in other locations to support learners and school programmes.
- Type 4 - Learning at home: Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework, and other curricular-linked activities and decisions.

- Type 5 – Decision-making: Include parents as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through PTA, committees, councils, and other parent organisations.
- Type 6 - Collaborating with the community: Co-ordinate the work and resources of community, business, colleges or universities, and other groups to strengthen school programmes, family practices and learner learning and development.

Each of the six types of involvement poses specific challenges for its successful design and implementation, and each type leads to some different results or outcomes for learners, parents, and educators (Epstein, 1996:216). Moreover, research on parent involvement can be successfully located within this framework.

Epstein (1996:16) argues that good programmes to implement or improve parent involvement will look different in each site, as individual schools tailor their practices to meet the needs and interests, time and talents, ages and grade levels of learners and their families. There are, however, some commonalities across successful programmes at all grade levels. These include a recognition of the overlapping spheres of influence on learner development; attention to various types of involvement that promote a variety of opportunities for schools, families, and communities to work together; and an action team for school, family and community partnerships to co-ordinate each school's work and progress (Epstein, 1996:704).

In conclusion, it appears that each of the scholars and projects mentioned above is distinctive. Most have their own orthodoxies, and some have become the equivalent of brand names. But the commonalities outweigh the differences and add up to a new definition of what has usually been called parent involvement. With reference to Epstein's model, Davies (1991:377) lists three themes of central importance:

- Providing success for all learners: This means that no learners should be labelled as likely failures because of the social, economic or racial characteristics of their families or communities.
- Serving the whole learner: Social, physical, and academic growth and development are intrinsically linked. To foster cognitive and academic development, all other facets of development must also be addressed by school, families and other institutions that affect the learner.
- Shared responsibility: The social, emotional, physical, and academic development of the learner is shared and overlapping responsibility, of the school, the family, and the community. In order to promote the social and academic development of learners, the key institutions must change their practices and their relationships with one another.

2.8.3 Swap's models of parent involvement

Swap (1992:57) proposes that parent involvement programmes are to be organised according to three different models, namely: the school-to-home transmission model; the curriculum-enrichment model, and the partnership model for school success. Swap (1993:28) also adds a fourth model, which she calls the protective model, which includes minimal parent involvement.

2.8.3.1 The Protective model

This is Swap's (1993:28) most dominant model for home-school relationships. The goal of the Protective model is to reduce conflict between parents and educators, primarily through the separation of parents and educators' functions. Swap refers to this model

as the Protective model because its aims to protect the school from interference by parents. This model is driven by the following three assumptions (Swap, 1993:28):

- parents delegate to school the responsibility of educating their children,
- parents hold school personnel responsible for the results, and
- educators accept this delegation of responsibility.

According to this model, parent involvement in decision-making or collaborative problem solving is seen as inappropriate and as an interference with the educator's job.

According to Swap (1993:29), many educators share this attitude, as illustrated by a educator's comment, "Parents should be actively involve with learners at home. The responsibility of parents ends at home. Educators are responsible for teaching".

The disadvantages of this model include: ignoring the potential of home-school collaboration for improving learner achievement; exacerbating many conflicts between home and school by not providing structures or opportunities for preventive problem solving; and losing out on the wealth of resources for enrichment and school support available from families and other members of the community (Swap, 1993:29).

2.8.3.2 The school-to-home transmission model

In the school-to-home transmission model educators specify what parents should do to support their children's learning at home (Swap, 1992:58). In this model educators envisage the participation of parents in two ways. The primary expectation is that parents will aid their children's learning by endorsing the importance of schooling and making sure that the learner meets the minimum academic and behavioural requirements. In line with this expectation educators, for example, expect parents to make sure that children complete their homework. Or, if learners are getting into trouble

at school, educators hope that the parents will work with them to reinforce expectations of good behaviour and create conditions at home that support a change of behaviour.

A secondary expectation is that parents will spend enough time with their children to transfer cultural capital to them. The latter comprises the way of being, knowing, writing, talking, and thinking which characterise those who are successful within the dominant culture (Swap, 1992:58). Schools hope that parents can in some way contribute to the cultural capital of the child. A minimum version of this expectation is that parents will read to their children and listen to their children reading to them. Parents might also contribute to their children's cultural capital through such activities as helping their children with a science project or visiting a museum.

The importance of parents supporting the growth of children's social skills is endorsed by Comer (1980:192).

Children whose parents feel that they can and should be a part of the social mainstream have the best chance to acquire the social skills that will lead to school and life success. Children whose parents are not part of the social mainstream can acquire such skills if they are taught in school and there is parental support for their acquisition and use. Regardless of the social background of the parent, the climate and the operation of a school must be reasonably good to constructively enhance children's social skills.

The values and behaviours which are hypothesised to undergird school successes are, however, not necessarily confined to parents of a particular class, racial, or ethnic background. Swap (1992:59) explains that middle-class parents may, for example, not support the mainstream values of hard work, self-discipline, self-motivation, and respectful manner; yet poor families may teach those skills very successfully.

Although schools rely on parents to support the school, it is the school personnel who define goals and programmes (Swap, 1993:30). Two-way communication is not sought because the goal is for parents to understand and support the school's objectives. Swap (1992:59) explains that parent programmes based on the school-to-home transmission often contain components that reflect an unwillingness to consider parents as equal partners having important strengths.

2.8.3.3 The Curriculum Enrichment model

The model is built on an explicit premise of mutual respect between parents and educators, and stresses mutual learning and mutually developed objectives (Swap, 1993:38).

Within this model there are two valued outcomes that justify parent involvement: learners' successful achievement in the mainstream and the valuing of the goals and beliefs of the non-mainstream culture (Swap, 1992:61). The Curriculum Enrichment model is different from the other models of parent involvement, because its assumptions do not necessarily permeate all aspects of the school culture and structure. Its focus is on curriculum and instruction (Swap, 1993:39).

One aspect of the Curriculum Enrichment model is the recognition by parents and educators of the importance of continuity between the home and school. Lightfoot, quoted by Swap (1992:62) articulates the importance of a home-to-school connection by bringing more parents into the school and recruiting more educators into the school who reflect and value the learner's culture so that parents and educators get to know each other through frequent informal communication, shared projects or through volunteering in the classroom.

If one recognises the initial social and cultural task assumed by all families and their primary education function, then it becomes clear that in order for schools to be productive and comfortable environments for learners, they will have to meaningfully incorporate the familiar and cultural skills and values learned in homes and communities.

2.8.3.4 The Partnership model

Schools prescribing to this model view parent-school partnership as a fundamental component of learners' success, and educators welcome parents as assets and resources in the search for strategies that will achieve success for all learners (Swap, 1992:63). According to Swap (1993:49) the Partnership model differs from the School-to-Home Transmission model in its emphasis on two-way communication, parental strengths, and problems solving with parents. The Partnership model also differs from the Curriculum Enrichment model in promoting a single unifying mission that suffuses the entire culture and galvanises all aspects of the school.

Although curriculum revision is seen as an essential tool in achieving the mission, the emphasis also extends to other areas. In the partnership model, parent involvement is seen not as an addendum, but as an indispensable component of school reform (Swap, 1993:50). The most important precepts of this model will now be described below.

In the first place there is clarity and consensus about goals, which means that the school, parent, and the community must have a shared sense of mission about creating success for all learners (Levin, 1987:20). One of the key ingredients is developing a shared mission of success for all learners and agreement on the standards by which success will be measured.

Cuban (1989:30) speaks of adults and children sharing common values about respect, intellectual achievement, and caring for one another. Such commitment represents a significant change in how school failure is conceptualised. This can be viewed as a paradigm shift in which blaming families and children for failure is replaced by an expectation of success for all children (Seeley, 1989:47).

In the second place a revised curriculum is suggested (Swap, 1992:65). This means that a remedial approach to educating at-risk learners is replaced by an accelerated approach. A comprehensive, intensive curriculum is used which assesses learners' progress frequently, and provides individual support through peer or educator instruction. Moreover, the implementation of successful educational programmes to address the needs of educationally disadvantaged learners requires the involvement of parents and the extensive participation of educators. Levin (1987:20) argues that such an approach would create learning activities characterised by high expectations and a learning environment characterised by high status for the participant.

In the third place local autonomy and control is required (Swap, 1992:65). This is necessary so that educators and principals have the flexibility to respond to changing needs within the school. Moreover, control over major decisions about budget, incentives, resources, curriculum, schedule, and educator assignments builds commitment, ownership and professionalism among the staff (Swap, 1992: 65). Fourthly, Swap (1992:65) maintains partnership among educators, parents and community members. Schorr (1988:257) underscores this, stating that successful programmes see the learner in the context of family and its surroundings.

Recognition of the necessity of collaboration among educators, parents and community representatives in meeting the goal of success for all learners is an essential part of the paradigm shift, as articulated by Seeley (1989:47).

Meaningful parent involvement in schools has been shown to improve learner achievement, decrease dropout rate, and improve behaviour regardless of the socio-economic class of the family. Translating the rhetoric of increased parent involvement into action, however, has proved difficult. Solomon (1991:360) points out that parent involvement that boosts learner learning doesn't just happen. Thoughtful, co-ordinated planning and systematic actions must integrate parent involvement into school and classroom programmes. Such co-ordination starts with leadership at the state level.

However, for whatever reason, state-level administrators have played a limited leadership role in the parent involvement movement. In actual practice, they do not seem to have advanced much beyond the concept of 'bake sale' parent involvement (Nardine & Morris, 1991:366).

In conclusion it appears as if parents are an available but untapped resource that educators can mobilise to help learners master and maintain needed skills for school. But this requires educators' leadership, evaluating, and continually building their parent involvement practices.

2.8.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, parent involvement as a theoretical framework for the discussion of parent involvement in education of their children was dealt with. Consideration was given to an explication of the definition of parent involvement, nature and scope of parent involvement, reasons for parent involvement, advantages of parent involvement,

ways in which parents become involved in the education of their children, reasons for non-involvement of parents in education, and various models of parental involvement.

The next chapter will deal with parent involvement in education in South Africa.