

Parental roles towards the creation of health
promoting schools

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to all the parents of South Africa who are toiling day and night, striving to promote the health of their children in schools despite their circumstances. I salute you.

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Abstract

Key words for indexing: Parents/ parental roles/ parental involvement/ health promotion/health promoting schools/ health/ education/ schools/ family/ children.

A call for parents to be involved in the education of their children is not a modern phenomenon at all. It is increasingly a call which invites parents to be involved in every sphere of their children's lives, including their health. Children of South Africa, like many other children in Africa, are engulfed with health issues. These problems range from drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, obesity, violence, suicide, alcohol, etc. Therefore, it is crucial to engage parents in an effort to promote the health of their children in school and together with schools.

Various parental roles were established during the early part of the century when parents were obliged to raise their children according to the set standard. As time went by, schools clearly drew a line to distinguish their role from parents' roles. Later on a need for parental involvement in schools arose again and a call for parents to attend to their obligations was a necessity, although parents were seen as problems by teachers. This allowed a space for barriers to grow between parents and teachers to such an extent that there was no collaboration in addressing problems affecting children in schools.

To investigate the issue of parental roles and health promotion in schools thoroughly, qualitative measures were applied. The analysis indicated that there is indeed a great need for parents to be involved in promoting the health of their children in schools. However, a lack of knowledge amongst parents and a lack of skills to work with parents amongst teachers hamper the possibility of preventing most of the health issues affecting many children of South Africa.

Indeed parental participation in schools and health promoting schools can yield positive results not only for the children, but for the schools and parents as well. Therefore, the government must employ practical strategies to involve parents in promoting the health of children in schools.

Opsomming

Sleutelwoorde vir indeksering: Ouers/ ouerlike rolle/ ouer betrokkenheid/ gesondheidsbevordering/ gesondheidsbevorderende skole/ gesondheid/ opvoeding/ skole/ familie/ kinders.

'n Oproep aan ouers om betrokke te wees by die onderrig van hulle kinders is glad nie 'n uitsluitlik moderne fenomeen nie. Dit word toenemend 'n oproep wat ouers nooi om betrokke te raak in elke sfeer van hulle kinders se lewens, insluitende hulle gesondheid. Suid-Afrikaanse kinders, soos ander kinders in Afrika, word verswelg deur gesondheidskwessies. Die probleme sluit in dwelm misbruik, tienerswangerskap, vetsug, geweld, selfmoord, alkohol, ens. Dit word dus krities om ouers te betrek by 'n poging om die gesondheid van hulle kinders by die skool en saam met die skool te bevorder.

Verskeie ouerlike rolle het ontstaan in die vroeë deel van die eeu soos ouers verplig was om hulle kinders volgens bestaande standarde groot te maak. Soos die tyd verloop het, het skole duidelik onderskei tussen die rolle van ouers en onderwysers. Later het die behoefte aan ouerlike betrokkenheid by skole weer toegeneem en die oproep aan ouers om hulle verantwoordelikhede na te kom het 'n vereiste geword, alhoewel sommige onderwysers ouers beskou as probleme. Dit het ruimte gelaat vir skeiding om te ontwikkel tussen ouers en onderwysers tot so 'n mate dat daar geen verdere samewerking meer was met die aanspreek van probleme wat kinders affekteer nie.

Kwalitatiewe maatstawwe is gebruik om die saak van ouerrolle en gesondheidsbevordering in skole te ondersoek. Die analise het aangedui dat daar inderdaad 'n groot behoefte is dat ouers betrek moet word by die bevordering van die gesondheid van hulle kinders in skole. Die gebrek aan kennis onder ouers en onderwysers se gebrek aan vaardighede om met ouers te werk beskadig egter die moontlikheid van die voorkoming van baie van die gesondheidsprobleme wat kinders in Suid-Afrika affekteer.

Ouerlike samewerking met skole en gesondheidsbevorderende skole kan positiewe resultate lewer, nie slegs vir die kinders nie, maar ook vir die ouers en skole. Daarom moet die regering praktiese strategieë implementeer om ouers te betrek by die bevordering van die gesondheid van kinders in skole.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction and orientation

South Africa as a democratic country faces many challenges in its development, including the limited resources available at all levels for attending to the multitude of problems that are faced in education today (Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge & Ngcobo, 2008:2). The main challenge faced in South Africa is the building of a true humane society, i.e a society that respects the rights of the individual, a society that unites rather than divides, and on top of that which enables and empowers its citizens to participate fully and creatively in its ongoing development (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002:2).

Implied in these challenges is the reconstruction of an education system that includes room for parents and community participation. The challenge of the reconstruction of education is most urgent. If parents have to think about the future of their children, they need to know and understand their roles. The ties between the school and parents have either been neglected or actively discouraged (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002: 20 & Tett, 2004).

Participation of and support from parents in the previous system was never easy. Although South Africa is in a new era of Outcomes Based Education, one cannot say that the role of parents in the various schools has entered a new dimension concerning the holistic well-being of children. Davidoff & Lazarus (2003:5) note that globally people are living in times where the family system is no longer what it used to be, mainly because there are many single parent families. Reasons include divorce or separation, or

the couples were never married at all (Ramisur, 2007). In many cases children are not living with their parents, but rather with their grandparents or other relatives. The variety of reasons includes being orphaned through the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Mashau, 2009).

The improvement of children's health in schools is the most appropriate thing to do in relation to the belief that all children can learn (DoE, 2001). However, if schools and communities ignore health problems, this contributes to poor attendance and school failure, and the child is deprived of the equal access to education (Marx, Frelick Wooley & Northrop, 1998:8). Attention to this problem can help reduce the effects of health issues. Therefore, health promotion by schools in collaboration with parents must be part of the education system in this era.

The concept of the Health Promoting Schools is a recent phenomenon in South Africa, as much as it is in the whole world. It started to make inroads in the African continent in 1997 when the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1997) started with the Health Promoting Schools Initiative (HPSI) in Africa (AFRO). This initiative has been introduced to at least 32 countries in Africa, including: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (WHO, 1995).

The concept "Health Promoting School" has been broadly defined by (WHO, 1995; 1996; 1997) as one in which all members of the school community work together to provide pupils with integrated and positive experiences and structures, which promote and protect their health. This includes both the formal and the informal curriculum on health, the creation of a safe and healthy school environment, the provision of appropriate health services and the involvement of the family and wider community in efforts to promote health. The Children's Health Development Foundation (CHDF, 1999) summed up this definition in 1999 by saying that a Health Promoting School is a school community that takes action and places emphasis on creating an

environment that will have the best possible impact on the health of students, teachers and other school staff.

From the above-mentioned definition of Health Promoting Schools, it can be deduced that such schools aim to promote a state of complete physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional well-being of learners and staff within the learning-teaching environment. According to WHO (1986; 1997:5) “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their every day life; where they learn, work, play and love”. It is a task for all to make it happen. The term “Health Promoting School” is, therefore, commonly used in Europe to describe school-based and school-linked health promotion. Different terminologies are used in different countries to convey the same message, for instance (WHO, 1986; 1997:5-20):

- In Canada the term “Comprehensive School Health” is used;
- In America they use “Coordinated School Health”;
- In England, the term used in policy documents is simply “Healthy Schools”, and
- In Quebec, the term that has developed is “Ecole et milieu en sante.”

The Health Promoting School approach to education is introduced as a promotion and prevention programme in the face of growing health concerns among school going children in the world. Some of the health concerns include among others the following: smoking, obesity, unhealthy eating practices, mental health, myopia, alcohol and drug abuse, irresponsible sexual behaviour, teenage pregnancies, STD/AIDS, violence and suicide (WHO, 1999; Karstens, 2006:1; cf. McKenzie & Richmond, 1998:5; Donald et al., 2002:253; UNESCO, 2004; U.S. Department of Health & Human Sciences, 2001).

The above-mentioned problems are not only global trends, they are a present reality in South Africa as well. In South Africa alone, the nation often hears and reads about racial violence and the use of drugs in schools. Viljoen and Kirsten (2003: xiv) noted, among others, the following health-related problems in the education sector in South Africa: drunkenness of teachers and pupils, alarmingly high drop-out rate, violence, illiteracy and poor nutrition.

No healthy community can close its eyes to the immense suffering caused by tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as by irresponsible sexual behaviour and violence as practiced by children. This calls for the need of health promotion in the school environment. According to WHO (1998), schools have an important role to play to ensure that the young are equipped to overcome negative forces. Schools must therefore inspire and influence the young to grow into happy and productive citizens and to enhance the common well-being, harmony and peace (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). WHO (1996) noted among others the following advantages of the Health Promoting School approach to education:

- It offers a holistic model of health that includes the interrelationships between the physical, mental, social and environmental aspects of health;
- It provides the opportunity for families to take part in the development of health skills and knowledge of their children;
- It addresses the significance of the physical environment (for example, shaded play areas) in contributing to the health of children;
- It recognizes the importance of the social ethos of the school in supporting a positive learning environment, one in which healthy relationships and the emotional well-being of students are strengthened;
- It links regional and local health services with the school to address specific health concerns that affect school children;
- It focuses on active student participation in the formal curriculum to develop a range of life-long health-related skills and knowledge;
- It enhances equity in education and health;
- It provides a positive and supportive working environment for school staff, and
- Enables the school and the local community to collaborate in health initiatives that benefit students, their families and community members.

1.2 Problem statement

The Health Promoting Schools approach to education is inevitable in South Africa basically because the well-being and wellness of learners in the context of their learning environment is of primary importance if the country has to succeed in curbing some of the health problems that hinder their effective learning and productivity. For the Health Promoting Schools to succeed, there is a need for all stakeholders in the educational sector to participate in the process of exploring the concept of the “Health Promoting School” in terms of its philosophical underpinnings as a promotive, preventive and curative intervention (Viljoen, 2006:2).

Stakeholders in the Health Promoting Schools include among others health and education officers, teachers and their representative organisations, students, parents, and community leaders, who must participate not only in the process of understanding the concept “Health Promoting School”, but also its guiding principles and objectives.

This research is geared specifically at looking at the place and role of parents in Health Promoting Schools. Parent involvement is a crucial topic today partly because many parents are not adequately involved i.e, they do not create time to read notes from the teachers, review what a child brings home, or attend parent activities at home, and as such the child is likely to suffer and feel embarrassed (Ramey & Ramey, 2004:1). It is a historical fact that parents from all walks of life are their children’s first and most influential teachers in the education of their children regarding the value of learning, good learning habits and respect for the educational process (WHO, 1995). The same message is echoed by the National Education Association (NEA) (1998:3) in Washington, D.C. when they indicated among others that:

- It is at home that children spend their childhood and get a great opportunity to build relationships with parents;
- It is at home that children form their attitudes toward learning;
- It is at home that children first learn the values they will carry throughout their lives, and

- It is at home that children learn to take care of their own health.

Indeed before children formally begin school, they already have been “schooled” at home, although this is rapidly eroding (Woolfolk, 1998:92). According to Papalia, Olds & Feldman (1999:595) & Kalat, (2002:395) it is the way in which parents bring up their children that can have a negative or a positive influence in the educational process. With the introduction of a “Health Promoting Schools” approach to education, research and discussion around parents’ involvement is necessary.

The main research question of this study is: What roles can parents in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province play towards the creation of Health Promoting Schools?

The sub-questions that further guided the researched project are:

- What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in the Health Promoting Schools in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province?
- How can schools in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province involve parents towards the introduction of the health promoting approach in schools?
- What possible guidelines could be put in place to assist parents in the health promotion of their children in schools?

1.3 Research objectives

The main aim of the proposed research was to study the roles that parents in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province can play towards the creation of Health Promoting Schools.

The individual objectives were:

- To understand the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement towards the Health Promoting Schools in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province.
- To analyse the possible ways in which schools can involve parents in the introduction of Health Promoting Schools approach in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province.
- To develop possible guidelines that could be put in place to assist parents in the health promotion of their children in schools.

1.4 Research methodology

1.4.1 Literature study

A literature study was conducted to serve as a foundation for the research and to gather valuable information in order to have a better understanding of the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement towards Health Promoting Schools. A search in the EBSCO Host search engine was done using the following keywords: “parents, schools, role, participation, health promotion”. Articles, newspapers, educational conference papers and other research reports were studied to find out more about the research in question.

1.4.2 Empirical study

An empirical study was conducted not only to determine the role and perceptions of parents in the D cluster in the Southern region of the North West Province, but also to establish the strategies to involve parents towards Health Promoting Schools. In this regard a qualitative research design was used (Leedy & Omrod, 2005:54-55).

1.4.3 Selection of participants

The research was done in five schools, one private and five public of the D cluster of the Southern Region in the North West Province of South Africa. The participants for this study primarily included parents. For the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted with five focus groups of 5 parents each from 5 schools within the D cluster.

1.4.4 Data collection strategy

The data was collected using qualitative method as described below.

1.4.4.1 Focus group interviews

According to Bloor & Wood (2006:88-89) and Calderon, Baker & Wolf (2000:92) and Brotherson (1994), a focus group interview is conducted in an informal manner and consists of small homogeneous groups. The groups are then facilitated by the researcher, which means that the researcher acts as a generator of a conversation. This conversation

is then audibly recorded and later transcribed as evidence of the study conducted. The focus group interviews were conducted with parents in a qualitative manner to obtain information about the role that parents could play towards the promotion of health in schools.

1.5 Data analysis

The data was transcribed and analysed, which enabled the researcher to determine different categories and sub-categories. The assistance of an independent co-coder

was utilized in the process of data analysis. This is important to determine whether inter-coder reliability exists. The identified categories were then used to formulate guidelines for the possible roles that parents can play in the creation of Health Promoting Schools. The data was evaluated and crosschecked against the literature to determine its trustworthiness (Calderon et al., 2000:101; Brotherson, 1994:220).

1.6 Ethical considerations

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005: 101), whenever human beings are the focus of investigation, we must look closely at the ethical implications of what we are proposing to do. Participants were informed about the study and the procedures that would be followed. Information with regard to the participants' personal information was treated in a confidential manner, which was communicated before the research took place. Furthermore, Leedy & Ormrod (2005: 102) indicated that each participant should be given a code number or a pseudonym and then label any written documents with that number rather than with the person's name.

The participants were also assured that none of them will be harmed during the proceedings of the study, and they were not compelled to take part in the study, and have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

1.7 Chapter division

Chapter 1: Introduction, statement of the problem and methodology

Chapter 2: Research design and methodology

Chapter 3: Parental involvement in the schools

Chapter 4: Parents and health promotion in schools

Chapter 5: Empirical investigation: Parental roles towards the creation of Health Promoting Schools

Chapter 6: Findings, conclusion and recommendations

1.8 Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter was to give a brief overview concerning the topic of investigation along with the methods and procedures in particular. The next chapter will pay attention to the research design and methodology.

Chapter 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction and orientation

The aim of this chapter is to describe the design and methods used in this research. The literature study presented in chapter three and four provides a theoretical background of parental roles in schools and in the Health Promoting Schools. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2001:4) research is the systematic process of collecting and analysing information to increase our understanding of the phenomenon about which we are concerned or are interested in.

This research is mainly focused on four main components, namely parents, involvement/ roles, schools and, Health Promoting Schools. Parental involvement in schools is a widely researched topic (Crozier, 2000; Alldred et al., 2002). The same applies to Health Promoting Schools. There are vast discussions worldwide with the intense interest to address children's adversity (Cole & Cole, 2001; Donald, Dawes & Louw, 2000), and the health of children in schools as well (Denman, Moon, Parsons & Stears, 2002; World Health Organisation 1978; 1986; 1998; 1999; 2000). Very often parental involvement is linked to learners' achievement in schools. However, parental involvement in education is beset with problems because it is influenced by a number of factors that include the parents' social class (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2003; Croll, 2002), health problems beyond parent's understanding, and schools that do not allow parents to partner with them.

Therefore, whilst various aspects related to parental involvement in schools are widely researched, the role of parents and Health Promoting Schools is lagging behind. It was briefly stated in Chapter 1 that qualitative research was used, and the reasons for choosing this method will consequently be explained in more detail.

2.2 The use of a qualitative approach to research

2.2.1 Qualitative research

According to Strauss & Corbin (1990:17) and Botha (2005) qualitative research is any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of quantification. It can refer to research about person's lives, stories, behaviour and organisational functioning, social movements or international relationships. McMillan & Schumacher (1997:392) add that qualitative research is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participant's perspective. Thus, qualitative research regards participation as the primary source of information.

Since the aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of parents towards the creation of Health Promoting Schools, a qualitative approach was considered to be appropriate. Bogdan & Biklen (1992:2) maintain that qualitative research strives to understand behaviour from the participant's own frame of reference. This implies that the researcher needs to interact with the participants as closely as possible in order to acquire such understanding. Borg & Gall (1989:24) contend that the research arise out of these interactions in the form of what people reveal to the researcher and the researcher's impressions.

Since parental involvement and health promotion in schools is directly experienced by the participants, it should be established what meanings these participants ascribe to parental involvement and its concepts. For McMillan & Schumacher (1997:392) participant's meanings include their feelings, beliefs, ideals, thoughts and actions. It is therefore hoped that the use of qualitative approach led to a better understanding of the research problem. Hoberg (1999:51) suggests that qualitative methods are used when the researcher aims to understand human phenomena and to investigate the meanings that people give to events they experience. Meanwhile, Tuckman (1994:366) maintains that the researcher uses a qualitative approach

when he/she attempts to identify the chief concerns of the various participants and audiences and to access the merit, worth or meaning of the phenomena to the participants.

Furthermore, Bogdan & Biklen (1992:2) maintain that qualitative researchers do not approach their research with specific questions to ask or hypotheses to test. They develop a research focus as they collect their data. They tend to collect their data through sustained contact with people in settings where subjects normally spend their time. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992:29-33), qualitative research has the following five features:

- Qualitative research takes place in natural settings. Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context. They feel that action can be understood when it is observed in the setting that it occurs.
- Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively. They do not search out data to prove or disprove hypotheses before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together.
- Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers are concerned with participants' perceptions.

It is, therefore important that the researcher who undertakes qualitative research should be familiar with these features, as they form the basis of qualitative research. These features are relevant to the study as they provide a direction and framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics (Patton, 1990:59).

2.2.2 The role of the researcher

Ary, Jacobs & Razavich (1990:447) contend that in qualitative studies, the researcher is the data-gathering instrument. He/she talks with people in their natural setting, observes their activities, reads their documents and written records and records this information in field notes or journals. Patton (1990:14) maintains that validity in qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence and rigor of the person doing fieldwork.

McMillan & Schumacher (1997:412-413) maintain that the importance of the researcher's social relationship with the participants requires that studies identify the researcher's role and status within the group. A researcher who is a full participant or already has a status within the social group being observed may limit opportunities to extend the findings. This implies that the researcher's role can have both a positive and a negative influence on the data gathering and the research findings.

Measor (1985:57) maintains that in qualitative research the researcher must strive to build a relationship of reciprocal trust and rapport with his/her subjects. The quality of the data depends on this rapport in so far as it increases the likelihood of participants sharing authentic knowledge of their world with him/her. Thus, the qualitative researcher should deal with participants in a professional manner in order to be able to acquire the required information. Bogdan & Biklen (1992:58) maintain that qualitative researchers should proceed as if they know very little about the people and places they visit.

Glesne & Peshkin (1992:36) maintain that the researcher is a learner, a curious learner, who comes to learn from and with research participants. Thus, the researcher should not come to the field as an expert or authority. However, the researcher is by no means a passive participant. He/she actively interacts with research participants in different ways. Glesne & Peshkin (1992:36) are of the opinion that the ideal of participatory research is for the researcher to be engaged in an interactive, action-oriented process.

Qualitative researchers attempt to cleanse their preconceptions mentally (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:58). In this study the researcher tried to put all preconceived ideas aside to allow the participants to explain their experiences and perceptions from their own point of view.

2.2.3 Data collection strategy

Patton (1990:10) maintains that qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection. These are:

- In-depth, open-ended interviews: the data from interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge.
- Direct observation: the data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviours, actions and full range of interpersonal interactions and organisational processes that are part of observable human experience.
- Written documents: documents consist of excerpts, quotations, programme records, memoranda correspondence, official publications, reports and personal diaries etc.

Glesne & Peshkin (1992:24) also list these methods and add that to determine which techniques to use, the researcher should consider carefully what he or she wants to learn. Likewise, the researcher should choose the technique that is likely to elicit data needed to gain understanding of the phenomena in question, contributes different perspectives on the issue and makes effective use of the time available for data collection. For the purpose of this study, focus group interviews were chosen and the reasons for choosing this data collection strategy are discussed below.

2.2.4 Reasons for the choice of data collection strategy

Best & Kahn (1993:190) contend that the choice of strategy "depends on the focus of the research and the desired time frame for the study". Therefore, the researcher has to choose

data collection strategies that will enable him/her to be in close interaction with the participants. This, in turn will enable the researcher to elicit more information from the participants. According to Cresswell (1998) and Neuman (2000) focus groups are useful especially when:

- Time is limited
- People feel more comfortable talking in a group than alone, or when
- Interaction among participants may be more informative than individually conducted interviews
- The researcher is having difficulty interpreting what he or she has observed.

In this study the researcher used focus group interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146).

2.2.4.1 Focus group interviews

According to Patton (1990:335) focus group interviews are used to elicit data from a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are typically six to eight people who participate in an interview for thirty minutes to two hours. McMillan & Schumacher (1997:433) regard the focus group interview as a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concerns, a new product or idea by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually.

Bogdan & Biklen (1992:100) maintain that focus group interviews are a useful way of getting insight into what to pursue in individual interviews. Likewise, McMillan & Schumacher (1997:453) add that by creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by each other's perceptions and ideas, one can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing. Thus, focus groups interviews were used for groups of parents because, as Krueger (1994:19) puts it, they produce qualitative data that provides insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants. In addition, Krueger also maintains that the focus group presents a more natural environment than that of the

individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others, just as they are in real life.

However, Van Dalen (1979:159) warns that the researcher should guard against a situation in which one person dominates the interview. Likewise, Bogdan & Biklen (1992: 100) mention the following problems: starting focus group interviews; controlling the person who insists on dominating the session; reconstructing tape-recorded interviews. The researcher should try to minimize these problems. The researcher should ensure that no participant dominates the interviews by intervening and asking others to voice their opinions. The tape-recorded data should be transcribed soon after the interviews while the discussion is still fresh in the researcher's mind. This helps the researcher to recognise who is speaking (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:100). These guidelines were followed for this research.

In this study five focus groups interviews were conducted in five different schools. Groups of five parents were asked open-ended questions.

The questions that were asked in the interviews were the following:

- What is the role of parents in schools?
- What is the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools?
- What possible barriers do exist that keep parents from executing their role?
- What are possible solutions for these problems?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in schools?

However, it is important to note that the questions were explained in more detail to the parents, especially when it was clear that they had trouble understanding the terms at hand.

In this regard the participants were invited to share their opinions and perceptions in an informal way. Every parent received a fair opportunity to express his/her views concerning their

involvement in schools. Parents were not forced to give answers. According to Puchta & Potter (2004:52) it is vital for the researcher to ensure participation and to guide participants without forcing them.

2.2.5 Transcribing data

Immediately after the focus group interviews, the interview recordings were transcribed. Patton (1990:347) warns that no matter what style of interviewing is used, and no matter how carefully one formulates interview questions, it all comes to zero if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed. The researcher transcribed all tape-recorded interviews verbatim immediately after the interviews had taken place.

Patton (1990:379) regards verbatim transcription as the essential raw data for qualitative analysis. Van Wyk (1996:164) warns that there is always the danger that the transcribed words may lose some meaning as tone, volume, emotionality and accompanying facial and body gestures (body language) and disposition cannot be portrayed. Thus, a diary was kept to record many of these aspects during and immediately following the interviews. Patton (1990:351-352) argues that recapturing and conveying those perceived meanings to outsiders are innate to the nature of qualitative research at the point of analysis and writing.

2.2.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis can be described as the process of obtaining meaning from the data acquired during the data collection stage (Holliday, 2002). It entails a progressive movement of reading, re-reading, and identifying themes and categories. The researcher as a person plays a very important role here.

According to Cresswell (1998) and Silverman (2005:178) the process of qualitative data analysis consists of four steps:

- Organising: filing, creating a computer database, breaking large units into smaller ones.
- Perusal: getting an overall “sense” of the data, jotting down preliminary interpretations.
- Classification: grouping the data into categories or themes, finding meanings in the data.
- Synthesis: offering hypothesis or propositions, constructing tables, diagrams and hierarchies.

2.2.7 Ethical considerations

When conducting research it is very important to consider the project from an ethical perspective.

According to Mitchell & Jolley (2004: 24) the following rules should be adhered to:

- Participants should volunteer to be in the study.
- Participants should be given a general idea of what will happen to them if they choose to be in the study.
- Participants should be told that they can withdraw from the study at any point.
- Investigators should keep all answers confidential.
- Investigators should inform the participants of the purpose of the study.
- Investigators should make sure that all the people working for them behave ethically.
- Researchers should get approval from appropriate committees.

These rules were followed in this study. Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education in the North-West province as well as from the various principals of the schools (see appendices B & D). All in all no individual was forced to participate. Everything was done on a voluntary basis.

2.2.8 Conclusion

This chapter described the basic underlying research paradigm as well as a rationale for the methods and techniques used in this research. The process of data collection and data analysis were described.

In the following chapters a literature review covering the concept of parental involvement in schools and their involvement and health promotion in schools will be offered.

Chapter 3

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

3.1 Introduction and orientation

For many years there was a clearly delineated line between home and school. The roles of parents and teachers were more explicitly defined than they are trying to be today (Wilmshurst & Brue, 2005; Thwala, 2003). Educators are experts in their field, children and the education of children, whereas parents are the experts on their children specifically. According to Olsen & Fuller (2008:5) the past experiences have given either parents or teachers' disproportionate power in the relationship, and thus, both now will have to work as a team. In addition, Olsen & Fuller (2008:5) recognize that the role of parents shifted from that of being actively involved in running the school to that of guests of the school. Education was obviously the domain of the school and parents were discouraged from interfering, hence they play a very limited role in the school and their children's education (Squelchi, 1994).

Based on the need for parental involvement in schools today, it is no wonder that parental involvement has become a major educational issue (Beveridge, 2005:1). This is an era of increasing concern from parents about the quality of education in the whole African continent and in South Africa as well (Lewis, 2007; Cosser, 1990). The South African government has taken greater care to monitor and maintain the quality of education, and parents are meant to be the custodians of their school going children. It is an important requirement that parents should show greater involvement in the education of their children (SA Schools Act, 1996). This is manifested clearly in the Constitution of the country, and again on the ANC Election Manifesto (Department of Education, 2004:7; 2001; Squelch, 1997).

It is therefore important to explore various issues concerning parental involvement in schools. In this chapter the background overview of parental involvement, barriers and benefits will be scrutinized to find out about the best level of parental involvement in schools. The following sections will successfully deal with various aspects.

3.2. Background overview

In this section the concept of parental involvement will be investigated within various backgrounds. The concept of parental involvement could be thoroughly understood only if the diverse content of parenting as practiced before is investigated. It could also not be done without considering the present practice of parental involvement in schools.

3.2.1 Earlier parental involvement

Education is primarily the responsibility of parents. Parents are the child's first educators and the most influential people in a child's life (Squelchi, 1994). In addition Beveridge (2005:32) believes that parents are the most influential in laying the foundation for subsequent social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth. In actual fact the nurturing role of parents encompasses all the affectionate care, attention, and protection that young children need to grow and thrive (Gestwicki, 2007:71). Nurturing involves most of the family's developmental tasks which continues throughout the child's years of development, leading to growth in all areas (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000).

In earlier times children were influenced by their own life experiences, the environment in which they lived and their culture. In primitive cultures the extended family and the clan offered education according to their own perceptions (Berger, 1991:210). Conditions faced by primitive societies dictated that families work together for survival. Constant effort was needed to protect

everyone, especially the children, from starvation, exposure to the elements, and disease (Berger, 2003).

3.2.2 The development of civilization

As civilization developed, children continued to receive their first education in their homes, and later on formal education outside their homes was added. The first formal education outside the home emerged in Egypt as long ago as the Middle Kingdom, 3787-1580 B.C. More specifically the Roman & Greek philosophers, Plato (427-347 B.C.), Aristotle (384-323 B.C.), Cicero (106-43 B.C.), and Polybius (204-122 B.C.) believed that good care and education of the child was paramount, and parent education in early society was for the benefit of the state, not the family per se. Children were seen as the future-bearers of the culture, the hope for the future, and that is the reason why it was the responsibility of parents to see to it that children were reared properly with care. However, this education was focused on boys only (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:15). This is seconded by the three theoretical views on child rearing that were based on European Union lines of thought and evident in 19th century (Berger, 1991:211). These theories are:

- The first theory was the Calvinist doctrine of infant depravity that required strict guidance by parents. Obedience by the child was all that was expected, with the main reason for disciplining the child. According to the Calvinists, a willful child reflected evil from within. Life was difficult for children during the Middle Ages, and harshness became a predominant focus of parenting behaviours. To spare the rod was to spoil the child. That is where the term “beat the devil out of the child” came into existence. Parents had classes to learn how to discipline their children (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:16).
- A second theory viewed children as basically pure and good, in contradiction to the first theory. The child was viewed as good, and thus the parents must take good care of him. The love which can be shown by parents can introduce the child to his little outside world, proceeding from the whole to the part, from the near to the remote. In addition, Martin Luther (1482-1546), the father of the Reformation, proposed revolutionary child-rearing practices. He advocated that parents should teach and educate their children

morals and catechism. He also maintained that families were the most important educators for children, and that education was appropriate for both girls and boys (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:16)

- A third theory was derived from Comenius (1593-1670), a bishop, teacher, and writer who believed that all children were basically good, and in addition John Locke (1632-1704), an English philosopher, promoted the idea that children's minds were like "clean slates" on which parents and teachers could write what learners were to learn. A philosopher Rousseau (1712-1778) took a social view of children and introduced the concept of the whole child, which was adopted by Pestalozzi and Froebel. They noted the importance of allowing the child to develop naturally and that the family was still the central feature in the child's education (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:17).

The above theories paved the way, and it is important to understand that parents' perceptions regarding their involvement and parent education today have their origin in parent involvement and education of yesterday. In addition, the direction that parent participation will take tomorrow will be influenced by changes in the future and the events of the past as well (Berger, 1991:209). In Scotland and Japan the awareness of involving parents in their children's education is becoming an increasingly important issue, especially in a situation where the structure of society and the role of education are changing. This awareness is made possible because educational achievement is transmitted during the course of their (children) upbringing, as it is believed that it strongly influences the course of their lives and careers (Lynn, 2004:260).

3.2.3 Parental involvement from deficit to difference

Primary schools paid attention to children's learning by using the idea of parental involvement, from deficit to difference, and it has been arguably the starting point for current interest in parental involvement. Bastiani (1995) argued that parental involvement requires new thinking and new ways of working, and evaluations of parental involvement often paid considerable attention to participation rates and were frequently based on the assumptions that parents are 'unwilling' educators (Edwards & Warin, 1999:326; Crozier, 1998; Scottish Executive, 2000).

According to Bastiani (1995) the 1990's has perhaps seen a shift from overtly deficit models to a framework to address differences between families and between home and school, because the unfortunate result of working with a deficit model perspective is that the professionals involved did not see the parents as capable of being allies. The professionals were clearly in control, in an uneasy tolerance of the families (Hornby, 2002). Several themes of which they impinge on 'why bother with parental involvement?' as a pedagogical question related directly to the standards of children's performance are at work (Gestwicki, 2007:131).

These interlinking themes, however, have a number of implications, the least of which are attempts to use parental involvement to normalize families and so erode differences between families and differences between home and school (Louw, 2004). In South Africa the National Curriculum has little room for the socio-emotional development of learners. Arguably they are obliged to frame any consideration of parental involvement in the parameters offered by the subject matter knowledge of the curriculum. The deficit model of parenting remains, though presented in terms of difference, while the concern with how best to support children as learners appears to have disappeared. Vincent and Tomlinson note that the area of parental involvement is under-analysed and under-theorized (Vincent & Tomlinson 1997, 23).

According to Mc Donald (2005) parental and community involvement is one of the four conditions for school success. Although the complexity of parental involvement is given a high status, the idea of the typical parent is under attack. Any notion of a homogeneous parent group is undermined by generalizing parent involvement based on the parents' perspectives on their possible roles (Lawson, 2003). These range from non-participation to parental control of the provision, where non-participation is seen as active as a result of other priorities such as career, or as passive as a result of lack of confidence. Reay's analysis of how working-class and middle-class parents perceive their position and their children's positions in the education market place remind us of the need for any form of parental involvement to work closely with the motivation and self-positioning of parents (Reay, 1996:1998). What appears to have been missing from the analysis so far is just how parental involvement may be justified in terms of

currently established understanding and perspectives of attending to the total well-being of the learners in schools.

In Taiwan, participation from parents in their children's education has not been a part of Chinese culture, teaching was generally considered to be the responsibility of teachers only (Hung, 2007:116). The same applies to Barbados, where there has so far been no history or societal expectation of parental involvement in schools. Schools were seen as places where children were sent to be educated, and therefore parents were not expected to be involved in schools (Ramisur, 2007:33). In addition, Ramisur recognize that although this view is changing, it remains ingrained in people's minds, which makes it difficult to establish satisfactory levels of parental involvement. Many parents doubt their ability, knowledge and expertise to provide appropriate learning activities for their children. Teachers are regarded as high profile authority figures because of the knowledge they possess, and that makes it difficult for parents to be involved in schools.

An analysis by Liu and Chien (1998:74) indicates that Chinese teachers have tended to exclude parents from the classroom because they believe that children must be left alone away from their parents to establish the independence that children need. In addition, some teachers felt that parent involvement may have a negative effect on children's learning and behaviour in the classroom. In particular, some teachers believe that parental involvement could harm the classroom climate that they have created in the meantime. Pearson (1996:273) contends that thoughtful teachers build and respect parents and the community at large.

3.2.4 The new educational reform

The new educational reform, however, requires that every primary school present parental involvement programmes in their school schedule. According to the Constitution of South Africa (1996), parental involvement is seen as a democratic issue both in terms of individual rights, and as a way of making the educational system more democratic and developing more power at

the local level. If the country has to increase the highest level of educational participation, parental involvement should be highly recommended (CERI, 1997), mainly because of the link between parent involvement and the learners' academic success (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002:5).

According to Akkok (1999:4), parents want to be involved in their children's schooling and understand the educational process more fully. In Canada, parents are highly involved in school activities. They tape the books for children who cannot read, and come to school to speak to learners and teachers on several topics. Schools use technology in communicating with the parents by providing electronic newsletters to parents (Gestwicki, 2007). In France, parents are participating through parents' associations. In Germany, parents are expected to provide support at home for school activities by supervising homework and helping to organise extra-curricular activities.

In South Africa the legislation to reform schooling in a democratic South Africa has focused the attention on the rights and responsibilities of parents as empowered stakeholders in education (Lemmer & Van Wyk; 2004:259). The distinction between parents having rights and having a responsibility should be clearly defined so as not to cause confusion between parents and schools. In addition, Lemmer & Van Wyk (2004:259) also suggest that if parents have rights in the education of their children, it means that they are granted authority and they must be responsible in exercising their rights. Regardless of the rights they have been granted, parents' knowledge, or lack thereof, about the system of education can seriously impinge upon the degree to which they exercise their rights and responsibilities. The transformational OBE expects parents to perform a number of responsibilities pertaining to education despite their disabilities to carry some of this educational task (Mda & Mothata, 2000:38).

According to the Department of Education, learners, educators, and the community must come together as a single and united voice in shaping the school. In addition, parents are invited to play a monitoring role on a number of issues, including the following (Department of Education, 1997:28):

- ensuring that educational outcomes are of the highest standards;

- identifying and articulating the values and beliefs of those who share the learning site and helping to develop the vision of the school;
- the active promotion of the culture of learning through the creation of a culturally-encouraging and learner friendly climate;
- assistance in the development of determined achievers and the construction of a positive learning environment;
- being agents for the gathering and utilization of all resources available in the community that could promote the learning process.

Very often, schools and families struggle to translate the intention to increase parents' involvement into practice (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999:254). According to Shumow and Harris (2000) merely inviting parents to school is easier than overcoming the subtle and powerful barriers to effective parent involvement on the part of teachers and parents. Frequently, attitudes of schools towards active parent involvement are ambiguous. Although the official rhetoric claims that the relationship between parents and schools should be collaborative, equal and reflect an even distribution of power, this is often absent in schools (Ng, 1999:552).

3.2.5 Investigations into parent involvement in South African communities

Investigations into parent involvement in diverse South African communities from the perspectives of teachers, parents and learners confirm a great need for a broader conceptualization of parent involvement, which includes, but transcends, parent participation in school governance (Van Wyk, 1996; Lemmer, 2000; 2002; Kgaffe, 2001; Bridgemohan, 2001; Risimati, 2001). A comprehensive strategy of parent involvement is uncommon in South African schools.

Normally, parental involvement is regarded primarily as a means of financing schools. At best, parents are seen as clients who have little say in school management and functioning (Heystek & Louw, 1999:21). Perceiving parents' responsibilities in terms of payment of school fees, attendance of school events and fundraising, that is, typical 'bake sale' involvement. In many

communities, parental involvement has been virtually non-existent due to political turbulence, poor socio-economic conditions, teacher reluctance and parent apathy (Van Wyk, 1996).

The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) describes the basic parental duties as setting requirements for schools relating to the parents' right to information and providing for parent and community representation in mandatory school governing bodies. A striking provision of the School Act (RSA 1996b, section 14; section 31) is the inclusion, for the first time, of parents in mandatory School Governing Bodies (SGB), with implementation commencing in 1997. According to this provision, parent representatives should be elected every three years by the parent body of the school to serve as representatives on the governing body. According to SASA (1996: 23) and Nelushi (2006) members of the governing body must be democratically elected, not by the education authorities, but by the very people whom they will represent on the SGB.

In some cases governing body 'elections' may reflect very little expression of the public choice, whereas, in some cases it is a matter of a school principal or the local educational authority persuading certain parents to accept office (Mda & Mothata, 2000:75). The number of member parents depends on the enrolment number of that particular year. The SGB decides on behalf of all the parents, hence, it has the responsibility to inform other parents of the decision (Nelushi, 2006). Parents form the majority on the school governing body and a parent member must act as chairperson. The SGB must execute among others the following duties (cf. RSA, 1996b):

- to determine overall school policy and formulate a code of conduct;
- to develop a language and an admission policy (in terms of the Act and the Constitution)
- to determine school times
- to control physical facilities
- recommend the appointment and dismissal of teaching and non-teaching staff
- handle matters of discipline relating to staff and learners
- to promote staff development and support the curriculum

- and to administer the school funds and school budget.

In addition, the remaining duties according to SASA (1996) are: to develop a mission statement, to adopt a constitution, to administer and control the school's property, and to draw up a budget.

These and other duties require a high level of literacy and relevant expertise. According to Potgieter, Visser, van Der Bank, Mothata & Squelch (1997:38) the lack of such expertise inhibit governance. Furthermore, for people without expertise, and often people who are living below the subsistence level, the challenges of raising money is indeed a daunting, if not an impossible task (Van Wyk, 2000). In South Africa it would be inaccurate to say that actual parent involvement exists, as Heystek and Louw (1999:21) argue that it remains weak due to the fact that a number of schools do not invite parents, and therefore the contribution and voices of parents in governing bodies are very limited. In addition (Mda & Mothata, 2000:65) noted that parents have little say over substantial educational issues and their involvement in education is limited to that of an advisory body by way of Parent-Teacher Association (PTAs). Many working-class and rural black parents face constraints in terms of participation in school governing bodies as a result of poor skills, distance from schools, lack of time and uneven training for new governing body members (Van Wyk, 2002; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In particular, South African schools are still gravely affected by the consequences of discrimination, the political struggle and socio-economic problems (Chisholm & Vally, 1996).

3.2.6 A call for restoration of teaching and learning

There is a desperate need for maximum parent involvement to improve the culture of teaching and learning. According to the White Paper on Education and Training (1995:21 -22) it is acknowledged that the restoration of a culture of teaching and learning seems to be a complex and daunting task in the light of the vast disparities in educational provision. Endeavors by the Department of Education to promote broader and varied participation of the parent body are absent or perfunctory. The initiative to welcome, support and use parents in the school and the

classroom or to support learning at home remains the responsibility of the individual school (Heystek and Louw, 1999:21).

As the main aim of this chapter is to find out about parental involvement in schools, the intention is to sensitize educators, parents and policy makers alike regarding the complexities of the issues involved. The term 'parent' is used in this research to refer to any adult who is the child's primary caregiver: mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, guardian, other relative, or a person standing in *loco parentis* (Davies & Yang, 2005; Koki & Lee, 1998). Parents cannot be limited by the fact that they are primary care givers, but necessarily "involved" and engaged. The truth of the matter is that, whatever their point of view, the assumption is that the school cannot work in "isolation", they are the subject of intense educational and political scrutiny, although their role is seen as ambiguous (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999).

The diversity in the family structure is recognized, and the challenge to come up with one word "parent" that fits all situations is crucial to this research. The intention of using one word in this regard is a wake-up call to all those who are faced with the challenges and responsibility to devote their time, attention, care, and love to raising children in a healthy school environment. The Departmental policy and legal aspects of education note that if parents could know that their involvement could lead to higher achievement by learners they would support the school to the utmost because it will be the interest of learners that is at stake (Piek, 1994:175-176).

It is something of a truism to state that parents have a vital role to play in their children's education. It is known from practical experience and extensive research that parents are the primary teachers and guardians of their children's lives in every sphere, since the beginning of time (Cairney, 2000:2). From birth they introduce children to the mysteries of language as they seek to communicate with them, and jointly make sense of their shared world. Therefore, a powerful rationale to involve parents in school issues is a must, if not a necessity. Parents are not simply a minor part of the educational process; but a variable to be considered and addressed. Bastiani (1997:13) argues that parents are still seen as external props to education and not as an integral part of it.

According to Bastiani (1997) the relationship between parents and schools need to be based on mutual trust and growing confidence, in which teachers genuinely attempt to work out what each can reasonably expect from the other and how they will work together. There seem to be many conceptualizations of the parent's role in schooling. According to Cairney (2000:3), in many instances parents are perceived as:

- Keepers who ensure that children are well fed, loved, and groomed and sent to school to be adequately 'trained' each day.
- Home based warders who ensure that standard of behaviour are conformed to, good habits set, and school related tasks completed.
- Compliant apprentices working with children at school as helpers and at home on a range of simple, but effective training tasks.

These views have several things in common, that is, in the first place, they assume that parents have only a limited responsibility in relation to their children as learners, and secondly, they also assume that the school is the site of the main game, and in the third place they offer parents only a token role in children's education. Basically, parents must be viewed as equal partners in education (Ramisur, 2007). The relationship must be reciprocal. Schools need to go beyond and above token involvement and recognize the vital role parents play in education. In contrast to such views, is an alternative that sees learning as a social process which has its beginnings in the meaning based relationship that parents establish with their children at home, as it provides both the beginning and foundation for learning. Taking into consideration the above mentioned facts, the next section will deal with the reasons why parent involvement is crucial.

3.2.7 Conclusion

The need for parental involvement in the schools has become prominent today. Research done over decades, point back to the fact that:

- Parents are children's first teachers. Different roles played by parents in raising their children have a greater influence in their lives. The impact of the social environment and community is very significant. The child's behaviour is determined by some other factors as well, including the home environment, school and the community.
- The development of civilization led to changes in the structure of education. Children continued to receive their first education in their homes and later on formal education was added outside their homes and according to various theories, a greater need for parental involvement is necessary.
- Parents' views are still underanalysed and undertheorised by professionals in schools. Their expertise is not considered to be part of the school business. Parents' focus is expected to be at home alone.
- The new educational reform expects parents to be involved in the education of their children. In South Africa parents are obliged by the law to exercise their rights and responsibilities to advocate on behalf of their school going children. However, it is not easy for schools to work closely with parents.
- Parental involvement in schools in South African communities previously took the form of parents only being expected to pay school fees and to attend meetings. They were not involved in the governance as such. Currently the South African Schools Act expect parents to be involved in the governance, but the main challenge for parents is how uninformed they are concerning how the schools should be governed.
- The parent's place as primary educator does not end at home. It should be extended to schools, irrespective of whether they are biological, guardian or foster parents. If a culture of teaching and learning has to be restored, parents have to be considered as the major partners in education.

3.3 Rationale for parental involvement in schools

The issue of parental involvement is attracting considerable attention in current education debates (Beveridge, 2005, 16). Research done over the past several decades has shown that involving parents in the process of educating their children provides substantial advantages for

their education (Armstrong, 1998). Many scholars have argued furthermore that parents' voice in school matters is a crucial component of an educational system in a democratic society such as South Africa. In fact, the cooperation between parents and schools is what Fullan (2001) calls the "power of three" (parent, teacher and learner collaboration), or the triad members (1996:203). Thus, parents are an important variable in the education of children.

3.3.1 The legal framework

On 27 April 1994 the Interim Constitution of 1993 came into operation, and the written Constitution of South Africa, which binds the state and government, its institutions, its citizens and all the people within its borders was adopted on 8 May 1996 and amended on 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly. This Constitution replaced the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 Of 1993 (Mda & Mothata, 2000:2). Of particular importance for the protection of individuals' rights is the Bill of Rights in Chapter 2, which focuses on amongst others education. According to Bray (2000:1) the areas which were hardest hit by the harsh Apartheid system are health care, food, water, social security, and children. In the Constitution the Bill of Rights was the hope for the people of the Republic of South Africa. It focusses on education especially. Mda & Mothata (2000:2) explain that for years there were separate education departments for different races, with Africans being at the bottom of the ladder in terms of provision of resources. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa assigns a role to parents in the fulfillment of child socio-economic rights (Coetzee & Streak, 2004:60). Amongst others the Bill of Rights (Section 27, 28 & 29; cf SA Constitution) include the following rights that are important in education and in which parents are obligated to honor, to promote the well-being of their children (Currie & De Waal, 2005). It also states that the nation is founded on principles of 'Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms'. These rights are:

3.3.1.1 Health care, food, water and social security

Everyone has the right to have access to:

- Health care services, including reproductive health care;
- Sufficient food and water; and
- Social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance.”

The provincial department of education and parents or guardians have to make sure that learners have the necessary health care, sanitation, water and food (Shaba, Campher, Du Preez, Grobler & Loock, 2003:15; Section 27 of the Constitution). Although in the nature of things, parents cannot be health care service providers. Their duty is to do what they can to ensure that their children obtain basic services to ensure good hygiene practice. It is clear that not all parents will be able to afford other health services for their children, thus they are obliged to take their children to the state clinics etc., for free treatment (Creamer, 2002:31). On the other hand, if the requirement of children’s nutritional needs is prioritized, it requires in the first place that their basic survival nutritional needs to be given precedence over other broader societal, economic and political demands (Coetzee & Streak, 2004:91).

3.3.1.2 Children

Every child has the right to:

- a name and a nationality from birth;
- family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;
- basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services;
- be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation;
- be protected from exploitative labour practices;

- not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that are inappropriate for a person of that child's age; or place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development.

A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child's well-being (Asmal & James 2002). In this section a person under the age of 18 years is considered a "child". Deliberately, there are two types of children in the South African law, namely, *infantes* and *impubes*. An *infantes* is a child below the age of 7 and *impubes* refer to children between the ages of 7 and 14 (Barnard, Cronje, & Olivier, 1994; 78-79), whereas South African Schools Act defines the child as a learner.

It is incumbent on everyone involved in education and the well-being of children to have the same perception as the government, to know their rights as contained in the Constitution. In ensuring the constitutional rights of children, (The Child Care Act no. 74 of 1983) as amended, also plays an important role. This is similarly important to various international conventions and charters on children's rights to which South Africa is a signatory in safeguarding children's rights.

3.3.1.3 Right to education

Everyone has the right:

- to a basic education, including adult basic education; and
- to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible;

Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of his choice (RSA, 1997:4-6). It is the responsibility of the state though, to see to it that these rights are reasonably applicable, taking into account the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices (Chapter 2, Section 29(2); Constitution of South Africa Act 108

of 1996:5 and 15). Parents are obliged as well to ensure their children attend school from the first day to the last day of the school (Maithufi, 1997:9). If for any reason, a parent fails to enroll his child, he commits an offence and upon conviction is liable to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months (South African Schools Act, Section 36 (a) Act 84 of 1996).

3.3.2 Parents are there to be involved

There are parents in every household, except in those extra-ordinary cases where children have to look after themselves. A mother or a father or both are more likely to be absent from home now than any time in history (Ramisur, 2007), and the extended family members are less likely to be involved in family life as well (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter 2007:67). Changes in social attitudes have encouraged people to think of androgynous adult roles, those that are shared by men and women and have similar functions. While recognizing that fathers and mothers likely relate and interact differently with their children because of the differences in their natures and their past experiences, many parents no longer separate aspects of parenting and family living into female and male tasks (Gestwicki, 2007:71).

However, a large number of parents universally and in South Africa are not quite certain about their roles and responsibility in schools, even if they are willing to be involved. Particularly, a large number of parents are uninformed with regard to the various concepts and protocols in terms of participating in schools, although they are aware that they must be involved. They are literally in the darkness (CERI, 1997). Much literature has been produced on parent involvement, but the saddest thing about it is that there is no specific way of involvement, and as a result many parents do not know how to get involved (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:130).

3.3.3 Popular demand

According to An Overview of Parenting Education and Family Support (Debord, Health, Dermott & Wolfe, 2000:1), parents from all walks of life, no matter what their socio-economic position or

culture, frequently seek information and advice to help them understand and respond to their children. Hornby (2002) asserts that almost all parents care about the education of their children, irrespective of their backgrounds. This is basically because historically, parents have had such knowledge and skills passed down to them by their own families (Lawrence, 1970). In many cultures and communities, that pattern still exists, but in many others, the wisdom of the preceding generation is either not available or not adequate (Gestwicki, 2007:442). Furthermore, as families have become smaller and separated by distance, the ease of passing on the accumulated child rearing wisdom has decreased (Lombard, 2007).

The decline of economic stability, the pressures facing parents, and the fragmentation of neighbourhoods and communities, make the support and care children receive at school even more critical (McWhirter et al., 2007:93). The Government together with the Department of Education joined hands to eliminate illiteracy amongst the parents, and to empower them through various programs that will enable them to be involved in the education of their children with ease (RSA, 1996b, Preamble:2). It is quite disturbing though to note that up until today, after a decade in the democracy government, there are parents who are unable to help their children with homework, projects, assignments etc, due to the fact that their education in particular, was and is still extremely impoverished (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:50). It causes confusion and frustration on the side of the school when parents are not doing what they are expected to do (Amatea, 2009:39). It is true that there is a greater call for parental involvement in education than ever before in history. It is not easy for schools to contribute to the life of a child without total support from parents, as they can also provide valuable information about their child to help the teachers (Fusun, 1999:3; Lott, 2001).

3.3.4 Parent development

Parent development, as measured by levels of literacy, social, health and general well-being, is at its worst in South Africa's communities (Mda & Mothata, 2000:78). Parental development is a good in itself, and a precondition for, though it may not be a guarantee of, learners succeeding in every sphere of their lives. It is definitely true that parents who are not well-developed, are not

good role models for the well-being of their children. Parents who work on farms or in low status jobs for example, have less of a chance to influence their children compared to parents who are aware of what is going on in the outside world (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2003:9). They often regard themselves as inferior to the teachers as they do not have any input in the lives of their children whatsoever, because they themselves do not have any hope for tomorrow, as such this is transferred to their children, and their future is bleak (Amatea, 2009). The analysis done by Pretorius & Le Roux (1998:58) clearly indicates that parents themselves at times go through difficult times during which they are unable to assist and motivate their children with regard to issues concerning their education as such.

3.3.5 The joy of involvement focusing on the benefits

The profound attachment of parents to their children makes them ambitious for the future of their children to such an extent that they would want to be involved in everything for their children (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:90). Failure to be involved in schools rob parents, teachers and learners collectively of the benefits that might be cultivated later (Ramisur, 2007). The joy of being involved is quelled by the fact that in some schools there are no strategies and policies to empower parents to take the baton and lead in schools (Asmal & James, 2002). Often there is suspicion that parents are there to criticize and not appreciate what has been done so far. According to Lortie's study (2002) of teachers, a good parent is regarded as the one who doesn't intervene and also supports teachers' efforts or who acts as a distant assistance. The question behind the joy of being involved is how is it can be done in a manner that ensures that the future of the children is attended to in the right manner? This is because parents are very much willing to be part of the bigger picture in the education of their children, despite the obstacles.

3.3.6 Social progress and political participation

According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), the history of the inhabitants of ex-homelands, poor in white farming areas of South Africa and those in the townships, is one of exclusion from power and decision making with regard to their children's education at many levels. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2004, 263) agree that limitations to parent's contribution in school governance are not unique to South Africa. Furthermore, Lemmer & Van Wyk (2004:263) note that black workers and their families on white farms have been, and still are, amongst the poorest and most isolated workers in the country; in ex-home-lands most rural inhabitants were, and still are, crowded onto uneconomic land holdings that oblige many to migrate. These remain weak foundations on which to build robust political participation. Parent involvement in itself cannot solve these problems, but it may give schools means to articulate their problems and act on the many issues that confront them (Kallaway, 2001).

3.3.7 Social justice

Although South Africa has changed, the disturbances caused by the policies and practices of the Apartheid era run deep, and without the implementation of social justice to correct the injustices of the past, reconciliation will be impossible to achieve (Asmal & James, 2002:24). The influence of these policies and practices is still present and it will take a long time to redress (Donald et al., 2002). The state has been founded on principles of human rights and social justice, which are at the moment not exercised thoroughly (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act no 108 of 1996). Parental involvement is central to the achievement of learners in schools along a broad range of frontiers. Social justice requires that parents be enabled to confront the injustices visited by inequality and poverty on the vast majority of people living in South Africa's poor areas (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

3.3.8 Democracy and development

Democracy requires development in education, and development in education requires democracy. Both require the highest levels of parent participation. Parent participation remains the major priority if better achievement is what is expected from learners (Asmal & James, 2002: 116:191).

Education in South Africa underwent major changes with the passing of the South African Schools Act of 1996 (Act 84 of 1996). Before this Act came into operation, a number of legislative enactments made provision for separate schools to cater for the education of different population groups. It was due to the policy of Apartheid that was followed by the previous regime to start formal and legal segregation according to races and ethnic groups in 1948 (Mda & Mothata, 2000:44). Although up to date there is a clear invitation for parents to pay more attention to their responsibilities. Both the shortcomings of the education system as well as the rise of crime can be attributed to the role played by parents in the upbringing of their children. When things are not going well with children, parents will suffer the consequences as well. In addition Blacktop & Blyth (1999) indicate that legal measures are drawn up to fine parents for their children's misdemeanors.

3.3.9 Conclusion

The current education debate raises more questions in the quest to try and find ways and means to involve parents in schools. This is supported by the following reasons why we should argue for parents' involvement:

- The constitution of the country demands full participation by parents in the education of their children in the fulfillment of child socio-economic rights.
- Children, just like all other persons, have the right to have access to basic services within the country. Due to the fact that it is not possible for children to get basic services

on their own, parents as well as the government will have to see to it that children's rights to basic services must be given precedence over other needs of the country.

- Parents are willing to be involved, but the saddest thing is that they do not know how to be involved as the schools do not know exactly how to involve them.
- There is a great demand for parents to be involved in schools, but among parents who have low status jobs, there is problem of inferiority when it comes to giving input in the education of their children, although their input can make a difference in the lives of their children.
- The disturbances caused by the policies and practices of the past seem to have an impact on the South African citizens even today. People in the rural and farm areas have been excluded from social progress and political participation, and as such are unable to articulate problems concerning their children in schools.

3.4 Dimensions of parental involvement

The importance of parental involvement in the education of their children is not a new concept at all. It has been the subject of research for several decades, and the topic continues to be of interest (CERI, 1997; Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). There have been many studies focusing on the involvement of parents in the challenges faced by their children. Many of these studies have been framed within the concept of 'At risk youth', which addresses issues such as obesity, malnutrition, depression, drug abuse, stress, teenage pregnancy, and school violence (Medical Research Council, 2000). The term 'at risk has' appeared frequently in the literature on education, psychology, medicine, social work, and economics, as well as in the legislation (McWhirter et al., 2007:6).

The focus is also based on discipline, helping children with reading problems, helping children with disabilities, protecting children from abuse and quite a number of problems (Flisher, Kramer, Hoven, King, Bird & Davies, 2000; Johnson, 2005; Medical Research Council, 2003). These studies also highlight that the youth in South African schools are facing major challenges, including poor mental health associated with substance abuse, physical illness, violence and

suicide. In the meantime, research relating to parental involvement towards the holistic well-being of learners in schools, especially within South Africa, is limited, as well as highly restricted to wealthier social groups (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003).

According to Briggs & Potter (1990:78) parental involvement in schooling about the issues above is often a 'dustbin term' that can mean all things to all people. Often parent involvement programs are viewed as shallow, ineffectual, confusing, and frustrating to both parents and teachers (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:128). The main reason for the failure of these programs is that many teachers have negative attitudes towards parents and parental involvement; they claim that parents are apathetic; they come to school only to criticize. According to Gestwicki these attitudes seem to crawl in especially if the parents are from lower socio-economic groups or from a different racial group (Gestwicki, 2007:198).

Unfortunately, some schools have adopted a very narrow definition of parent involvement, which primarily seeks to determine what parents can do for teachers, rather than what schools can do for and together with parents (Cairney, 2000:3). According to Moles (1992) parent involvement may take a variety of forms and levels of involvement, both in and out of the school. It includes any activity that is provided and encouraged by the school and that empowers parents in working and on behalf of their children's learning and development. The concept of parent involvement has been part and parcel of education since historic times. Among educators parental involvement is used synonymously with terms such as partnership, parent participation, parent power, and school, family, and community partnership (Epstein, 1996; Wolfendale, 1989). The concept is either defined as partnership or collaboration (Epstein, 1996).

However, such definitions are only limited to the usefulness of understanding the processes at work between parents and schools. Different dimensions were investigated in order to explain the complexity and diversity of parent involvement. Below is a discussion of each of these dimensions and the behaviours they include:

3.4.1 Basic obligations of parents

These obligations involve meeting the basic needs of their children, including providing for their children's food, clothing, shelter, health, safety, and general well-being. Beyond these basic needs, parents are also obligated to prepare children for learning (Cowan & Cowan, 2000:77; Olsen & Fuller, 2008:131). It is a pity though, since parents are hindered by poverty and unemployment to render these basic obligations (Le Roux, 1994). There is a high dependency on social grants and pensions on which the whole family depends (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Parents live within a particular community. The difficulties they encounter cannot be inseparable from the schools and their children. Thus the holistic approach to the education of their children suffers (Seroto, 2003).

3.4.2 Communications

If teachers are accountable to parents, good communication between schools and home on all aspects of school life is essential, from school policies and rules to children's progress and the curriculum (Mc Donald, 2005). This aspect of involvement also includes an obligation to vary the form and frequency of communications such as memos, notices, report cards and conferences to improve all parents' understanding of all school programs and children's progress (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:112). With the advance of technology, schools are increasingly using e-mail to communicate with the families and using voice-mails and the school website to relay messages to parents.

Although it is extremely important to communicate, questions such as how to communicate with the teacher on a personal level and how the school handles written communication to the parents have to be communicated too. As can be asked of non-verbal communication, is the tone authoritative or informal? Is the style accessible? (Edwards & Redfern, 1988:25). Questions such as these are very important. They can make parents feel welcome or held at bay; valued or dismissed. Their willingness and ability to be involved in their children's education is greatly influenced by the school's communicative style (Louw, 2004).

3.4.3 Volunteering

This type of involvement includes all voluntary work in schools, such as classroom assistance, participation in fundraising activities, parents as audiences at learners' performances and assemblies, parent attendance at workshops and training sessions (Epstein, 2001). Although parents are expected to be involved in all these activities, there are complaints that schools are not involving parents enough (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2003:9). In South Africa parental involvement in the form of volunteering is still not utilised. Parents do not have any idea of what to do and how to do it, and besides, they cannot afford to assist for free, otherwise they lose the opportunity to render a service which they can get paid for to sustain their families (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

3.4.4 Learning at home

According to Olsen & Fuller (2008:139) this set of involvement behaviours grows out of basic obligations and includes efforts by parents to help with the development of general skills that do not duplicate the teacher's efforts. This includes study habits, critical thinking, conversational skills, responsibility and sportsmanship, and basic social and personal skills, as well as efforts to assist with the development of specific skills related to the lessons occurring in class, such as helping with homework, playing specific learning games, and working on specific sequences of skills needed for success in various subject areas. These activities may be initiated either by parent, teacher or student, and may or may not involve direction from the teacher (Alldred et al., 2002).

3.4.5 Governance and advocacy

Parental involvement in governance and advocacy includes participation in Parent Teachers Association, Parent Teachers Organisation, Parent Forums, or other school-connected groups in this category (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). It also includes participation in decision-making, active

roles in governance, watchdog and advocacy groups (Gestwicki, 2007: 436), although the functioning of these structures is not without problems (Heystek, 2004:308-312; Heystek, 2006:482). Involvement in this regard is rarely discussed as schools are not that willing to involve parents in such responsible tasks (Mda & Mothata, 2000:65).

The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996:14) acknowledges the rights of parents to be involved in school governance. The governing bodies are significant features of democracy in a society and represent a major move towards empowering parents in schools (Alexander, Bastiani & Beresford, 1995:88). The issue of governance and advocacy affect parents who are involved in the governing body. Instead of bringing some input in the meetings they are there to rubber stamp whatever is decided by the school or the school principal (Heystek, 2006), since the government expects the SGB meetings to be solely calm (Heystek & Bush, 2003:128). This area of parental involvement is one of the most controversial issues. Surveys show that most parents would like to play a more active role in this type of involvement, whereas most school administrators and teachers exhibit great reluctance to encourage parents to become partners in governance, especially in areas such as teacher and principal selection and evaluation (Carey & Farris, 1996:4, Heystek, 2004). This is not something new in South Africa. Management and governance was generally regarded as an activity for one who holds a senior position in an organisation, and these positions were basically dominated by men. Such positions granted the leader the ability to make unilateral decisions with very little or no input from the staff or parents (Mda & Mothata, 2000: 64). Not much has changed, although there is a call for democracy.

3.4.6 Collaboration and exchanges with the community

According to Gestwicki (2007:443) collaboration and exchange with the community include those activities that help to connect schools, families and students with the agencies, businesses, cultural groups, and community organisations that share the responsibility for young peoples' education and future successes. It requires effort from parents and schools. It is interesting to note that Pintrich & Schunk (2002, 396) are very aware that community

involvement is not something new. In addition they note many ways to involve communities, such as parent organisations, coaching school teams, talking with children and visiting classes, and apprentice programs with community businesses as well. It is clear that schools can no longer work in isolation. Collaboration with the community should be the priority.

3.4.7 Parental involvement with disadvantaged learners

There are learners whose socio-economic status puts them at an educational disadvantage as compared to their more fortunate peers. Similarly Raab & Storkey (2001) note that lower educational achievement is widely associated with children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Minority or low-income parents are often underrepresented among the ranks of parents involved with the schools, and their children suffer discrimination from their teachers (Coetzee & Streak, 2004:43). Numerous reasons such as lack of time or energy due to long hours of heavy physical labour, embarrassment or shyness about their own educational level or linguistic abilities, lack of understanding or information about the structure of the school and accepted communication channels, perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators, and teachers and administrators' assumptions of parents' disinterest or inability to help with children's schooling (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001:6).

Perhaps one of the most important findings of the research, however, is that parents of disadvantaged and minority children can do and make a positive contribution to their children's achievement in school if they receive adequate training and encouragement in the types of parent involvement that can make a difference (Human Rights Watch, 2004). Because of the special problems and the potential associated with the minority and disadvantaged parent involvement, school personnel tend to view parents and the surrounding community as needing to change and having little to offer (Olsen & Fuller, 2008: 280). This "deficit model" as it has been called, is clearly detrimental to the development of positive attitudes about education and good working relationship between parents and the school.

3.4.8 Parental involvement and poverty

According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:25) poverty and unemployment are starkly present in every reality, speech and activities of people living in rural areas. In some other cases parents are also faced with these realities and dynamics when they attempt to be involved in their children's schooling. Poverty can often be passed on from one generation to the next through a lack of education (Sender, 2002). Extreme poverty in some cases hinders every opportunity at which parents attempt involvement (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003). Poverty is defined in terms of one's income or expenditure being below a particular value or level. In addition, Ngwane, Yadavalli & Steffens (2001:202, 203) view the poverty line as the instance when individuals or households earn less than the agreed poverty line in monetary terms within the context of a specific country or region. In addition, Van Wyk (2004:5) is of an idea that absolute poverty refers to a percentage of people who have to make ends meet with a wage that is below that required for a basic and dignified existence.

There is quite a large number of children in South Africa who go to bed without food, and go to school without any breakfast or a decent lunch box for a day. Extensive poverty in South Africa makes it impossible for millions of parents to fulfill their obligations towards their children and as required by the constitution (Creamer, 2002; Donald et al., 2002:205-208). It is heart breaking for both parents and teachers, because teachers have to teach children who cannot pay attention to what they are learning because of the conditions they come from. Some children even drop out of school and become street kids just to fend for themselves and their families (Donald et al., 2002:210). Poverty is the risk factor most closely associated with family stress and highly correlated with school failure (Children's Defense Fund [CDF], 2001b; Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose & Tembon 2003:22), delinquency (Jarjoura, Triplett, & Brinker, 2002), and other problems, even though some children from poor economic backgrounds fare well.

3.4.9 Parent involvement and the child's age

In many cases parents are very concerned with the education of their children when they are still at a tender age. At the same time, however, it should be noted that when they get older, the involvement of parents declines drastically (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:196). The drastic change is because parents often judge themselves less able to help with school learning areas and other aspects, and their involvement becomes limited mainly to motivation as children become more independent and sometimes turn to their peers for help (Gestwicki, 2007:49). Parents can be involved by prompting motivation for learning, helping with cognitive tasks, and guiding school-relevant behaviour, parents perform school-like functions and support their children's school learning and motivation from their home (Allred et al., 2002; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002:395).

3.4.10 Conclusion

Parent involvement means different things to different people. It is a confusing term though, to schools and parents themselves. Dimensions of parental involvement were clarified in this manner:

- Parents are obliged to meet the basic needs of their children and to prepare their children for learning. This is not always possible because of the state in which some parents find themselves. Unemployment and poverty makes it difficult for parents to fully involve themselves in the education of their children.
- Parents' willingness and ability to be involved in school matters is greatly influenced by the schools communicative style. Many schools use modern ways of communication to communicate with parents. The difficulty is in applying these different styles of communication, as they can make parents feel welcome or held at bay.
- Parents are expected to volunteer to help with various activities in schools, although they do not know how to do it. In South Africa the idea of parents volunteering to help in the class is still underdeveloped.

- A call for democracy expects parents to be part of governance in schools either as members of the governing body or Parent Teachers Association. Schools are not willing to involve parents in such a huge responsibility as it is regarded as a waste of time. Schools would rather make decisions by themselves.
- Collaboration with the community helps to connect the schools, parents and learners to such an extent that various problems are tackled. Thus, collaboration with the community can lead to the success amongst children.
- Parental involvement in many instances is hindered by poverty and unemployment, which cause parents to feel less capable to help their children. Those parents in low socio-economic status put their children at an educational disadvantage since teachers expect nothing from them, although the research findings is that these parents can make a positive impact provided they are trained and encouraged.
- Parents seem to be very interested in the education of their children whilst they are still young. The older they (children) get, the more parents feel that they are less capable to help. As a result, children turn to their peers for help. At any age parents are helpful to their children for advice, motivation and many other things as well.

3.5 The perceived value of parental involvement

The perceived value of parental involvement is not what it is expected to be, since some educators feel that parents do not carry their share of the load. Teachers think that parents often “dump” their children at school and relinquish their responsibility for their children’s educational development (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999:3). It is important however, to know how parents are perceived by the schools in which their children learn in order to understand their views as well (Rabusicova, Emmerova, Cihacek & Sedova, 2002, 2). Factors include the school’s communication with parents and the support that it provides to parents’ in terms of involvement in school activities and their rights. Furthermore, Rabusicova et al., (2002:3) identify four basic approaches towards parental involvement, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.5.1 Parents as problem

The fact that parents are seen as problems today is not something which started in the 21st century. Long ago notices that said “No parents beyond this point” or “parents must not step over this line” or more politely, “please will parents not come into corridors” or more subtly, “parents are welcome if they make appointments”, or “please see the secretary” were seen everywhere in schools (Cullingford, 1996:730; Cullingford & Morrison, 1999:253). In this manner, the school with its special professional, institutional modus operandi creates an ambience and identity of separateness away from parents. Such an institution ranges from tentative defensiveness to straightforward arrogance. It is of course, not unique to schools of today. These signs see parents as problems. This approach to parents represents a traditional and experienced-based attitude, but this does not mean that this “attitude” is non-existent at all. Basically, three forms can be distinguished:

- Parents as a problem – “independent” parents

Independent parents prefer to keep minimum contact with their children’s school (Rubusicova et al., 2002). They rarely communicate with teachers and have a rather casual interest in their children’s learning outcomes. The parents’ values may differ from those transmitted by the school and thus, though tolerant, such parents do not feel much need to cooperate actively with the school. Their concern is usually with the well-being and healthy development of their children. These parents only fulfill their parental obligations to the limit they have set themselves and not set by the school, for if the school was not obliged to document its contact with them it would not be necessary to call them problem parents (Vincent, 2000).

- Parents as a problem - “bad” parents

Actually these parents show no interest in their children’s learning at all, and do not encourage them to learn. According to Olsen & Fuller (2008: 94) these parents are viewed as a problem for teachers. In particular, children of these parents are frequently judged to come from poor backgrounds, from a home environment which is unsupportive of the educational process. They only make little effort to enquire about the school’s

educational methods and pedagogical goals. It is really surprising to find out that these parents give the impression of neither accepting nor supporting the school and its values. However, the worst part of it is that some of them simply ignore it (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:93).

Generally this category includes families living on the margins of society, parents who cope with personal problems such as alcoholics, workaholics, sick people, illiterates, etc, and families that come from a different cultural background (Mc Ewan, 2005). There is no doubt that these parents often fail in their parental duties, even within the family. This category can also include parents who are unable to adequately express their interest or who are embarrassed to ask about things that are not clear to them, i.e. parents who lack necessary social competencies (Kallaway, 2001).

- Parents as a problem - “eager” parents

On the other hand, parents who are too “eager” can constitute a problem for the school as well. These parents make an effort to communicate, they participate in meetings, assist their children with homework, and on top of that they openly support the teachers and the school (Olsen & Fuller, 2008: 90). This category of parents can cause the teachers to feel that their position as educational experts is endangered (Lawson, 2003). These parents demand clear reports about their children’s progress, explicit descriptions of the teacher’s pedagogical approaches, educational counseling etc, and all this in a language that is intelligible to the parents. Active parents may sometimes be suspected of trying to gain advantages or control over the school (Cullingford, 1996). As such, their eagerness opens a gap that will hardly close because teachers feel intimidated.

3.5.2 Parents as customers

Hughes, Wikeley & Nash (1999) provide interesting insight into the notion of parents as customers or consumers or clients, a view promoted in U.K. under the conservative government

and continued under the present government. Within this view is the associated idea of education as a commodity. Parents are given the right to 'shop' for their children's education in the school of their choice (Gestwicki, 2010:260). This model view parental roles from two possible perspectives:

- The school and teachers are experts

Teachers are experts in the sense that the services they render are outstanding and they perform their job to the best of their ability (Olsen & Fuller, 2008: 11, 89). This includes treating customers as the most important persons in their children's lives and having willingness to subject the school's work to the criticism and requirements expressed by parents. In South Africa this is not always the case, the issues around Outcomes Based Education makes it difficult for the teachers and the school to be experts.

- Parents are experts

Parents are the experts on the education of their children. This is clear when they know best what schools and educational methods they need. If they want their children to be academically oriented, they are likely to involve their child in activities that stress academics (Pintrich & Shunk, 2002: 386). Generally speaking, this method entitles parents to choose from the following possible forms of participation: to be actively involved in the school's management and direct control over the school's development, secondly, expression of their needs and demands as the rank and file parents, or acceptance of whatever is offered to them, showing loyalty and entrusting themselves to the experts. This concept brings forth the idea that parents have a choice in the school in which their children must attend. This idea literally force the schools to compete with one another, and this puts pressure on the schools to continually improve their services and to innovate in the curriculum as well as in the choice of extra-curricular activities.

The free choice of a school and the introduction of a "consumer culture" into the school environment is expected to bring about greater cooperation between parents and the schools through the possibility for parents to have greater influence in the quality of the services they "buy". However, this assumption is somewhat problematic because the "customer" has the right to voice their claims or of not expressing them at all (McDonald,

2005). Thus the parents take into consideration their time limitations as well as their readiness to push their claims through. In addition, the parents might not always feel comfortable in the role of “supervisors”. Parents are often aware of their limited understanding of all the internal processes that take place within the school and therefore they tend to regard the teachers as professionals whose work should not be interfered with.

3.5.3 Parents as partners

The most frequently used expression when it comes to the relationship between the school and parents is partnership (Lynn, 2004). Partnership offers equality to both parties and mutual recognition of each partner’s contribution to the child’s progress. Often teachers strive to suppress their roles as experts and to welcome the parents’ views as an enrichment of their work. It is known that parents, regardless of how little professional training they might have had, are experienced educators who know their children best, which makes their opinion valuable (Lee & Ostrosky, 2004).

Due to various ways of running schools, sometimes the assumed quality in this relationship is questioned. Nonetheless, Nxesi (2004) and Munn (1993) offer such a concept of partnership where elements of reciprocity can be identified: shared power, responsibility and ownership, though unequally; reciprocity that begins with listening to each other, involves a sensitive dialogue and a give and take on both sides, shared goals based on shared values, recognition of important differences between the partners, and commitment to joint action through which the parents, pupils, and the experts strive for a common goal.

According to Ellsworth (2005) this kind of relationship is defined as a work relationship characterized by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and willingness to take action. This implies sharing information, skills, responsibilities and decision making, as well as accountability to each other. It implies readiness to come together with a sense of equality and clarity of roles,

as well as mutual support, although, if not well planned, this phenomenon can be easily replaced by mutual mistrust and recrimination. Teachers can blame parents, as well as vice versa (Lombard, 2007). Despite these tensions, at the heart of the dilemma is the role of parents in schools. Adding to these concerns is the question: Do they know their tasks? Or are they passengers in schools?

In addition the ideal partnership according to Ellsworth (2005:118) is built upon openness to new ideas and to open honest communication, which is based on realistic expectations and not looking for miracles. Ellsworth goes on to say that in an ideal partnership, there are minimum threats and there is also an expectation of reward, and both parents and teachers understand what is expected of them. In this relationship it is applicable to confront differences whenever there is suspicion. This partnership does not only include parents and teachers, it also includes all the stakeholders involved in the education of children.

In the partnership parents often like to exchange information with teachers about their child's personality, behaviour and the best way to approach him or her. They also facilitate the child's school performance, that is, they give advice, and create good conditions for learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002:395). Furthermore, they are also willing to help their child's classes by partaking in the organisation of class activities and sponsor activities financially. These parents try by all means to get involved in formal parental networks and to influence important decisions concerning the school. Lastly, they act in the interest of the school wherever it can be of benefit to the school.

3.5.4 Parents as citizens

Schools are built within communities, and members of the community tend to support any development within their communities (Coetzee, 2007). This includes school initiatives to collaborate with the community (Gestwicki, 2010). Their support of the school continues even

when their children do not attend a particular school (Vincent, 2000). Their main intention is to support the community in which they live by giving back their time and other resources required by the school. This is where schools that are committed to partnership with the parents tend to use whatever skills parents may have to develop the school as a whole (Gestwicki, 2010).

3.5.5 Conclusion

Parental involvement is perceived as either valued or negative in the ways described above. Parents are evaluated and observed from a distance. The attitude of seeing parents as problems neither makes it easier for parents nor for the school to join hands and collaborate for the sake of the child. Instead, it opens a gap that widens by the day. Parents are seen as problems in the following manner:

- Parents are seen as problems by the school to such an extent that notices are written to let them know how and when they should be available at school. Parents are even labelled by the school as independent, bad and eager depending on their willingness to be involved.
- The attitude that sees parents as customers gives parents the idea that they should shop around for the best school where teachers know their job best, and where parents can have more influence on the particular school of choice for the sake of their children.
- Partnership is an expression often used to describe the relationship between parents and schools. Often partnership is hindered by the fact that teachers act as superiors to the parents. Parents' views are seen as enrichment to their work.
- Parents are citizens of a particular community, therefore, as members they support any development within the school by giving back their time to the school, even if their children are not longer attending the school.

3.6 Barriers to parental involvement in schools

Despite the clear evidence that parental involvement in their children's education has wide ranging benefits, parental involvement in school programs and activities remains rare. This has led to extensive research to identify barriers to parental involvement. Brazier & Lange (1994:5-9) identified that although there are fairly extensive theoretical support for parent participation, many also acknowledge that in practice, participative opportunities are often ill-managed token gestures that have not been adequately developed in school policy, or missed altogether. The responsibility of parents is still undefined, despite a large body of research on the matter. There are still more barriers than expected, which hinder parents' involvement. These barriers are divided into two categories, namely barriers that are caused by the school and barriers that are caused by parent characteristics. These barriers will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

3.6.1 School centered barriers

According to Koki & Lee (1998:3), barriers to parental involvement in schools prevent parents from assisting their children in many ways. These barriers range from:

3.6.1.1 Teacher's skills

In many cases the teachers are not skilful enough in inviting parents to participate because they have not been provided with the requisite knowledge and skills (Van Wyk, 1996). As a result, parents often become isolated and distanced from the school. Teachers may seem to be unsympathetic people from the parent's point of view because they will not be willing to welcome any extra bother and hassle. In real fact teachers view the act of dealing with parents as very time consuming. Given the constraints, parents are often associated with trouble. According to the teachers' views, they are only seen when there are problems: "and some find them a nuisance, you know bloody parents coming in" (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999). Parents are depicted psychologically as powerful and potentially threatening. The less they are seen the

more likely it is that they are seen as a result of difficulties and, in consequence, in a circumstance of confrontation (Wolfendale, 1989). Due to lack of skills in involving parents, there will always be some teachers who might wish to remain unapproachable, but at the root of the problem the point is not the personality but the circumstances.

3.6.1.2 Teacher's perceptions

According to Van Wyk (2002) school centered barriers also include teachers' perceptions and understanding of working with parents. This includes factors such as:

- Educators have a limited understanding of what constitutes school family partnership

Educators in many schools state that there is no policy on how parents should be involved, as such schools do not bother to talk about it (Epstein, Saunders & Clark, 1999). The absence of school policy on how to involve parents is unfortunate, as research shows that school programs and educator practices are the strongest and most consistent predictors of partnership (Wanat, 1994:644). Likewise, most schools have never discussed family and community involvement as a way of improving schools. Instead, more conventional ways such as open-house days, fundraising activities, volunteer programs, and parent-teacher conferences are engaged. Many parents, especially single and dual income parents, are not able to participate in such activities, and yet they want to assist their children to succeed in school. However, it does not seem as if educators make specific arrangements for such parents to become involved in their children's education. As Chrispeels (1991:371) notes: "most efforts have been directed at 'fixing' parents rather than at altering school structures and practices."

- Educators are not convinced that family-school partnership are important for learner success

In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many educators do not believe that parent involvement is important for a learner's success. This means that among others, teachers do not readily discuss learners' progress with their parents. However, the parents of weaker learners are contacted (Eksteen, 2009), or cases where there are "serious concerns" (Stoll & Fink, 1996).

- Educators do not involve families in homework activities

According to (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005), in low socio-economic school communities, educators argue that parents are uncooperative when it comes to homework. At least, literate parents try to check their children's homework, but illiterate ones don't care, they are always busy. On the other hand, parents complain that the work given to their children is not clearly defined (Thwala, 2003; Cooper, Lindsay & Nya, 2000). Teachers never teach parents how to conduct homework, and they do not know how to do it (Epstein & Dauber, 1991: 290). With the implementation of OBE, assisting learners with various tasks as homework has become very difficult for parents as they are clueless (Vally & Spreen, 1998).

- Educators do not actively support parents in their role as educators

Learners need to be provided with a rich social capital from their families and their communities, and this should be encouraged by the teachers. Some of the teachers are not willing to encourage parents to do so, since they feel that parents are not meaningful educators who can have a positive influence in their children's education (Naicker, 2001).

- Educators seem unwilling to include parents in classroom activities

Most educators seem to be unwilling to use parents as volunteers, and if they do, they do not involve them to play an active role (Thomson, 2007). They are invited as audience, never to participate or to help as conflict may arise due to interests, values and goals that may differ (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

- Educators seem satisfied with one-way flow of communication

Most educators communicate with parents by means of written communication, school meetings, and parents' conferences, and with messages passed on through learners (Wilmshurst & Brue, 2005). There is a limited opportunity for parents to communicate with educators at a time that is convenient for both parents and educators. A large number of teachers argue that their cell phone and home telephone numbers should not be given to parents. There is the view that parents are problematic and difficult to work with, and therefore parents have to wait to hear from educators on what to do next (Neal & Kaye, 2006).

- Educators often believe that the parents' role in decision making should be limited

In general, educators feel that parents' role in decision making should be limited to voting for, or serving on, the school governing body (Mda & Mothata, 2000). In many cases, some decisions are taken without parents' consent. And again, teachers feel that the recent legislation has given the school governing bodies too much decision making power (Maithufi, 1997; Pretorius, 1998), and as such teachers as professional people should not be outvoted by parents, since they consider parents as untrained (Coetzee & Streak, 2004).

- Educators have limited knowledge of and experience in involving the community

According to Epstein (2001), schools were supposed to invite various agencies to render various services, for instance traffic inspectors to speak on road safety, nurses on health issues, police on crime and crime prevention, etc. These people who have to be invited to come and speak with the learners should be parents at the school. Greater awareness of community resources available for use by the parents, learners and schools should also receive attention, and this information should be passed on to those in need of help (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004). This problem is enormous, especially for educators, and particularly those who teach in economically disadvantaged communities, because they do not have knowledge on how to utilize the resources in the community, neither on how to involve the community (Mda & Mothata, 2000). It is sad though if little attention is paid to prepare educators to work with the community or to link community resources to the goals of learners, families and schools.

- Educators tend to blame parents for the lack of effective school-family-community-partnership

Lack of partnership is often blamed on parents. The following reasons, as they are perceived by educators, lead to the lack of effective partnership (Epstein, 2006; Kgafe, 2001). They are:

- Limited time: working parents do not have enough time to be involved in the education of their children (Heystek & Louw, 1999). They often arrive late from work or else they might be working over-time. During weekends they have to attend to community functions such as weddings, funerals, parties and "stokvels".
- Problematic life situations: many parents in South Africa experience stress to such an extent that it is quite hard for them to relate to their children and the school (Asmal & James, 2002).

- Uncooperative parents: in general, many parents just dump off their kids and expect the job to be done by their teachers.
- Parents' lack of education: it is estimated that 37% of the population is unable to read or write (Shindler & Bot, 1999:1). This kind of parent assumes that he/she will be rejected by the teachers and that he/she is not worth to be part of the school. Parents do not see themselves as generally able to influence decisions (Lemmer, 2003).
- Educators are not trained to initiate or improve school-family-community partnership.

Educators believe that they were taught how to manage a class and to control books. They are not sure of where parents enter the curriculum. Often they are intimidated by parents. In fact, they are minimally prepared (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1999:2).

3.6.1.3 The principal

According to Lombard (2007) the responsibility of involving parents lies in the principal's hands. If the principal has a positive relationship and good communication rapport with parents, it is likely that there will be strong participation in school affairs. Nelushi (2006) maintains that the task of the school principal is to provide advice and psychological support to all stakeholders, including parents. However, if the principal places "low priority" on parental involvement or does not communicate well with families, parents may feel unwelcome and unwanted at the school (Bastiani, 1997; Mda & Mothata, 2000; Lombard, 2007). The principal's supporting role in the process of change gives all stakeholders courage for whatever activity is done at school (Ramisur, 2007). Therefore, the leadership skills of the principal and his/her attitude is of great importance if parents have to be involved.

3.6.1.4 Meeting place

The conditions under which parents meet and communicate with teachers may also be a barrier (Gestwicki, 2007:216). The physical characteristics of areas where parents and teachers meet, such as the classroom, conference room, and principal's office, may seem unnatural and uncomfortable for parents to express themselves. If the meeting is held in the principal's office or a particular teacher's class, a desk can be barrier as it displays that the person sitting behind it is dominant (Gestwicki, 2010:338). This may cause much tension for parents, since they are nervous and fearful when they remember to visit the school. Therefore, a relaxed setting where parents can feel welcome can do the trick.

3.6.1 Parent centered barriers

Schools play an important part in the child's development. Therefore, parents and guardians are typically interested in what is going on there (Ramisur, 2007:32). This interest, however, can be mediated by the school-level factors that are believed to influence the extent and character of parental involvement (Feuerstein, 2000). According to the Fast Response Survey System (U.S Department of Education, 1996:26) it cannot longer be denied that there are perceived barriers to parental involvement in school programs. These problems can range from:

3.6.2.1 Not enough time

One of the most crucial elements when it comes to parental involvement is time. Both parents and teachers are undoubtedly under time constraints. According to (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:92), today's parents have layers of responsibilities that make it difficult even to help their children with homework or other school related tasks. In addition they also find themselves at the mercy of a society that imposes pressures and priorities that allow neither time nor place for meaningful activities and relations between schools (Gestwicki, 2007).

3.6.2.2 Feel they have nothing to contribute

Parents' attitude towards helping their children or being involved with other school activities is very negative. According to Beveridge (2005:2) the quality of parental involvement is influenced by parents' confidence in dealing with school issues. Very often, parents do not perceive themselves as able to influence decision, although they are rated by their children to be better listeners (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin & Sinclair, 2003). Parents' attitude do not resemble advocacy to the needs of their children (Beveridge, 2004).

3.6.2.3 Don't understand or know how to be involved

It is with no doubt that parents want to be involved in the education of their children. Hence, they motivate their children in every possible way they can, even though they do not have appropriate skills. Very often parents seek assistance on how to help their children learn better. Unfortunately, efforts by the school are not helping in any way (Berger, 2003). It is sad to note that the very same people who are regarded as the first teachers of their children are not empowered to be actively involved in the education of their children (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis, 2007). As they are not actively involved, they are blamed when children are not behaving well. As it has been discussed earlier (cf. paragraph. 3.5), their effort to be involved is perceived in different ways. These ways show clearly that they do not know exactly how to get involved.

3.6.1.4 Lack of child care

Parents in poor and urban communities suffer many constraints. With the dynamics of the changing family structure and modernisation, many parents do not have the support of the extended family (Hilton, Desrochers & Devall, 2001). Children are taken care of by various institutions such as Day Care Centers, After Cares and Pre-Schools (Gestwicki, 2007:46). These institutions operate during the day. By the time parents come back home from work, caring for their children is their responsibility. This means that if they have to attend meetings later on, they have no-one to look after their children. This problem reduces parental involvement (Fussell & Greene, 2002).

3.6.1.5 Feel intimidated

Not all parents feel at ease when they have to visit schools, no matter how qualified they are. Often the feeling of intimidation clicks in the back of their minds, just to remind them that they are not in charge (Wolfendale & Bastiani, 2000). Precisely the same attitude of superiority is displayed by the teachers, just to show that they are in charge of the whole arena (Beveridge, 2005). This kind of feeling rarely puts parents and teachers on the same level or interest to help the child. In fact it keeps a distance and makes the parents feel unwelcome.

3.6.1.6 Not available during the time scheduled

As if twenty four hours was not enough, parents always complain about time. The effect of time depends on when the meeting is scheduled, as schools often schedule their meetings according to their programs, forgetting parents (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). Time on its own cannot be regarded as a barrier, though issues such as transport, distance from home to school, whether the meeting is held during the day or evening, time when parents start or leave their offices for home can be regarded as problematic (Gestwicki, 2007). It cannot be denied that these issues have a serious effect on parental involvement.

3.6.2.7 Unique cultural conditions

There are varying perceptions of what parent involvement actually should be based on cultural and socio-economic differences in parenting styles (Beveridge, 2004). This sets the stage for communication problems based on the differing expectations of parents and teachers. In South Africa there are serious incongruities between the expectations of teachers from the white community and parents from black families with regard to parent involvement in child rearing (Mda & Mothata, 2000; Ramisur, 2007). Differences between parents and teachers related to ethnicity, language, socio-economic status and education represent a barrier to the home-school partnership (Crozier, 1998). If the educational environment is not sensitive to the home language and home culture, communication is difficult and parents may feel unwelcome at school and psychologically discouraged from initiating a dialogue with their children's teachers (Gestwicki, 2007; Lombard, 2007). The relationship is often seen as rather awkward since communication between schools and parents has been negative. Schools tend to see parents

as deficient, apathetic and in fact the source of the children's problems. According to the socio-pedagogical perspective, child rearing and education are always actualized in a social situation and are not isolated from the broader societal situation, its trends and situation (Pretorius, 1998: 229; Lombard, 2007:23). As such, parents should not be excluded from schools as they form part of the community in which their children are living.

In quite a number of cases in research on parental involvement, literature fails to mention the role of gender in parent involvement. Very often the theorists identify inherent biological and/or psychological differences between men and women (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). For example, families commonly include a gender division of labour. Women are usually primary caregivers, and their household work is not recognized. It reduces availability for salaried work and results in overwork (Enslin & Pendlebury, 2000:437). It is supposed that women should think and act according to the roles they have been taught and they are expected to be passive, orderly and motherly (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003:126).

Much of the literature speaks of 'parent', when it actually appears to assume the predominant pattern of maternal involvement. Such an assumption may reduce the possibility of paternal involvement due to the changing structures of families, including the rise of single-parent households and the increase in working mothers in two parent households (Ramisur, 2007). The absence of a father figure in the circle of education is really posing serious problems today as compared to the past when mothers had to be responsible for every single matter concerning their children at school (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002:393; Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Teacher's expectations when frustrated by diverse parenting styles often lead to attitudes that also function as barriers to the involvement of parents (Ramisur, 2007:33). On top of that, there are instances within the community where these families live where cultural events in the community comes before the school program. Therefore, if a village or community event takes place at the same time as a school event, the former takes precedence (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2003:34). Likewise, in some communities the church plays a vital role in the community, as such parent involvement with the school is impossible due to the fact that the church or any other activity in the community will require community participation (Lombard, 2007).

3.6.1 Conclusion

Barriers in parental involvement are more or less the same on the whole continent. Parents view schools as their main obstacles to involvement since they determine when and how parents should be involved. On the other hand, schools view parents as their main obstacles since they are not participating enough. In conclusion barriers to parental involvement include:

- Teachers' skills and perceptions hinder parental involvement in schools since teachers were not trained to work closely with parents, and on the other hand they see working with parents as time consuming.
- The principal as the manager of the school is expected to build positive relationship with parents and to ensure maximum participation by parents in school matters. Principals who place low emphasis on parental involvement makes parents feel unwelcome and not wanted. Hence, the skills and attitude of the principal in parental involvement is crucial.
- Many parents are not at ease when they visit schools. They are always anxious about what is going on in the lives of their children and the meeting place makes it more difficult if it displays superiority, because it also determines the outcome of the meeting.
- Parents' barriers range from not having enough time to attend meetings due to other responsibilities to intimidation, not knowing how to be involved, and unique cultural conditions.

3.7 Expectations from parents

Schools and parents are faced with challenges to work together in order to provide the necessary education and support that children need in all areas. The well-being of children is no exception at all (Rudiger, 2000). Parent involvement in children's learning is identified as a critical task to achieving a high-quality education in a safe, disciplined learning environment (U.S. Department of Education 1994; Pintrich & Shunk, 2002:391). To overcome these challenges parents must continue to be involved with the schools, and schools must continue to

reach out to parents as such. There are many levels of parental involvement (cf. paragraph. 3.4), and each is important in its own way for its contribution to the alliance (Epstein, 2006). The first is commitment of parents to the necessity of schooling for their children, and an understanding of the influence that this has on the child's own commitment to participating positively in school. In a variety of cases parent involvement ranges from this basic, but relatively passive support to active participation, volunteerism and decision making. Parent involvement has changed over time, thus it includes the following levels: Parent as an active partner and educational leader at home and school; parent as a decision maker; parent as a school volunteer or paid employer; parent as a liaison between home and school to support homework and finally, parents as supporters of the educational goals of the school (Lombard, 2007; Ramisur, 2007).

Apart from these roles above, parents are willing to be involved in the school governance in this manner:

- Parent involvement as a component of a culture of teaching and learning

Strong parent involvement is linked to sound management and a strong culture of teaching and learning in the school. Up to date, the absence of the culture of teaching and learning is a grave concern in South African schooling and in brief, it refers to the general malfunctioning of mainly black schools due to the legacy of Apartheid (Christie, 1998; Chisholm & Vally, 1996; Mda & Mothata, 2000).

- A parent friendly school

Parents need to be recognized for their strength and potential. Frequently, families, particularly low-income or ethnically diverse families, do not feel welcome in schools and due to the fewer resources that they have, their children often display learning problems and require extra assistance (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002:389). Thus, the school needs to be sensitive towards this issue and have an open-door policy that welcomes all parents into the school community (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997). Reaching these parents is more of an ideal than a reality, since these parents still need to be welcomed and appreciated by the school (Epstein et al., 1997:56). A welcoming atmosphere requires more than just the rhetoric of policy. Activities to involve parents should consider the pressures of contemporary family life. It should be feasible to implement and equitable to all types of families.

- Home school communication

Parents feel that communication must be two-way (Wilmhurst & Brue, 2005) and their own language must be used to communicate issues around and about their children. They also need to be informed about the school program, their learner's achievements and difficulties (Dietz, 1997:3) and not only when a behavioural or learning problem arises, as many parents experience (Littky, 2004: 147). If any relationship between parents and school has to function, various aspects have to be taken seriously (cf. 3.4.2).

- Reconceptualizing the parent's traditional role

Parent volunteers are a cost effective way to expand the range of activities at the school, but on the other hand involving parents on the school premises is difficult. Parents are always busy and those who are willing to offer these services are not welcome because they are considered unsuitable as they are often the elderly, illiterate or unemployed (Dietz, 1997:40). In South Africa using volunteers in the classroom is an unusual way to involve parents (Mda & Mothata, 2000; Asmal & James, 2002). A number of counter-responses are expected from parents (Constitution of South Africa. Chapter 2, Schools Act, 1996). They should:

- ensure that their children attend school regularly
- see to it that their children are sent to school well-fed, neatly and cleanly dressed
- constantly encourage their children to make a success of their schoolwork
- accustom their children to strict discipline and responsibility, thereby facilitating and supplementing the school's effort in this connection
- see to it that their children have a suitable place for study and sufficient time to do their homework
- have a positive attitude towards the school, never speak disparagingly of the principal or a teacher in the presence of their children, and discuss complaints or grievances with the principal personally
- inform the principal of anything such as their children's physical condition or any other problems that might have an effect on their children as a whole.
- react positively when the school requires their assistance.

In contradiction to what is expected from parents, many parents are not aware of their obligations towards the educational department, children and the school. Their only perception about their role is only referable when their children are guilty of an offence and are in trouble or when they have been wronged by the school (Littky, 2004: 147). It is clear that the parent's traditional role is interdependence with the school.

The importance of parental involvement in their children's education, particularly when problems affecting their children are likely, appears largely uncontested by schools (Edwards & Warin, 1999:325), but parents are viewed as amateurs (Littky, 2004:144). Normally, schools decide for parents and parents are expected to dance according to their tune. In the democratic South Africa, parents' voices must be heard. The problem remains the same if there are still authoritarians in the top structures at schools (Mda & Mothata, 2000). Issues around education that affect children will not change if parents are not part of it (Wolfendale, 1992). As long as the same people are making all the decisions, everything will stay pretty much the same (Asmal & James, 2002). An abundant body of literature on parent involvement comes to the suggestion that parents are the children's first and most influential teachers regarding the value of learning, good learning habits and respect for the educational process, and they cannot, and must not, be left out of the education equation, not even when there are professionals around (Littky, 2004:13,79). Merttens & Vass, for example, describes parental involvement as the 'flag to be saluted whenever it is hoisted' (Merttens & Vass, 1990:88). Similarly Vincent and Tomlinson note that the 'soft rhetoric' of parental involvement 'still dominates at school level' (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997:3). Parents need to know how their children are progressing at school and how they are conducting themselves.

3.7.1 Conclusion

When parents take children to a particular school of choice, they have some expectations as well. They have their own way and understanding of being involved.

- In every sphere, parents expect better reception from the side of the school, although they are not always welcome. They are a component of a culture of teaching and

learning. Therefore, a parent friendly school which communicates well with parents can succeed.

- Besides their traditional roles, parents want to be involved by volunteering and in the governance of the school. Parents who offer their services to the school are not always welcome as they are looked down upon. However, the constitution of the Republic of South Africa requires parents to be fully involved in the education of their children.

3.8 Benefits of involving parents

The policies of most education systems worldwide current include widely supported research on parental involvement and its benefits to learners (Cullingford, 1996). In Great Britain, government support on this issue received particular attention in the Government's Education White Paper Excellence in Schools in July 1997 (National Children's Bureau, 2000). Ever since the contribution of parents has been linked to school effectiveness and the success of children (Wolfendale & Bastiani, 2000; Bastiani & Wolfendale, 1996; Munn, 1993; Wolfendale, 2002). In Australia, it is also evident that the perception of the importance of parent involvement is a gem to be considered in the education of children (Angus, 1995). This is also evident in New Zealand (Renwick, 1989). In Hong Kong parent involvement has been linked to school improvement (Ng, 1999), as also in the Netherlands (Smit, Van Esch & Walberg, 1993) and in Indonesia (Van der Werf, Creemers & Guldmond, 2001).

Hornby (1990:247) indicates that the benefits of involving parents first gained its widespread acknowledgement from educators in the 1960s. The evolution of parent involvement in the UK has, so far, tended to be practice led rather than being guided by theory or policy. According to Hornby (1990:247) parental involvement has become the focus of attention for several possible reasons such as:

- Various public debates and disputes in the field of education have focused parents' attention on what goes on in schools.
- Schools are now required to have parent representatives among their governors.

- The 1981 Education Act concerning children with special needs requires parent involvement in the assessment and planning processes.
- The advantages of involving parents, both in managing children's behaviour and in facilitating their development have been widely reported.
- The emphasis on parents' rights in the 1988 Education Reform Act means that schools can no longer afford not to work closely with their learners' parents.

Useful models are available for various types of parental involvement. Numerous publications and books on the subject have been published. What has been missing so far was a comprehensive, theoretical and strategic model to guide the practice of parent involvement, a guideline that provides educators with a framework with which to formulate an overall policy and plans for the involvement of parents to improve teaching and learning (Sheldon, 2005). Such a model would enable a local school to ensure that, as far as possible, parents' needs are met and their strength as such is being utilized. Thus, educators must have knowledge and skills in order to participate in each type of parent involvement.

Further benefits include:

- When parents are involved in their children's education, the children's achievement improve, they show better grades, better test scores and long term academic achievement attitudes as well, regardless of family income or background. Students whose parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behaviour and adapt well to school. This holds true for all types of parent involvement in children's learning and for all types and ages (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
- The most accurate predictors of learners' achievement in schools are not family income or social status, but the extent to which the family creates a home environment that encourages learning by modeling a character that is desirable, communicates high yet reasonable expectations for the child's achievement, and becomes involved in the child's education at school (National PTA, 2000:11-12; Henderson & Berla, 1994:160).

- The more comprehensive and well planned the role and involvement of parents at school and at home, the higher the learner's involvement (Henderson & Berla, 1995:14-16).
- The involvement of parents in schools does not benefit their own children only. As such, the performance of all the learners at school tends to improve and they are more likely to go on to higher education as well (Henderson & Berla, 1995:14-16).
- There are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those that engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs that involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or even tutoring them using materials and instruction provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001:3).
- There is increased confidence in the parents (Bastiani & Wolfendale, 1996:7).

Henderson & Berla (1994) reviewed and analysed eighty five studies that documented the comprehensive benefits of parent involvement in children's education. The findings resemble that if parent involvement activities are planned effectively and well implemented, they result in substantial benefits not only to children, but for the parents, educators and the school as well. These benefits are:

Benefits for children

- Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or social background, socio-economic status or parents' educational level.
- Children consistently complete their homework.
- Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation towards school.
- Children's positive attitude about school often results in improved behaviour in school and less suspension for disciplinary reasons.
- Fewer children are being placed in special education and remedial classes.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals work together to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the culture in school.

- Junior high and high school students whose parents remain involved usually make better transitions and are less likely to drop out of school.

Benefits for the parents

- Parents increase their interaction and discussion with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, intellectual developmental needs.
- Parents are more confident in their parenting and decision-making skills.
- As parents gain more knowledge of child development, there is more use of affection and positive reinforcement and less punishment of their children.
- Parents have a better understanding of the teacher's job and school curriculum.
- When parents are aware of what their children are learning, they are more likely to help when they are requested by teachers to become more involved in their children's learning activities at home.
- Parents' perceptions of the school are improved and there are stronger ties and commitment to the school.
- Parents are more aware of, and become more active regarding policies that affect their children's education when parents are requested by the school to be part of the decision-making team.

Benefits for the educators

- When schools have a high percentage of involved parents in and out of schools, teachers and principals are more likely to experience high morale.
- Teachers and principals often earn greater respect for their profession from the parents.
- Consistent parent involvement leads to improved communication and relations between parents, teachers and administrators.
- Teachers and principals acquire a better understanding of families' culture and diversity, and they form deeper respect for parents' abilities and time.
- Teachers and principals report an increase in job satisfaction.

Benefits for the school

- Schools that actively involve parents and the community tend to establish better reputations in the community.
- Schools also experience better community support.
- School programs that encourage and involve parents usually do better and have higher quality programs than programs that do not involve parents.

3.8.1 Conclusion

Throughout this section, it has been shown that the benefits of parental involvement in schools:

- Yield positive results for learners, parents, educators and the school respectively.
- Parents' understanding of educational matters improves, and they also gain more confidence.

3.9 Final conclusion

In this chapter the main focus was on parental involvement in the schools. The history of parental involvement was traced from the times when parents still provided informal education from home, up to when formal schooling started. In the earlier times of formal education parents depended mainly on teachers, because they thought they were trained to take part. On the other hand, teachers were complaining that parents were not involved. This left a void between what teachers were doing at school and what parents were doing at home. Finally, the chapter emphasises the importance of involving parents in the education of their children. In order to understand the phenomenon under research, it was necessary to explore parents' identity, levels of involvement and barriers to involvement. These form the basis of understanding what should be the involvement of parents with health promotion in schools. This will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

PARENTS AND HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS

4.1 Introduction and orientation

Since 1994, the South African government has undertaken several international and national level policy initiatives to promote the health and well-being of young people (Coulson, 1999). At international level they participated in the signing of the World Summit Declaration and the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2002). At national level, the National Action Plan for Children was a further illustration of existing commitments to improving the health of the youth in South Africa (National Programme of Action Steering Committee, 1996).

According to the Department of Health (2000b:1) the challenges facing education and schools in particular, cannot be ignored anymore. It is undoubtedly true that the central challenge of all is the culture of teaching and learning, and to provide better quality education for all in school (Simpson & Freeman, 2004). At the heart of this problem lie obstacles such as poverty, the HIV/Aids pandemic, all forms of violence in and around schools, and again various forms of substance abuse. To many children of South Africa, this is a situation of life and death (Flisher & Reddy, 1995; David, 2005).

However, the Department of Health (2002) has embarked on a strategy to address these challenges. Though one can say this is a problem affecting schools only, parents are also the main stakeholders in the future of their children (St Leger, 2001). According to Donald et al., (2002:22) it is clear that in any society parents have to own what takes place in the education of their children. Parents must be engaged in saying what ownership means and how it matters to them, because nobody can tell parents how to get involved (DFE, 1992). According to Spinelli (2002:22) the role of parents has increasingly been stressed in all aspects of the classification, programming and placement of the child. The pivotal role of parents in the education of a child

cannot be emphasised enough, as children will always have difficulties in one way or the other (Henlye, Ramsey & Algozzine, 2002:51). Clearly, such a process must involve dialogue and negotiation. Educators do have information and professional perspectives parents may not have. Probably most parents are educators themselves. Unless parents are actively involved in such a process, their voices will not be heard. And they will not experience ownership of what happens to their children (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005:1; Lewis, 2005).

The above remark clearly denotes that parents have total ownership in the education of their children, including collaboration with schools in the promotion of health, although the authoritarian way in which education has been conducted in the past in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2001:19; Maithufi, 1997) caused people to believe that involvement will not take place in any way, except paying school fees and attending to other matters raised by the school authorities (Asmal & James, 2002). According to Donald et al., (2002:22) the past policies and practices in South Africa disempowered people in such a way that engagement in decision making is an unpleasant experience, even though structures to remedy the problem have been set in place. Meanwhile, Mda & Mothata (2000:66) maintain that this created an illusion of stakeholders' participation.

In the marginalized communities there is an urgent need for parents to be involved in a range of health problems that besiege both schools and communities (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In particular, these problems range from abuse, drugs, malnutrition, obesity, sex related problems, alcohol, vandalism, crime, violence and other health problems that affect the well-being of children (Department of Education Directorate, 2002; Donald, Dawes & Louw, 2000).

As mentioned before, there is nobody who can tell parents how to get involved, except to discover most effective ways of how to promote health among school going children and to empower them (Batey, 1996:27; Hornby, Davies & Taylor, 1995:87).

This chapter will investigate various ways in which parents should be involved in health promotion in schools, and will discuss the obstacles that hinder parents from being involved. These problems have only been attended to in a fragmented way (Donald et al., 2002). From the literature review in the previous chapter on parental involvement in schools it was clear that there is a great need. This chapter could help close the gap between theory and reality, and it can also eliminate the ongoing health problems of children (Graham & Uphold, 1992). In order to understand more about parental involvement and health promotion in schools, the barriers, functions, challenges and misconceptions about their involvement will be investigated. Just to have a clear perception of health promotion in schools, the concept and practice of health and Health Promoting Schools will be explored as well.

4.2 Health, Health promotion and the Health Promoting Schools

In this section the concepts and practices of Health Promoting Schools, Health Promotion and Health will be discussed in detail to gain a broader understanding of health practices in an academic world. The essential framework of this study is based on the concept of health promotion in schools, as it is crucial to understand its importance in the academic setting. The background understanding of this concept will form the basis on which parents could be involved in the well-being of their children. An overview of this concept is discussed in the following manner:

4.2.1 Health

The definition of health is difficult, if not the most controversial, since the crux of the definition does not mean the same thing at all times and for different cultures. According to the well-known definition of WHO (2002), health is a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease as some cultures may say. The term has appeared frequently in the literature on education, psychology, medicine, and social work as well. Its origins are obscure, and its use in various contexts indicates a lack of consensus regarding its meaning. As psychologists, social workers and counselors use the term to explain individuals who suffer emotional and adjustment problems, medical workers use the term to

denote physical health problems or illness of the body. With this varied understanding of the definition of health, Western science attempted to understand the functioning of the body by analysing the components, instead of looking at health in a more holistic manner (Ogden, 2000:2; Naidoo & Wills, 2000:9).

The definition of health in education is not only about intellectual and scholastic achievement, but it encompasses all the dimensions in different contexts as well (Williams & Reddy, 1998). It implies that children must be physically, mentally, socially, environmentally, economic and spiritually healthy (Department of Health, 2000b). The concept is not limited to the physical state of the body only. The extension of the meaning of health by the Department of Health surpasses the definition of the World Health Organisation, which is limited in its scope as is believed to be incomplete (Ewles & Simmet, 2003:6-8).

The holistic approach in the definition of health is considered as positive because the concept of health psychology, which is the study of the effects of psychological factors in the origins, prevention, and the treatment of physical illness (Baron & Byrne, 2000:544) and health related issues in the schools of South Africa, are included in the definition (Viljoen & Kirsten, 2003:xiv). Therefore, it implies that health is not only the business of health practitioners, but it is just as much the business of parents, teachers, ministers, psychologist, doctors, and social workers as well.

In terms of health in conjunction with education, it means that children must be totally healthy in all spheres, as they will not be considered healthy if they are unable to cope in some instances during their education (Department of Health, 2000b). If there is something missing from all the aspects that link to make up the well-being of the child, predictably there will be a serious crisis in education (Enslin, 2003). It is advisable to take preventative measures, since prevention is better than cure (Grave, 2003). It is quite interesting to know that the Department of Health is much aware of the health issues affecting the young people of South Africa, as the presentation by Dr Chetty highlighted in the conference at the University of Western Cape, children and youth carry most of the burden of diseases and health, and that these challenges are

particularly prevalent in rural areas where environments were often unsafe (Lazarus, 2006:9). Health promotion is therefore a crucial part of the solution to all of these problems.

4.2.2 Health promotion

According to the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986; Donald et al., 2002:34, 137), “health promotion is a process of enabling people to increase control over, and improve their health”. The definition of health promotion is of great importance since health promotion helps people to gain and maintain good health by combining education and environmental support to influence people’s living conditions and actions (Department of Health, 2006). However, within the education arena, this entails promoting learning and development by attending to barriers to learning that hinder effective teaching and learning in the school environment (Department of Education, 2002). This could also be achieved by empowering other stakeholders beyond the school environment; such as parents. In actual fact, health promotion should be carried out by and with people, not on or to people (WHO, Jakarta Declaration, 1997).

4.2.3 The Health Promoting School

According to WHO/EURO (1993:1) the Health Promoting School is defined as one that aims to achieve a healthy lifestyle for the total school population by developing supportive environments conducive to the promotion of health. The definition is open to such an extent that it offers opportunities, and on the other hand requires commitment to provide for a safe and health enhancing social and physical environment. It is well-known that schools are only one forum among many other mutually competitive forums in the lives of children and adolescent (St Leger, 2004), and for ages the taught curriculum reflected only a small part of physical health learning. This is not supposed to be the case. In actual fact, the whole school context should become significant as a learning environment for health issues and a setting for health promotion (Denman et al., 2002; Weare & Gray, 2003; Taylor, Coovadia, Kvalsig, Coutsooudis, Jinabhai & Reddy, 1999). The different learning theories emphasise that knowledge, attitudes,

and skills are not independent of the mental, physical and social context but are rather part of the environment in which they are learned and used (Simpson & Freeman, 2004).

4.2.3.1 Background

Today, the whole world is quite aware and awake with regard to matters concerning Health Promoting Schools and health. This awakening was brought about by the International Conference on Primary Health Care in Alma-Ata in 1978 (WHO, 1978). Due to this terminology circulating all over, the world has become a global village where problems affecting children are discussed by experts universally with the aim to revive children's well-being and a sound vision for a better world. The first move in this direction was taken in 1950 by the World Health Organisation (Konu & Rimpêla, 2002) when they established an Expert Committee on School Health services.

According to the World Health Organisation (1986) the First International Conference took place in 1986 in Ottawa. This conference raised awareness of health related problems, and afterwards changes in attitudes and behaviours in this area started to manifest themselves. However, in many cases the focus was on the cure of illness and diseases rather than on prevention. In the long run the focus of health promotion is not cure, but prevention. The Ottawa Charter (WHO,1986) and Marx et al., (1998:4) view health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. According to Kickbusch and Jones (1998:1) it is true that very often efforts to promote health lack such dimension. This concept embraces a holistic vision of health and gives consideration to positive as well as negative influences on health. Sometimes people think of education as the accumulation of facts and basic skills, and sometimes think of health as the opposite of illness. According to WHO (1995), education and health are broader, richer concepts that are inseparable.

According to the Health Promoting School concept, the definition can be described along the following three key components (Inchley, Currie & Young, 2000):

- Curriculum, teaching and learning

The formal and informal curriculum provides learners and others with an opportunity to gain age-appropriate knowledge and skills and develop attitudes and understanding to enable them to become more autonomous and responsible in individual and community health matters (Peacock & MacCabe, 2004:13).

- School organisation, ethos and environment

Policies are regulations, principles, expectations and rules that are designed to encourage healthy environments and health enhancing behaviour. Some policies are explicitly health orientated, while others can be extended or interpreted to include health. Practices are the various ways in which policies are implemented. They are frequently used to measure the effectiveness of a policy (Peacock & McCabe, 2004:12).

- Community links and partnerships

According to the Jakarta Declaration (WHO, Jakarta Declaration, 1997) community relationships are the connections between the school and the students' families, plus the connection between the school and key local groups and organisations which support, sustain and promote health. By definition a Health Promoting School is one where parents are closely consulted about and involved in the school's health promotion activities, because this whole program cannot continue without them (Donald et al., 2002:290).

A Health Promoting School strives to build health into all aspects of life at school and in the community. Basically, from country to country, even within the different regions and communities of one country, schools have distinct strengths and needs (Department of Education, 2000:8). By building on those strengths and drawing on the imagination of students, parents, teachers and administrators, every school can find new ways to improve health and address health problems, since this is the heart of the process of becoming a Health Promoting School.

A description of Health Promoting Schools that definitely agrees with the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (World Health Organisation, 1986) describes the six key features of the

Health Promoting School (World Health Organisation, 1996a; Kickbusch & Jones, 1998:5).

These key features are:

- Engages health and health education officials, teachers and their representative organisations, students, parents, and community leaders in efforts to promote health with families and community groups involved in the school, as well as community services, businesses and organisations linked to the school, school/community projects and outreach, health promotion for school staff (World Health Organisation, 1999:19)
- Strives to provide a safe, healthy environment, including sufficient sanitation and water (Mda & Mothata, 2000; Constitution of South Africa, 1996). In a way a Health Promoting School should ensure that children should have freedom from abuse and violence from their peers and the community as such. This should occur in a climate of care, trust and respect (Gestwicki, 2007). Opportunities for physical education in clean and safe school grounds (South African Schools Act, 1996) and recreation and programs for counseling, social support and mental health promotion.
- Provides skills based health education with curricula that improve learners' understanding of factors that influence health and enable them to make healthy choices and adopt healthy behaviours throughout their lives, curricula that include critical health and life skills (Asmal & James, 2002), a focus on promoting health and well-being as well as preventing important health problems, and information and activities appropriate to learners' intellectual and emotional abilities, training and education for teachers and parents.
- Provides access to health services, such as screening, diagnosis, monitoring growth and development, vaccination, selected medications or procedures that may be most efficiently provided in the school setting, depending on school resources and mandates (Marx et al., 1998), partnerships with local health agencies that will provide services, nutrition and food safety programs.
- Implements health-promoting policies and practices, such as an overall policy supported by school administration and management as well as teaching practices that help create a healthy psychosocial environment for learners and staff, policies on equal treatment for all learners, policies on drug and alcohol use, tobacco use, first aid and violence that

help prevent or reduce physical, social and emotional problems (Department of Health, 2000b).

- Strives to improve the health of the community by focusing on the community health concerns and participating in community health project (Gestwicki, 2007).

Fundamentally, a Health Promoting School uses its full organisation potential to promote health among learners, staff, families and community members (Deschness, Martin & Hill, 2003). It is an all encompassing project (St Leger, 2004). The European Network of Health Promoting Schools, is considered to be highly effective since it was founded and established in 1992, and spilled over to other countries (Rasmussaen & Rivett, 2000).

4.2.3.2 Rationale for Health Promoting Schools

Schools are uniquely placed to play a crucial role in promoting the good health of school children (WHO, 2000). Since most children spend most of their time at school, the school becomes the perfect setting for health promotion in schools (Scriven & Stridad, 2003). According to (Konu & Rimpêla, 2002) Health and health well-being of children has been separated from other aspects of life, whereas in the Western societies, health services and health have been available for school going children for a long time. The impact of Health Promoting Schools entails the following:

- Children enjoy the enhanced physical, psychological and social well-being and the ability to take full advantage of every opportunity for education. This is possible with their parents' participation in the school (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Children who learn skills to maintain health when they are young are able to apply them in their adult lives and pass them on to their children (Feinstein, Duckworth & Debates, 2008:80).
- Schools benefit by having parental and community input and support. They benefit by establishing links to important services and resources in the community (Feinstein et al., 2008:174). Broad participation from any sector can reinforce classroom teaching by delivering consistent messages through mass media, community organisations, families and religious groups (Boult, 2006:66). School staff experience improved morale and

skills, and can do their jobs more effectively and improve their health. School and health systems can maximize the efficient use of scarce resources as well as reducing waste.

- Parents and community members benefit by gaining a broader knowledge base about local health problems, learning important new health information and skills, and taking part in their children's education (Boult, 2006:71). They gain assurance that their neighbourhood school is open to their ideas and participation.
- Community groups and organisations benefit by having students and teachers involved in community activities (Boult, 2006:12). Working in collaboration with the school can also help organisations make their services or products known or accessible. Educated and healthy people are an asset to the community as a whole (Skidmore et al., 2006).
- Businesses can expect better-educated and more productive employees. Joint participation by schools and businesses also gives adults a mechanism for sharing information about what jobs are available in the community and the kinds of skills young people will need to find employment (Naidu et al., 2008:139; Boult, 2006:67).
- The nation with healthier and better-educated men and women has a stronger basis for economic development (WHO, 2000).
- The world makes progress in guaranteeing fundamental human rights (Asmal & James, 2002:84) as elaborated in numerous international health and education conventions and declarations. Schools can provide knowledge and help learners to acquire skills that are needed to avoid a related discrimination (WHO, 1999).

4.2.3.3 Nature of Health Promoting Schools and implementation

Concern about the health and educational achievement of young people and the recognition that education and health are inextricably intertwined have resulted in considerable interest in school health programs that engage the entire school system, instruction, services, community, and environment (Marx et al., 1998:xv). It is best described by eight well-developed and mutually reinforcing components, that when combined, offer a framework for a coordinated school health program (Marx et al., 1998:4; National Centre For Chronic Disease and Health

Promotion, 2002). These components contribute in unique ways, and yet they overlap with one another in the following manner:

- Comprehensive school health education addresses the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of health, develops health knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the classroom, and is tailored to each age level to cater for all the learners. It is designed to motivate and assist learners to maintain and improve their health, to prevent disease, and reduce health-related risk behaviours (WHO, 1999, 2000)
- Physical education in the school setting is a great equalizer, providing planned, sequential instruction that promotes lifelong physical activity. Overweight and obesity are not just cosmetic issues - they are health issues that often continue into adulthood, with 70-80 percent overweight children and adolescents becoming obese adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Inchley & Currie, 2003). Things have changed in recent decades, and schools have changed too. Schools sell candy, chips, and soda while offering fewer opportunities for learners to be physically active (David, 2005:2).
- School health services are designed to promote the health of learners, and to identify and prevent health problems and injuries, and to ensure care for learners (Inchley, Muldoon & Currie, 2007). Its focus is mainly on the preventative services, education, emergency care, referral and management of acute and chronic health conditions (WHO, 1999).
- School nutrition services offer nutritious meals to the learners, although not all schools are able to reach all their learners due to various reasons that are beyond the particular school. The integration of nutritious, affordable and appealing meals enable learners to focus. In addition, nutrition education and an environment that promotes healthy eating behaviours for all children can add more value and maximize each learner's education and health potential for a lifetime (Department of Health, 2002; Inchley, Todd, Bryce & Currie, 2001). A study that was conducted in 2001 revealed that 6 to 11 year old children from families that can not feed their little ones sufficiently attained significantly lower arithmetic scores and were more likely to repeat a grade (Alaimo, Olson & Frongillo, 2001:44-53). This is the same with children who skip their breakfast, which adversely affects achievement on problem-solving tests (Pollit, Leibel & Greenfield, 1991:34).

- School counseling, psychological, and social services maintain and support the psychological health of learners and staff as much as addressing physical health (WHO, 1997:49) since many schools tend to focus on the behaviour of children without finding out the root of the problem. Most often schools respond to children's problems in a fragmented manner (Marx et al., 1998:9). Many of these children are expelled because schools are not ready and able to attend to their problems in a holistic manner. The activities that focus on cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social needs of individuals, groups and families are neglected. These activities are designed to prevent and address problems, facilitate positive learning and healthy behaviour, and enhance healthy development (Russell, 2002).
- A healthy school environment should be a must for every school to ensure the safety of learners and staff (WHO, 2000). In South Africa, although it has been a number of years into democracy, Health Promoting Schools is still in the developmental phase, and while there is confidence about progress, it cannot be denied that the ghosts of the past are not yet completely off sight. Many schools are not in a good, conducive mode of learning for learners (Mukoma & Flisher, 2004). These conditions include amongst others overcrowded classes, violence amongst learners and the educators, which even sometimes leads to death (DoE, 2007). Adding to that is alcohol and substance abuse. Drugs are peddled in schools by the drug lords who live in the communities. They change children into drug moles, vandalize classrooms. In addition, there is an unavailability or lack of advanced ablution blocks, lack of learning resources such as text books, libraries, laboratories, furniture, etc. Children can only learn better if the physical, emotional and social environment is safe and secure (Inchley, Currie & Young, 2000). Programs that provide safe physical buildings, as well as healthy and supportive environments that foster learning are a necessity indeed (Mitchell, Palmer & Davies, 2000). The high level value of education lies in what remains in a person when all facts have been forgotten. That which has been internalised and is left matters most.
- School-site health promotion for staff is not satisfactory at all. The research done in South Africa and other countries indicates that many teachers are leaving the teaching profession in great numbers to join the private sector, and to find posts in countries where teaching is valued more (Jourdan, Mc Namara, Simar, Geary & Pommies, 2010), some of them are leaving due to stress and the lack of security in schools, as crime and

other unsuitable activities are finding ways to disrupt learning (Teacher Education in South Africa, 2005:7; Scheckner, 2002). A full range of programs for staff and support staff have been designed to maintain and improve the health and well-being of school staff, including awareness activities, health assessments, stress assessment, fitness activities, and health-related support services. Staff members serve as role models for learners (Lewin, Samuel & Sayeds, 2003). It is true that healthy staff is a healthy school, and a healthy school is healthy learners (Marx et al., 1998, Saaranen, Tossavainen, Turunen, Viviniemi & Vertio, 2007).

- Family and community involvement in schools have greater meaning in the life of children (Gereluk, 2007:20). Perhaps the time has come to organise the parents, caregivers and every community at large to participate in the education of children (Gestwicki, 2007). Children must become a community priority, although, in the hard-edged, competitive world, a community-wide commitment to help children may seem quixotic (Griffiths & Hamilton, 1994). There is a need for more hands on board, parents in particular. The sense of neighbourhood is fading, and the very notion of community seems strikingly inapplicable to contemporary life (Tett, 2004). The common saying that “It takes a village to raise a child” is no longer applicable (Gestwicki, 2010:456). In Health Promoting Schools it should mean that it takes every adult to bring up a child. It has to be stressed once again that every single parent should be engaged in health promotion for the sake of the children, who are the future leaders of tomorrow.

According to Asmal & James (2002) all the provinces are in progress to initiate Health Promoting Schools. A school in a semi-rural town situated about fifty kilometers from Cape Town has started to transform itself into a Health Promoting School (Flisher et al., 2000). Some schools only lack coordination of resources, sophisticated materials, and quality (Mūkoma & Flisher, 2004). To put these programs together, every school needs to develop its own policy depending on the need of the school, on how to implement these programs to be integrated into the school. The following strategies as suggested by the World Health Organisation (1998) play an important role, as they call for a new vision of the essential relationship between health and learning. That is:

- Strengthening the ability to advocate for improved school health programs.
- Creating networks and alliances for the development of Health Promoting Schools.

- Strengthening national capacities.
- Research to improve school health programs.

Today's climate in education is a state of drastic change and challenges (WHO, 2002), and as with all systemic change, developing and implementing coordinated School Health Program takes time. Implementation requires the commitment and continuous involvement of school and community professionals, learners and their families, and the community (Flisher et al., 2000). The approach cannot be the same, as different schools have different needs, depending on their circumstances (WHO, 1997:75). Schools should not only be focused on reading and writing, but should also look out for the children's general health and well-being.

4.2.3.4 Advantages of a Health Promoting School

The advantages of Health Promoting School form the basis for schools to start venturing into the program of health promotion within a particular school, depending on the needs (Schools Improvement Research Series, 2001). According to the World Health Organisation (1996) the Health Promoting School program offers a holistic model of health that includes the interrelationships between the physical, mental, social and environmental aspects of health. Besides focusing on the learner's health alone, this program focuses on families to provide the opportunity to take part in the development of health skills and knowledge of their children on a daily basis (Gereluk, 2007:71; Seager, 1990).

In the promotion of health, the Health Promoting School addresses the significance of the psychosocial and physical environment such as shaded play areas, buildings, grounds, interior structures (WHO, 1997:41). In addition, the basic elements of a healthy environment such as safe water and sanitary facilities are important as well. The Health Promoting School program recognizes the importance of the social ethos of the school in supporting a positive learning environment, one in which healthy relationships and the emotional well-being of students are strengthened (Asmal & James, 2002:106). One of the advantages of the Health Promoting

Schools is that it links regional and local health services with the school to address specific health concerns that affect school children within a particular school (Naidu et al., 2008:140).

It focuses on active student participation in the formal curriculum to develop a range of life-long health-related skills and knowledge (WHO, 1999). Furthermore, it enhances equity in education and health. Finally the Health Promoting Schools provide a positive and supportive working environment for school staff; and this enables the school and the local community to collaborate in health initiatives that benefit students, their families and community members.

4.2.3.5 Health Promoting Schools in South Africa

Since the end of Apartheid and the beginning of democratic government in South Africa in 1994, an increasing process of change has occurred in all sectors of government, including education (Naidu et al., 2008:2). According to Swart & Reddy (1999:47), the change process was directed by a policy framework outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the African National Congress, the majority party in the government. These changes led to government departments, non-government organisations and professional associations questioning their role and function, and to change their policies and practices (Naidu et al., 2008: 22). In particular, the government of South Africa, in collaboration with the Minister of Health, Education and Welfare became aware of the problems facing the school going children in the new century, and of the fact that these issues need to be addressed (Department of Health, 2000b:1).

Until recently, the traditional model of school health was practiced in most schools. According to (Asmal & James, 2002:140) some elements of the model include screening for visual and auditory impairments, health education, and follow-up from health examinations. School health services and health education practitioners experience many hurdles reflecting inequities of years of discriminatory practices such as the previous provision of services along racially segregated lines, provision of unequal resources to schools, disproportionate personnel-to-

learners ratios, financial constraints and inadequate training of staff (Department of Health & Education, 2000:79). Consequently, issues such as health in schools did not enjoy the high priority it deserved.

The growing population of young people in South Africa experience unacceptable levels of mortality, morbidity, and risk taking behaviours (Mda & Mothata, 2000; Adams, 2006). The consequences of these behaviours are preventable, as is the main stance of the World Health Organisation (Kickbusch & Jones, 1998:1; Karstens, 2006). Many of these problems persist into adulthood and cause a significant burden of illness on the community, which translates into a range of chronic and lifestyle diseases that contribute to a significant economic cost for government through the increased expenditure on health care (WHO, 2000).

In historically disadvantaged communities, the legacy of Apartheid still persists today. Chuenyane (2008:5) notes that education has not yet improved the lives of black learners specifically. In addition a Human Science Research Council (HSRC) study conducted by Dr Linda Chisolm indicates that although black learners have gained access to schools previously closed to them, they were still being prepared for a working-class existence and even unemployment. In these schools, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, bullying, theft and lack of discipline rather than racial tension preoccupied teachers (Chisolm, 2007).

Issues that need to be addressed in schools that might be called prerequisite for health are things such as adequate nutrition, water and sanitation, healthy early childhood development, child protection and social welfare, as well as behaviours such as smoking, alcohol use, drug use, road related behaviours, sexual behaviours and violent behaviours, which is at the highest level in South Africa at the moment. Some of these behaviours were under-reported. Meanwhile, according to the report by DA spokesperson on education in Gauteng (Quail, 2008:14), the violent incidents among 1.8 million pupils for the past 18 months is relatively small according to MEC for education Angie Motshekga. In Gauteng alone, there were 27 stabbing incidents that required medical attention. Eighteen of the perpetrators had been disciplined. Some were suspended and others were expelled.

This was before the fatal Samurai-sword attack at the Nic Diedericks Technical School. There were 16 cases of child abuse, eight of which were sexual abuse. At least 13 of the cases involved physical violence, while 11 were perpetrated by an adult. From this partial report one can ask how many cases were not reported or covered up by the statistics. Or how accurate are the statistics? It is clear that many cases are not reported for fear of bad publicity or otherwise (Quail, 2008:14)

Although health promotion is a new paradigm in education, already there are various initiatives existing where goals and strategies of Health Promoting Schools are in place and have been implemented (Viljoen & Kirsten, 2004; Viljoen, 2002; Viljoen, Kirsten & Haglund, 2001; South Africa, s.a.).

Because of various initiatives, South Africa is becoming more and more aware of the major health problems facing its youth today. Way back in 1994 the national leaders in education and health sectors came together for the first time to discuss the concepts which define health promotion as well as Health Promoting Schools. The meeting resulted in the first conference aimed at promoting the implementation of Health Promoting Schools held in 1996 (South Africa, s.a.). The bigger picture of the conference focused on the background, aims and characteristics of Health Promoting Schools. The gathering could not ignore the major problems such as: poverty, racial prejudice, suicide, substance abuse, nutrition, gender issues, traffic and other injuries, tuberculosis and other forms of infections, social diseases and violence (University of the Western Cape, 1996).

According to the South African Departments of Health and Education (2000:16), the vision is the development of a culture in which effective teaching and learning occurs through the holistic development of schools that promote the optimal well-being of all stakeholders involved through the implementation of the Health Promoting Schools initiative. The past differences and inequality of schools need to be taken seriously. In South Africa children are not just seen, but heard, their interests are of paramount importance (The Constitution of the Republic of South

Africa, 1996:14), mainly because they are valued as the leaders of tomorrow, they are the gems of the nation, and without them there is no future (National Youth Commission, 1997).

Measures to promote health in schools are also part of the initiatives of the provincial governments, as stated by the Department of Health (s.a.) for the North West Province. It is very interesting to note that the emphasis is in line with the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO, 1986), and in addition the focus is on prevention and early intervention as well (South Africa, s.a.). Within this context it is clear that the well-being and the quality of life of the school as a whole are essential.

4.2.4 Conclusion

As a result of the Health Promoting School program, children's health is taken into consideration more now than ever before. A thorough review of health promotion in schools indicates that the program has gone to a higher level since its inception. Policies and strategies are in place to such an extent that they can be implemented into the curriculum (Mukoma & Flisher, 2004) to ensure the success of the program in every sphere of the lives of children.

- In the above review of health promotion, much is said about the improvement of the health of children in schools, but little is mentioned about the tangible role of parents and health promotion. Even though parents are seen as the most important tools in educating their children in health matters, they are not considered.
- Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. In education it implies that children must be environmentally, economic and spiritual healthy as well.
- Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. It is of great importance to view health and education as this can also have a huge impact in the lives of learners.
- Health Promoting Schools aim at achieving healthy lifestyles for the total school population by developing supportive environments conducive to the promotion of health.

In South Africa the major problems facing the youth is receiving serious attention, although the stakeholders of the schools are not considered as such.

4.3 Parental involvement and health promotion in schools

The literature review in Chapter 3 clearly showed that there are so many ways parents can be involved in the education of their children in schools, yet their effort is not utilized to bring about the collaboration that is desperately needed to promote the health of their children in schools. This section aims to identify the issues with regard to parents' involvement in health promotion in schools in order to discover whether there is a generous understanding of what it means to promote the health of their children in schools.

4.3.1 Awareness program

If one wants to understand the issue of parental involvement and health promotion in school, and find out the reason why parents are so reluctant to be involved, one needs to understand the way in which this issue has been communicated to parents and how it was brought to their attention. The communication methods used did not match parents's vocabulary (Van Fleet, 2005). Very often the way in which it was communicated couldn't reach all parents, and the awareness of potential benefits and challenges were not transferred (Naidu et al., 2008:132). Only a few educated parents who are able to use different forms of media, such as buying books with information about parenting, searching for information on the internet, attending workshops where parents are empowered, are aware of the health issues facing their children (Cairncross, 2001). It is a pity to see that thousands and thousands of books and articles have been written about the involvement of parents in Health Promoting Schools, but still very few parents are well informed because there is a very big gap between the literature and parents (Boult, 2006). In some cases neither parents nor schools are aware of the programs that are offered to their children by the agencies and organisations (Naidu et al., 2008:133). It is clear that the strategy used to make parents aware of their role and of health promotion in schools cannot reach the majority of poor people of South Africa, as they do not have the finances or

even any other form of resources to reach out. In developing countries it is very common to find that a large portion of the population is illiterate, including the parents. Some are drop-outs themselves, or they had their own kind of learning problem whilst at school (Naidu et al., 2008:134).

4.3.2 Parents' attitude

It is parents' attitude that determines their positive or negative involvement in the Health Promoting School (Boult, 2006:59). Involvement can also create an attitude that helps children to respond to schooling. When new things happen, there will always be some kind of resistance on the side of parents, since they are not aware of what is going on and how they can be part of this great venture (Boult, 2006:8). This kind of attitude often leave those who are capable of empowering parents with the knowledge of health promotion in schools with doubt whether parents are willing to be empowered or not, or are just not interested.

The attitude of parents can be negative or positive based on the information they had about the phenomenon when they were still growing up (Wolfe & Haveman, 2002), although there is no guarantee that the appropriate information can change their attitude (Baron & Byrne 2000:547). Due to the negative attitude of parents towards a number of health issues, there are children in various communities who are living on the streets of South Africa, hungry, walking barefoot, wearing dirty clothes, without education, although the Government is trying by all means to make sure that all children in South Africa and in Africa as a whole should have a better education (The Presidency, 2009; Mashau, 2006). Still the attitude of parents towards health promotion and schools is not convincing, because some parents waste their money on things like alcohol and gambling, buying fast foods, etc.

4.3.3 Parents' behavioural intentions

Parents are the learner's first primary teachers and role models (Paige, 2002), and if parents are actively involved in their children's health promotion, good outcomes are more likely (Gray,

Young & Barnekow, 2006). A lack of parental supervision correlates with criminal activity and misbehaviour. Poor parental supervision and family availability affect children's behavior, as they will choose to associate themselves with their peers who may display diverse problematic kinds of behaviour (Andersson & Stavrou, 2001:71). The increase in the number of mothers of young children in the workforce is one of the largest changes in the last half of the 21st century (Halpern, 2005:198), since the traditional arrangement in which fathers are employed and mothers stay at home with the children is no longer the case for most families.

According to Padayachee (2002:5), in the South African context it is not only a lack of parental supervision, but also the lack of parenting skills, as many parents are young or they fear their own children. Thus, learners are less likely to succeed when parents do not set clear expectations or model appropriate behaviour (Feinstein et al., 2008). Parents can influence their children in a particular way, which can have a positive impact in their lives. On the contrary they can also engage in unhealthy behaviours such as excessive drinking, poor dietary habits, substance abuse, interpersonal violence, child abuse or neglect, which can lead to other sicknesses and psychological problems (Pettit, 2004:199). Their negative lifestyle can impact very badly on children's lives (Naidu, et al., 2008:133) and this can have a great impact on the functioning of children in the school (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004:39).

Most adults in these families experienced the same problems in their own families of origin and, as is common, perpetuate the same problems for their children (Loury, 2006). A large number of children live in dysfunctional families that subject them to stresses that may lead to risky behaviours (Sander & McCarty, 2005:205). Children of alcoholic or drug-addicted parents may be predisposed to becoming alcoholic themselves or to enter into relationships with alcoholics (Wilens, Biederman, Bredin, Hahaesy, Abrantes, Neft, Millstein & Spencer, 2002).

4.3.4 Interpersonal intentions

The fact that health promotion in schools is a new phenomenon in South Africa means that it is rare to find parents communicating about health issues at all, or if they try, the problems are attended to in a very fragmented way (Department of Health, 2000). It is also very difficult for

parents to address health related problems that affect children at an early age. Instead parents let children do whatever they want, not bearing in mind that what they do today will reflect back when they are adults tomorrow (Feinstein et al., 2008).

On the other hand there are many established non-profit organisations that are trying to curb the serious health problems that children are engaged in. These organisations range from preventing the use of drugs in communities, preventing early pregnancy by providing workshops, preventing obesity, preventing STD'S and HIV & Aids (UNICEF, 2002; WHO, 2002) . Often when parents are invited to talk about these issues, they have no intention to be part of the program as they are not interested in the whole issue. They are only interested in addressing specific problems that affect individual children such as epilepsy, autism or even impaired hearing.

4.3.5 Current intentions

Up to now in South Africa there are programs in place addressing health promotion in schools in all nine provinces, although there are few schools that are already incorporating these programs in their curriculum (Lazarus, 2006:12). There is quite a number of schools in the Western Cape province where these programs are in place already, in the Gauteng province and North West province as well (cf. paragraph 4.2.2.5). In some provinces these programs are there in documents, but are not applied in the real context, maybe because there are too few resources to carry on with the program (The Presidency, 2009; Asmal & James, 2002). It is clear that in provinces where there is lack of intervention by the government or the responsible departments, parents do not have any intention of dealing with health promotion issues as such.

4.3.6 The new trends

The new trend of health promotion in schools has not yet established itself in South African communities (The Presidency, 2009). Within this trend of Health Promoting Schools, the health and education of girls is of special concern. If there is an improvement in girls' health, there will

probably be an improvement in women's health and in return, the health of their children and families will improve (WHO, 1997; 1998). On the other hand, instead of promoting the health of children by giving nutritious food, children are given fast food for lunch, and they might have possibly not had breakfast. The same applies to certain schools. Tuck shops are packed with sweets only and nothing else in the name of fundraising at the expense of poor children's health (Shi-Chang, Xin-Wei, Shui-Wang, Shu-Ming, Sen-Hai, Aldinger & Glasauer, 2004).

Children boast today of the expensive play stations their parents bought them, and instead of going to the gym they sit in front of their play stations the whole day. Children are encouraged to engage in criminal activities as a way of fending for the family if there is no bread winner in the household. It is a pity that young boys and girls are asked to sell their bodies as prostitutes as a way to provide for the family (Pretorius & Le Roux, 1998). These actions show that the battle to involve parents and health promotion in schools is far from over unless drastic measures are taken before it is too late.

4.3.7 Conclusions

Against the background of parents' understanding of the phenomenon of health promotion in schools, a clear distinction can be made between their involvement at home and at school.

- Parents separate home actions and learning at school, and as such, it poses many health related problems for their children.
- It seems as if there are no programs in place to make parents aware of their role in promoting the health of their children in schools and at home as well.
- If parents' attitudes, behaviour or intentions are not right concerning their own health and the promotion of the health of their children, it jeopardizes their children's health. In the next section the focus will be on the variables of parent involvement in the Health Promoting School.

4.4 Aspects of parental involvement in health promotion in schools

It is always important to take note of the context in which parenting and health promotion takes place. The context determines the way in which parents meet their responsibility, and how they respond to the health promotion challenges (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). In particular, a setting can be influenced by things such as poverty, economic, cultural and social factors. These factors can determine parents' response health promotion in schools (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004:303; Engelbrecht, 2001:19).

4.4.1 The world as context

Based on the amount of research conducted for several decades concerning the involvement of parents in the education of their children, even in health promotion in schools as well, all parents, universally, have common interest, and they are eager to participate in every way (SACE, 2007: 142; Gray et al., 2006). The diversity of their contexts makes a great impact on the way in which they respond to matters concerning their involvement in the Health Promoting School (Petr, 2003:35). According to Fussell & Green (2002: 20-21ff) and Coetzee & Streak (2004:43) diversity is clearly visible when it is viewed in relation to the capacity of health systems, population density, poverty, employment, low wages, economic development, political stability, and the education system in place. These factors determine the results of health promotion in schools. The world as a context can also be viewed in economic terms, where the developed countries are able to apply measures on health promotion and schools with ease. However, it is not the case with developing countries where the level of health is still very low (UNESCO/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank, 2000).

4.4.2 Philosophical worldview as context

Family involvement could be viewed as a matter of principle (Nojaja, 2002:88), and it forms an integral part of parenthood. According to Duminy, Steyn, Dreyer, Vos & Dobie (1998) every kind

of thinking or behaviour always reflects the current way of explaining the reality. Such explanation consists of the basic philosophical assumptions that are shared by the majority and without which the research problem itself could not exist (Leedy & Ormod, 2005:56). In terms of parenting, in a post-modern world, parents are faced with challenges that were not faced by earlier generations.

According to Mūkoma & Flisher (2004:5) the philosophy of health promotion emphasises community participation as integral to the success of health promoting interventions. However, promoting health is not an apolitical concept, and schools and the communities in which they are located are not neutral settings either. Implementation of the concept of health promotion also depends on the teachers. Therefore, support of teachers by parents is necessary, since teachers spend most of the time with learners at school (Midford, Munro, Mc Bride, Snow & Landiski, 2002).

4.4.3 Community as context

Parents live within a particular community that is governed by its own norms, moral values and beliefs (Loury, 2006). In many cases, these communities are engulfed by poverty, a high crime rate, unemployment, socio-economic conditions with reference to a lack of decision-making power for certain sexes and races, a high illiteracy rate, violence, a lack of community involvement, the list is endless (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003:76). Despite all these shortcomings, along with the democratic process in South Africa, parents and communities are in the rightful position to be involved and to have control over the development of schools (Asmal & James, 2002). Stakeholders and all institutions form part of the community at large, which play a great role in the involvement of parents in the Health Promoting Schools (Cairncross, 2001).

The stakeholders within the community is composed of a variety of components, some of these stakeholders, as mentioned by Donald et al., (2002:162) include:

- Religious, civic and other leaders in the community.

- Relevant non-governmental and community-based organisations (NGOs & CBOs), particularly those who deal with issues directly relating to the life of the school.
- People in helping professions.
- Indigenous or traditional healers, particularly within the notion of a community-based support service.
- The formal and informal business sector, as well as the professional sector, particularly in terms of facilitating a closer link between education and work.

These stakeholders have an impact in promoting the health of children in the community by eliminating community problems, maximizing resources and expertise in attending to the health development of children and their families in particular (Marx et al., 1998:4).

The institutions that are found in the community are very important as they form the basis of Health Promoting Schools in various ways. The churches have the responsibility of promoting spiritual well-being (Aoki, Engert, Turk, Wilson, Chen & Latu, 2000; King 2003), the sports club in promoting physical health, the youth club in promoting social life. In all these institutions, parents have to be involved in promoting the health of their children in one way or the other.

Besides the stakeholders and the institutions that are involved in the community services, there are organisations that are helpful in dealing with issues affecting children. This is done through workshops, although not all parents are able to attend due to other commitments.

4.4.4 The family as context

The family is usually the first institution an individual interacts with, although this context is rapidly eroding (Woolfolk, 1998:92). According to Mc Whirter et al., (2007:79) the family is regarded as the taproot that provides a network that anchors and nourishes life. It also transmits

culture, which enables the children to assimilate their experiences, but today families are influenced by modern trends, its either divorced or single-parent families. Divorce affects children living in the home badly, the same applies to families that are headed by mothers only (Riche, 2000:26-28; Belsie, 2001:1, 5), because they have less education, less prestigious jobs, lower incomes and more economic strain (Hilton, Desrochers & Devall, 2001:28).

In addition to this, there is an erosion of extended family networks. This situation is neither typical nor unusual today. Young parents often find themselves in a position in which they find it difficult to provide clear guidelines and to be consistent. Although children from wealthy families are privileged in many regards, this does not remove potential threats to their psychological well-being (Luther & Latendresse, 2005:50; Kalat, 2002:398).

According to McWhirter et al (2007:31) the socio-economic status, that is, the social and economic environment in which the children grow up is a significant exosystemic predictor of their overall well-being. Families in the extreme poverty are clearly linked to a wide variety of problems among children. Of course it is impossible to understand what poverty is unless it is experienced. The analysis from the survey suggests that 75% of South Africa's children are poor (Coetzee & Streak, 2004:43), and the stigmatization and the negative psychological impact associated with child poverty came across most starkly with the children living in the rural and informal settlements. These children are aware of the precarious situation of their parents, either through limited job opportunities or in the case of most farm workers or unskilled labours, low wages.

4.4.5 Poverty as context

Much has been researched, written, and could be said about the effects of poverty. According to Payne (cited in Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2006:168) poverty is defined as the extent to which an individual does without resources. Resources necessary for survival and success include financial, emotional, mental, spiritual and physical support systems. In contrast, Emeagwali in

the City Press News paper (2008:25) defines poverty not as an absence of money, but the result of an absence of knowledge to utilize the golden opportunities available. It can be concluded that the definition of poverty means different things to different people, even to the poor (Ngwane et al., 2001:201). This is clear with the Indicators of Poverty Report released by the Reconstruction and Development Programme office. It reported that more than 50% of all South Africans live in extreme poverty, with many families earning less than R3000 per month (Mashau, 2006).

Poverty may also affect parenting. Donald et al., (2002:207) discusses some of the issues involved. These factors are divided into direct and indirect effects:

- Direct effect

There is a close relationship between poverty and inadequate facilities and resources. In many cases, there is inadequate and overcrowded housing and poor water supply, sanitation and hygiene facilities (WHO, 2002). Due to an enormous percentage of unemployment in South Africa, some children even go to bed without food and not knowing what to carry for the lunch box the next day. This causes much disturbance for children as they are not able to concentrate at school, and if not detected well, teachers can always label these children as lazy because their work is not satisfactory.

Under these conditions, it is highly impossible for parents to maintain healthy children (Colclough et al., 2003:73). Sometimes children get sick, and with inadequate information and a lack of knowledge about health and child development on the side of parents, it becomes hard to access health services in the vicinity (WHO, 2002). The fact that poverty has a greater effect on the health of children cannot be denied any longer. Besides the direct effect that has a great impact on the lives of the poor children of South Africa, there are indirect effects as well.

- Indirect effects

It is not always easy to connect indirect effects to parenting as they do not occur in all poor families. They are more psychosocial in nature as they can be modified by other factors, such

as strong support in the family that can help reduce the stress. These factors include amongst others (Loury, 2006):

- Large families
- Single or unmarried mothers
- Teenage motherhood
- Unemployment, or parents who have to work long hours away from home.

Support networks are critical in balancing and containing these kinds of strain. A great number of families in South Africa are supported by social grants earned by disabled people in the family, elderly or children who receive monthly grants (The Presidency, 2009: iv-v).

The combination of direct and indirect effects can have a serious impact on the health of the children. In cases where the support is not that strong, the indirect effects may pose physical, neurological, cognitive, scholastic, emotional and social risks to development (Donald et al., 2002)

4.4.6 Conclusion

The context of parents does not leave their children unaffected. As long as children are still dependant on their parents in everything, they will encounter serious health problems as members of poor households, and this will affect their performance at school and in the community as such. This is clear when:

- Parents all over the world are eager to be involved, although aspects such as the economic status of their country count as well. Developed countries are able to cater for the variety of needs of their children, whereas the developing countries struggle to make ends meet. Many developing countries are stricken by poverty and unemployment to such an extent that the lives of school going children is at risk.
- The community at large plays an important role in the lives of parents, schools and children as well. An advanced community makes it possible to fight and eliminate

various problems facing its youth today. Various stakeholders can play a bigger role by promoting the health of the community.

- The family is the background where children are nurtured in various ways. It is just unfortunate that due to various problems affecting the family today, the notion of a family raising a child in a healthy environment is eroding.

4.5 Barriers in implementing health promotion in schools

The concept of health promotion in schools is a new phenomenon to many parents, and as such it is welcomed with questions and some typical concerns, no matter how promising to the health of children might be.

4.5.1 Money, training and facilities

Implementing health promotion in schools is a nightmare for parents because they think that much is expected from them. One can understand their uncertainty as Swart & Reddy (1999:47) are also aware of the state in which South African schools were before 1994. In fact, Swart & Reddy (1999:47) acknowledges that the resources were unequally distributed due to the fact that previously schools were classified according to race. These effects continue to persist until today in historically disadvantaged communities. In addition, South African schools are still gravely affected by the consequences of discrimination, political struggle and socio-economic problems (Lemmer & Van Wyk 2004:263). These issues affected very much how parents could be involved today. Since they were not involved before, they do not have any idea of what is in place, and it poses great doubts as parents do not have a clue as to what the school has in place already. They think everything must start right from the beginning. They think of things such as money, training and facilities as a stumbling block to promoting the health of their children (Asmal & James, 2002).

According to De Jong (2000:51), the central theme of education reform is not having more in order to achieve goals, but to do more with less. One cannot ignore these misconceptions amongst parents. Although South Africa is in its early years of democracy, there are still a great number of schools that are not privileged. Public schools in particular do not have enough resources to equip their learners (The Presidency, 2009). Maree (2000:4) expresses concern about the state of schools in previously disadvantaged areas where there seems to be no improvement to any significant degree since the abolishment of the Apartheid era. There are learners who are learning under trees, in shacks, unfurnished classrooms, with no running water, toilets, tables and chairs for the learners to use (DoE, 2001). Basic facilities, such as a laboratory for science experiments, a library, and sports fields are things that these students have heard about or have seen on pictures. Some of these communities are engulfed with unemployment and poverty, let alone mention finances to support some of the health programs (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). These conditions in some cases over the years resulted in illiterate parents, which makes them unable to cope with new challenges facing them and their children. Addressing these problems should be immediate, as is the need for training to participate in health promoting services (Perry & Arendts, 2003).

4.5.2 Time to participate in health promotion programs

Time plays an enormous role when it comes to the life of a particular school (Paige, 2002). Parents are already committed to other school activities, so much so that when they think of being involved in health promotion at school, they think it is another program apart from what they have been doing already. In reality, a health program saves time because it avoids duplication of the programs that are already in place. They also feel that they cannot do more than what they are doing now. Often they tend to see health promotion as a burden (Sekete et al., 2001), especially those who moved from disadvantaged schools and communities to the so-called Model C schools. In some other cases, although many parents may want to be involved in what is happening at their child's school, they are unable to become involved in activities that are held during school hours (South Australia Department of Human Services, 2000:20).

4.5.3 Previous applied methods

Often parents will rely on their previous experiences and assume that they are still applicable today when the reality is that the world and its communities are changing drastically at an alarming rate and in a dynamic way (WHO, 2007; Davis & Cooke, 2007:1). It is true that some methods of discipline worked in the past, methods such as corporal punishment, expulsion for few days away from school and even sending children to schools where the behaviour will be dealt with accordingly. Those methods do not apply to the current system of education and the law of South Africa in general, for instance corporal punishment has been abolished (Mda & Mothata, 2000). Learners' problems have to be dealt with in a holistic manner. This implies that their emotional, physical, psychological, social, and financial problems are not supposed to be seen as units, but seen as a collection of issues that need to be addressed (Morrow, 2007; Young, 2005). Efforts related to the physical health of the children were previously totally dependant on school programs, physical education was the only part of the school subjects to reach the physical part of the children's health (The Presidency, 2009). Parents felt that it was not their responsibility, but the responsibility of the school. Their main argument now is that the way in which things were done previously yielded positive results for many. With this they mean that corporal punishment has contributed to many people being successful, although parents were not involved as such. Nevertheless, this does not mean that those methods were the best. The public needs to consider the fact that the needs of the youth of today and the needs of their families are changing, and for this reason the school and parents must work together to support the children (Stewart-Brown, 2006).

4.5.4 Coordinated school program

A coordinated whole-school approach is difficult to implement and sustain (Denman et al., 2002), and the old patterns of thinking and acting are hard to break. Therefore, educators as well as parents need to push. This also requires a deep level cultural shift, not simply additional techniques or resources (Davis & Cooke, 2007:44). "Gone are the good old days", many parents recall the fact that they succeeded without the issue of coordinated school health programs. But the fact of the matter is that the challenges faced by the youth of today are far

from those of the past (Ijumba & Padarath, 2006). For instance, the Soweto uprising struggle of the youth in 1976 is very different to the struggle of the present youth of today. Today's youth have to fight against drug related problems and HIV/Aids (Asmal & James, 2002).

The complex needs of learners can never be met by schools that exist in isolation without partnership with the parents. Many role players have a resistance to intersectoral collaboration, and they lack a common understanding of health promotion. Strong feelings existed that this program will be another committee, dominated by an interest group with no benefit to the schools or to children (Swart & Reddy, 1999:48). In addition to the communicable diseases, our youths are faced with new kinds of serious dilemmas in their lives. These dilemmas include amongst others early unprotected sex, teenage pregnancy, eating disorders, substance abuse, crime, violence, vandalism, drop out and depression (WHO, 2007). These issues do not leave the school and the role of parents unaffected. They are also affected by these failures. Today's life demands empowered and knowledgeable youth who can be healthy and successful adults tomorrow, who have been equipped to create a future in which they want to live (Davis & Cooke, 2007).

4.5.5 Health versus education

There is a very big contrast between today's health education and early health education that focussed on moral and physical issues such as hygiene and the dangers of drinking alcohol, to a progressively more holistic and ecological approach to promoting health in schools (Davis & Cooke, 2007). It will come as no surprise to learn that many parents do not understand the link between education and health. Education is viewed as something that equips children to get the job one day when they are educated, but health is something that has to do with the doctors, hospitals, nurses, and clinics. It is true that learners who are hungry, sick, depressed and troubled cannot cope in the classroom situation, often they will be the teacher's problems, trying to seek attention in a manner in which they will end up in trouble and sometimes be expelled (cf. paragraph 4.2.1).

Often parents run away from addressing their problems by sending their children to schools that are regarded as best by the community, thinking that the schools will try to help them out (Van Wyk, 2004). In a true sense, adults cannot simply pass their problems on to the school. Instead they need to work with and empower young people so that they learn to influence the changes and ultimately to transform the status quo (Davis & Cooke, 2007) because not even the best schools with the best policy in discipline can manage to address the problems encountered by these children. Education and health are intertwined to bring the best. According to the major international reports (UNESCO, 2005), education has a pivotal role and it is also regarded as a key to create a more sustainable and peaceful world (World Bank, 1993).

4.5.6 Performance of learners

Parents are quite aware of the performance of their children. However, they turn a blind eye, thinking that things will be all right, the school will fix everything for them. The world is changing rapidly. They only wait for a call to invite them to come and discuss the performance of their children, when they have been passive all along (Loury, 2006). It poses problems and frustrations to teachers and children whose parents do not even respond to the invitation by schools (Mda & Mothata, 2000). The effort exerted by schools is not adequate, additional opportunities, supports and services that promote positive development of children and their families to increase their academic success must be put in place. Learners who are not healthy cannot perform well (Department of Health. s.a; National Youth Commission, 1997; Marx et al., 1998).

4.5.7 No gain

As with any group of people, when parents enter into any responsibility that they think does not benefit them directly, their first concern is what am “I” going to gain with this? Indeed throughout the literature review in chapter three and in this chapter it has been stressed that parental involvement yields positive results for learners, schools and parents as well (cf paragraph,

4.8.2). If learners' health-related needs are met, obviously, learners will be ready to learn and to participate fully and will not disrupt other learners at school.

4.5.8 Conclusion

Parents have so many misconceptions that they are far behind that which is expected of them in terms of raising the flag to promote the health of their children in collaboration with schools. It clearly indicates that parents are not thoroughly prepared to take part in the health of their children. This state of affairs drags the whole process of health promotion and schools down. This is possible because:

- Resources to establish a Health Promoting School seem to be a worrying factor, because many parents are either unemployed, illiterate or earning very little.
- Parents do not understand the relationship between health promotion initiative and education. They'd rather prefer to use the previous applied methods.
- Parents view health promotion as a waste of time since they cannot gain anything tangible, although research shows that children whose parents are involved succeed in schools.

4.6 Essential functions of parental involvement in health promotion

The overall success of Health Promoting Schools depends on the contribution of parents (Denman et al., 2002:21), because parents are primary teachers and role models, and as such they have a direct care giving role that can create favourable conditions for learners to thrive personally and academically (SACE, 2007).

Parents are willing to be part of their children's education in meaningful ways that not only form part of the school agenda, but also contribute positively to their own health knowledge and behaviours. Very often when schools have good relationships with parents, parents are more likely to cooperate with schools' health efforts (Denman et al., 2002:21). In addition, good

relations between schools and parents make it easier for parents to understand and support school health programs. Some ways in which parents can support the Health Promoting Schools include the following:

4.6.1 Time, experience and resources

The new and more advanced approach in education, i.e. Outcomes-Based Education, allows parents to have ample time to work with their children by helping them with their homework, projects and assignments (Asmal & James, 2002; Naidu et al., 2008). This helps learners to benefit from the experience within their families. In cases where parents are well informed about the curriculum, they also organise materials that are helpful to the educators, although offending information that is part of the curriculum must be taken seriously into consideration, since the material can be sensitive due to difference (Chadwick, 2004).

4.6.2 Share facilities

Schools can do all the work to bring parents into the school, only to offer them a less than friendly welcome when they arrive. If parent involvement is to be sustained, it is the school's responsibility to create a welcoming and personalized environment with dedicated space for parents (Chadwick, 2004). When parents are utilizing the school facilities for various purposes, it is easier for them to be involved in the school health when there is a welcoming attitude that is offered by the school when collaborating with the parents (Epstein, 2002).

4.6.3 Consistent communication

Very often, schools do not communicate with parents on a continuous basis, instead they choose when to communicate with parents and on what issues. This is often done when there is a crisis at school (Berger, 2008:202; Olsen & Fuller, 2008:122). By then, the intention of the

school is not to discuss the issues with the parents, but to inform parents on what to do (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:196). The relationship between the school and home must be consistent to such an extent that parents are able to reinforce the school programs (Boult, 2006). Many schools are on the one hand willing, and on the other hand worried about parents' involvement, but schools can not promote health without the collaboration with parents, especially with health issues such as HIV& Aids, drug abuse, poor eating habits, physical inactivity and behaviours that result in injury. Life Orientation brings reality to schools, support from parents is ideal since they have a great influence on their children's behaviour with their own lifestyle and by representing the family perspective on sensitive issues (Kirby et al., 2003).

4.6 4 Support learner involvement

Learners depend mainly on support from school and their parents as well (Neal & Kaye, 2006; Waggie, Gordon & Brijlal, 2004). Before the implementation of OBE in their curricula, schools used to have periods such as physical education where learners were encouraged to take part in various sporting codes. Guidance was also part of this curriculum, where learners acquired much information concerning their life as a whole, guiding them to express their feelings, to explore their spirituality and their psychological being (The Presidency, 2009). Although there is no big difference between the former approach and the latter, parents must support their children to partake in various school health activities through conversation, arranging transport to a particular sporting event, and by organising fundraising that is aimed at raising the alarm with regard to health issues among school children (Mda & Mothata, 2002; Williams & Reddy, 1998).

4.6.5 Provide needed health services

It is unfortunate that health services that are desperately needed by almost every school are not adequate and available (Chadwick, 2004). Many children have serious learning problems and learning disabilities, which very often are mistaken for behavioural problems. Schools are supposed to conduct services such as routine health screening and to notify parents of

conditions that require follow-up (The Presidency, 2009). Parents are responsible for obtaining medical, preventative health and mental health care for their children, and sometimes they need support from the school to fulfill these responsibilities. Parents might not be able to obtain services needed by their children due to financial limitations, inability to take time from work, lack of transportation, lack of familiarity with the health care system, language barriers, or other circumstances. In general, parents will welcome help from school.

4.6.6 Provide valuable insights

As members of the school governing body and advocacy groups, parents can always influence the development of health related issues by providing valuable insights into community norms, cultural sensitivities and learners' needs (Berger, 2008:242). They can also identify, build strong links among, and integrate community and school-based resources and services that strengthen programs, family practices and learning and development of their children (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

4.6.7 Conclusion

The functions of parents do not end at home, they continue to promote the health of learners together with schools. Very often parents are mistaken as problems in schools.

- Parental function in the school environment is needed, as it can yield great impact in the life of every individual school.
- Parents can always share their expertise, time, resources and other things which can benefit the school.

4.7 Challenges to parental involvement in school health promotion

Challenges to parent involvement do not only focus on parents per se, it includes teachers too (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:100). Although there are challenges, the benefits of parental involvement are quite clear: better achievement by the learners, better health and well-being. It is a daunting task for schools to involve parents in the education of their children due to some logistics and protocols involved in the process (Koelen, Vaanrager, & Colomer, 2001). A number of challenges can hinder parent involvement, although they can be overcome. The first aspect will address challenges faced by parents, then, the latter will address challenges faced by teachers.

4.7.1 Challenges for parents in terms of their involvement

4.7.1.1 The school diversity

Within a particular community, there are the learners' families, which include different cultures, social classes, races, ethnic groups, family structures and sexual orientation (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). These families also have energies, creativity and resources, which can enhance the school health programs. They are often ignored. In many cases, the culture in schools does not welcome suggestions from parents' morals and cultural values. Parents are informed on what to do and what not to do, which weakens their participation (Epstein, 2002). Without a thorough agreement from within the school and the parents, the chance of working together is very limited. In other cases, the language used reinforces stereotypes, and it is not well understood by parents, although it is taken for granted that everyone knows the language, and as such parents feel neglected and rejected by the school (Amatea, 2009:212). Besides the language used, matters such as identifying parents by race, a particular ethnic group, unique backgrounds and beliefs are still problems many parents face when they think of visiting the school (Bradley & Kibera, 2006). In South Africa, valuing diversity is one most important issue (South African Constitution, 1996). South Africa is known as the rainbow nation. This must be clear when people interact with each other in various programs.

4.7.1.2 Different views in the application of health promotion

Every school has a vision and a mission that is geared in a certain direction, and there are various activities rendered by the school in collaboration with the parents (Engelbrecht, 2001:23). In many cases, some parents disagree with the school or in actual fact do not understand the purpose of a school health program. Often, the various aspects of the school health program are controversial to such an extent that parents are not familiar with the terms. Some schools do not have policies for addressing controversies that give parents opportunities to air their concerns, and this raises much concern and criticism with regard to the school (Lombard, 2007:28). Parents' views and suggestion are not valued enough, they seem to be inferior to such an extent that parents are driven away from the school community because they feel uncertain and unwelcome (Swart & Phasha, 2006:).

4.7.1.3 Family health choices

Many children are exposed to unhealthy settings in their lives. Some settings are unfavourable for the well-being of children (Thom, 2001). In some families, adults engage in unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, drug abuse, sleeping around, which poses the risks of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/Aids, excessive drinking, where some children are introduced to drinking at an early age because they are the ones who are sent to buy liquor, and poor dietary habits due to lack of enough food or the preference of fast food (White & Matawie, 2004). Due to the unacceptable health choices by parents, discussions of risk behaviours by schools are viewed as a criticism (Stofile, 2001). Some habits are difficult to do away with. Today's youngsters represent the future adult population, and therefore the prevention of chronic diseases and focusing on the health risk behaviours of children is warranted (De Nooijer & De Vries, 2006:5).

4.7.1.4 Discomfort or distrust

There is incorrect assumption by the school staff that parents who are not involved in school activities do not want to be part of the school progress (Chadwick, 2004). Indeed it is well known that almost all parents are first and willing stakeholders when it comes to success and the future of their children, although their reasons vary when it comes to involvement. Many times, parents distrust schools due to their feelings of inadequacy as parents and the negative experiences they had during their times when they were school going children (Berger, 2008; Alant & Harty, 2006:85; Barbour & Barbour, 2001:289). Often, in communities where illiteracy is still dominant, parents have problems when it comes to communicating with the staff. Some parents view teachers and the school administration as the authority figures, and as such, they hesitate to enquire about the serious issues concerning their children and delegate their decision making status to the school (Farkas, Foley & Duffet, 2001:29). Still others lack the confidence or social skills to learn about school operations or even teachers' expectations.

4.7.1.5 Access to school

Very few schools are within reach of parents because they are too far away (Human Rights Watch, 2004). There are families that lack transport to such an extent that they fail to attend valuable meetings. Many schools tend to schedule their meetings in the evening or during awkward times when many parents are working and cannot attend daytime school activities and other events of importance. Besides working, they might lack childcare (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). There also schools that do not allow parents to visit as they wish. They have to call the office and book for an appointment in the principal's office (Gestwicki, 2007).

4.7.1.6 Grade level differences

The responsibility of raising children is a continuous task that must not end with a certain age or a certain grade if children are still attending school (Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Loock, Mestry, &

Moloi, 2005:106). One can say that there are differences in the needs of each grade level, because as children get older, their lives and lifestyles change. According to Bauer & Shea (2003:168) family support should be ongoing and involvement should not be withdrawn when the child grows older because that is where the guidance of parents is needed the most. At the early stage they depend on their teachers and parents to guide them, as they find their way, and then they start to depend on themselves and their peers, although they will not always get the relevant information from their peers.

4.7.1.7 Language barriers

In South Africa many primary schools are situated in the particular community they serve, and all learners learn in an African language for a minimum of three years up to the end of the General Education and Training Band, as stipulated by Language Learning Area in line with the Department of Education's language-in-education policy (Mda & Mothata, 2002). This policy gives School Governing Bodies the responsibility of selecting school language policies that are appropriate for their circumstances and in line with the policy of additive multilingualism (RNCS, 2002:4).

In addition, Donald et al., (2002:70) maintains that language contains many of the cumulative meanings of any community of people. It is a very powerful vehicle, or a carrier of values, information, and ways of understanding (Salas, Lopez, Chinn & Menchaca-Lopez, 2005:52). As has been noted already, South Africa is a rainbow nation, and as such multilingual country. In the Limpopo province for example, the main spoken languages are English, Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga, whereas in the North West province the main spoken languages are Afrikaans, English and Setswana. This was not the case in the past regime, and this caused much controversy and tension in the nation (Donald et al., 2002:162), and resulted in the strike against the use of the Afrikaans language in 1976. Today people have the right to live wherever they want to, which means they also cross the language boundaries. If more teachers are not fluent in the languages that are spoken in their region, as a nation we are not likely to achieve additive bilingualism or multilingualism at all (Donald et al., 2002:222).

Parents who have children in schools where the language spoken is not their mother tongue encounter problems when it comes to communication, they feel inferior (Lombard, 2007:32). They fail to understand the information communicated by the school, and sometimes they even sign contracts that they do not understand at all. This causes a communication breakdown resulting in a serious controversy in the long run (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004). This is visible in rural areas and informal settlements where many parents take the initiative to introduce their children to former Model C schools. In these schools English or Afrikaans is used as the medium of instructions and it is not the first language spoken in the learner's home. In such cases many parents are illiterate with regard to reading and to using recent technology (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

In many instances, if the language used by the school is not what parents are capable of understanding, very often they tend to be passive when it comes to matters concerning their children, although they might be willing to be involved. Baker in (Donald et al., 2002:222) indicates that at all times, respect for the first language and all that is associated with it, needs to be promoted and maintained alongside any other languages. In addition Donald et al., (2002) shows the importance of healing the sense of cultural inferiority that the subtractive process has generated. It means that positive value must be attributed not only to the language, but also to the particular knowledge, experience and ways of viewing life which children from many different backgrounds bring to the classroom (Swart & Phasha, 2006:222; Morton-Young, 1995:78).

4.7.2 Challenges for educators

The fact that the fundamental agent in school health programs is the teacher cannot be ignored anymore (St Leger, 2000). Furthermore, if parental involvement and health promotion in schools has to be initiated and developed, little will occur unless attention is directed at understanding how teachers work and what support they need to make changes happen (Viig & Wold, 2005:83), and what problems they experience.

4.7.2.1 Minimal commitment to parent participation

The fact that teachers are experts in their field of teaching cannot be underestimated (Lombard, 2007:27). On the other hand, their commitment in working with parents should not be minimal. Some teachers do not feel secure when parents are around them (Amatea, 2009). Generally, they feel that parents are there to criticize what they have been doing for quite a number of years (Wolfendale, 1989:14). These parents are not viewed as partners in education. Working with parents is viewed as wasting the time of both teachers and learners (Gestwicki, 2010). Activities to involve parents in schools are not available at all.

4.7.2.2 Doubt about their abilities to work with at-risk parents

Most teachers work very hard, but are not certain about their abilities to work with at-risk parents (Epstein, 2002:7; Engelbrecht, 2001:19). They know that all children need support, care and nurturing (Berger, 2008:182). They also know that with the decline of economic stability and the pressures facing parents, together with the fragmentation of neighbourhood and communities, the support and care children receive at school are even more critical (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:278; Petr, 2003:11).

Teachers are expected to do more than ever before in classrooms, and some find it increasingly unsafe. Many children come from dysfunctional families where the parent-child interaction is totally disturbed (Petr, 2003:34) and this leads to limited cognitive, emotional, and social developmental in the child (Amatea, 2009:348). In these kinds of families, children frequently have poor emotional and behavioural control and school adjustment problems. They may become easily upset, or disturb the class with unusual behaviour and have consistent discipline problems (Wardekker, 2001). Whenever parents are invited to solve some of these problems they become so defensive that in the end teachers are to blame for any disciplinary measures they take against the child (Amatea, 2009:282).

4.7.2.3 Concern about sensitive health issues

In South Africa there are many children living in townships or far more remote areas (The Presidency, 2009) where many of them are exposed to various health risk behaviour issues that put their lives in serious danger. These behaviours range from smoking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, prostitution, teenage pregnancy, and so forth (Mashau, 2006; Reddy, Meyer-Weitz & Yach, 1996). Some children might be experiencing a certain form of abuse that also affects their learning at school (Amatea, 2009). These kinds of problems pose a serious challenge to the teacher as it will not be easy to address these sensitive health issues that are not seen as sensitive issues by the communities where the learners come from. For example, alcohol use in some families is not seen as a health risk issue, it is seen as part of refreshment or entertainment (Stofile, 2001). Should the teacher try to address this issue at school, it will seem as if the teacher is interfering with family matters and does not have respect for families (Lott, 2001).

4.7.2.4 Concern that teaching authority will be undermined

The question as to whether or not teachers are “professionals” and should be considered as such, and if so, in what sense, has a long history. Up to this day educators seek to construct and defend a certain degree of professional autonomy while simultaneously being publicly governed and held accountable. According to Berger (2008:130), in some schools the environment becomes a place where parents are not welcome, as schools are regarded as professional business arenas where parents should bring their children and leave them to the professionals (Hung, 2007:116).

Whilst there is concern that teaching authority will be undermined, the element of fear and avoidance is dominant (Berger, 2008:136). Teachers struggle to protect their professional spheres in which, as they see it, parents frequently intrude. Parents are perceived as often being the boss in the teacher’s business and professional circles. If teachers are not valued and

respected, they experience stress, burnout and depression, which according to (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:88) is a major cause of teachers leaving the profession. The mistake which is often made by schools/teachers is that they draw a line as to what is considered “appropriate” and “inappropriate” parent involvement, and those lines are directly related to teachers’ understanding of their professional spheres (Chadwick, 2004).

Basically, teachers view appropriate parent involvement as supporting them in their endeavors, offering services, while accepting the teacher as the authority in matters around educating children (Amatea, 2009). “Inappropriate” parent involvement, on the other hand, may well be perceived by parents as appropriate forms of child advocacy or attempts at participation in school governance. Often teachers do not see it that way, they want parents to be involved, but not know what the teachers are doing with their children (Amatea, 2009:141).

In many cases teachers use techniques in order to gain parents’ respect and control over their own professional sphere. These are some of the strategies:

- Struggling to make parents obey certain rules. Example: parents have to call the secretary to make an appointment with the principal or the teacher, and if that is not obeyed, the parent will not be attended to (Berger, 2008:140).
- Telling parents what needs to be done in order to further their children’s education, assuring parents of the high quality instruction their children receive at school in general and in a given class, although it might not seem like that in reality. This is done to make parents trust in their teacher’s professional ability (Olsen & Fuller, 2008).
- Demonstrating to parents the quality of instruction through recognition beyond the school walls. Example: when children are able to participate in other sporting activities and excel (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:326).
- Creating and maintaining a positive reputation among parents: example: when a teacher calls parents and tells them that their child is performing well in order for them to talk in positive terms to other parents about him (Berger, 2008).

- Conveying to parents the moral dimensions of teacher (i.e. the ethical obligations, rights and responsibilities of both students and teachers).
- Diffusing crises in order not to alienate parents which, in turn, creates the necessary space for teachers to operate (Amatea, 2009).

4.7.2.5 Lack of time and funding for school-parent communications

Being a teacher today is very different from what it was just a few decades ago. Several new tasks have been added to the teachers' function (Amatea, 2009). Rapid changes in the society have caused new challenges for the schools. The teachers increasingly find themselves having to deal with social problems. Integration of learners with special needs into ordinary classes also demands a greater degree of adjusted teaching (Berger, 2008; Lombard, 2007).

New teaching plans and reforms, new evaluation routines, more contact and meetings with the parents, in addition to extended cooperation with the colleagues, fills more and more of teachers working hours (Berger, 2008). One source of frustration is the paradigm shift in education and all the new programs stealing from a tight time schedule: How can a teacher manage to deal with all the different tasks and at the same time, be able to do a satisfactory job? (Viig & Wold, 2005:98).

4.7.2.6 Inadequate teacher access to communications technologies (e-mail, voice-mail)

According to Berger (2008:214) technology is far more developed today than in the past. Teachers used to depend mainly on textbooks to teach learners at school. Written notes to parents were the only possible way to communicate (Berger, 2008:169). Today things have changed drastically, because much of the recent information is available on the internet,

although not all schools have access to computers to find information or to allow children to do school projects.

4.7.2.7 Some parents are motivated by a single concern only, and therefore are not representative

There are times in the life of the school when there are crises, and that is when many parents want to raise their voices. In those times many parents seem to be motivated and very interested in the school issues. But when those issues are done with, they disappear. They are nowhere to be found in the life of the school (Olsen & Fuller, 2008:122).

4.7.2.8 Teacher expertise is not recognized

Teachers are professionally trained to do their tasks and there is no doubt about that. As it is acknowledged by Olsen & Fuller (2008:4, 11) teachers have knowledge and skills to handle the responsibility of teaching, which indeed overlaps the role of the parents. However, very often when there are changes in the education system teachers are not part of the bigger picture, they are only informed about the decision. This raises many concerns from the teacher's side, as teachers often do not have adequate information on how to apply the techniques. This is a very clear indication to show that their expertise is not valued as such.

4.7.2.9 Conclusion

In conclusion to the challenges, it is clear that many parents do not have access to the health and education of their children, and above all:

- They are not empowered to participate in the schools of their children in a meaningful way that not only enhances the school's activities, but also contribute positively to their own health knowledge and behaviours.
- In quite a number of schools teachers do not have any idea about health promotion and one could agree that they are not even given enough time to be part of the health promotion program, they are left out in confusion.
- Therefore, if teachers are confused, what about parents and their children who must promote health in their homes?

4.8 Parental involvement and Health promotion in schools: An ongoing debate

The role of parental involvement and health promotion in schools should be the ultimate goal if the maximum success of the health of children of South Africa and Africa has to be reached (The Presidency, 2009). It is very interesting though to know that much effort has been exerted to improve the health of children in the communities of South Africa and schools as well. According to Naidu et al., (2008:140) health and social services are rendered to schools on a regular basis to diagnose health problems among learners. This is done by conducting health clinics and immunization programmes, delivering lessons on health issues including personal hygiene, HIV/AIDS, STD's and other illnesses. In addition, social services that are rendered by social workers and psychologists provide life skills, self help and mutual support programmes. But, the disappointing factor is the lack of cooperation and coordination between parents and schools (Naidu et al., 2008:132), even though the South African government is trying by all means to bring services to the people.

Quite a number of schools receive services and assistance from organisations and agencies (Naidu et al., 2008:133). The only problem with these agencies and organisations is that their services are presented in a fragmented manner, usually with little or no communication amongst them and parents. Furthermore, these service providers do not know much about what other organisations or agencies are doing, what has been provided already or the information

available to assist the learners with their problems (NCREL, 1995). Basically, even the school staff is not aware of the other activities that are taking place after school (Anderson-Butcher, Stetler & Midle, 2006:160). This fragmentation of services leads to unnecessary duplication (Naidu et al., 2008:133) which ignores parental involvement and the holistic approach of attending to the child as a whole.

As more schools are becoming Health Promoting Schools, a large number of parents are not part of the great move. This is not because they are not willing. The point is that they are neither informed nor empowered to increase control and improve the health of their children. This still poses enormous problems with regard to the health of their children.

From the literature review in Chapter 3 it was clear that the involvement of parents in schools yield positive results to the school and to their children too. For this reason parental involvement in Health Promotion and Schools is focussed on the holistic well-being of a child. Much success can still be attained if parents are involved in Health promotion together with schools. According to Gray et al., (2006) parents' involvement leads to:

- a more balanced approach to school health promotion will develop rather than emphasising one component such as health education;
- more impact on pupils' behaviours in relation to food preparation;
- influencing food policies in schools through involvement in school nutrition action groups;
- co-operatives to provide healthy food for pupils in the middle of the school day;
- facilitate safe and active routes to schools;
- restricting the sale and advertising of unhealthy products near school entrance and within the school e.g. in vending machines;
- the provision of 'drop-in' centers for young people where they can raise issues on a confidential basis;
- working towards and across disciplines and sharing the resources;

- schools will have a greater access to community health personnel;
- greater awareness will exist of resources for health programs;
- strategic decision making will be based on improved information on health and health programs;
- reduce common health problems;
- the image of the school in the community will be improved;
- the health status of learners will be improved to maximize their educational achievement;
- the general quality of education in schools will be improved.

4.8.1 Conclusions

A debate about the involvement of parents and health promotion in schools cannot be concluded without analysing the importance of their involvement and their failure to do so. It is done to find more effective ways to sustain health promotion in schools further and improve the health of children for the better.

Finally, it is very clear that involving parents in health promotion and schools is an investment, since it has a positive impact on the lives of children and the school and their families as well. Parents' interventions are able to increase children's knowledge, which changes factors such as behaviour and attitude that can have a negative impact on health at a later stage in life.

4.9 Final conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate parental involvement and health promotion in schools. To understand this in a much better way, issues about health, health promotion and Health Promoting Schools, were reviewed to make it easier to analyse different ways in which

parents can be involved in collaboration with schools, in the promotion of health of their children. From this chapter the following conclusion can be deduced:

Parents' understanding of their involvement in HPS is still far behind. Their intentions and attitude only display that this program is still a new phenomenon. In this manner:

- Parents' socio-economic status affects health of their children at school. If parents are not empowered to improve their own health, the problem will be continuous.
- In many instances parents do not understand issues of health and education, There is no collaboration.
- Schools need parents to be involved, but on the other hand when they start to raise concerns or to be involved in a manner that is not acceptable, they are questioned and set back.
- Both parents and teachers have barriers and challenges which hinder their involvement in HPS. No one is accountable at the end of the day.
- Policies and strategies in HPS programs enable all the stakeholders to know where to start with the program and various ways they can be involved.
- The benefit of parents' involvement in HPS program should be evaluated to encourage parents to be more involved in the health of their children.

The discussion of parental involvement and health promotion in schools show very clearly that if parents are involved in health promotion in schools, there will be great changes. According to St Leger (2004) and Deschesnes, Martin & Will (2003) it is because Health Promoting Schools is an all encompassing project which focuses in the holistic aspects of health of learners, staff, parents and the community at large. To find out about the correlation of this point, the next chapter will form part of the empirical findings.

Chapter 5

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION: PARENTAL ROLES TOWARDS THE CREATION OF HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOLS

5.1 Introduction and orientation

Children need to be cared for by adults to enable their survival and development (The Presidency, 2009:104). As a matter of fact this quotation stresses the point that children cannot be accountable for themselves, therefore they need guidance and supervision by parents to be able to reach their full potential. In addition, the presidency is able to recognize that children have a unique need and right to family care and parental care that must be met in one way or the other. This is also stressed by the National policies and programmes according to which all school-aged children are in schools and their safety and the school environment come first (Chisolm, 2007).

The safety of children as it is stated in The Bill of Rights Handbook entails the children's right to dignity through the abolition of corporal punishment, a prohibition on all discriminatory practices, codes of ethics for educators and learners, and particular attention to the rights of children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and those with disabilities and special education needs (Currie & De Waal, 2005). Although the government is trying by all means to come up with policies and strategies to enhance children's well-being, there is often a wide gap between the policies and the reality of involving parents in the health promotion and schools.

There could be no better possible solution for the problems affecting school going children's well-being than inviting parents on board to give a helping hand to all who are involved with the children on a daily basis (WHO, 1999). It has been acknowledged that parents are children's first and foremost primary educators (Amatea, 2009:27). So how on earth could they have been

excluded from executing their role in schools? Since the African continent is struggling to apply and utilize the Health Promoting Schools program, parents find it difficult to find ways and means to engage themselves in the education of their children.

This chapter presents data generated during focus group interviews with 25 parents. Their views and experiences concerning their involvement in schools and health promotion were discussed. The characteristics of participants were discussed as well. The researcher assured all participants of confidentiality and anonymity.

5.2 Research design

The qualitative method of research was used in this study. A phenomenological research design was chosen. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:13; 2001), the phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular situation. Both parental roles in schools and health promotion were investigated thoroughly in the literature review (cf. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4).

Parental involvement and health promotion in schools has not been extensively researched. Thus a qualitative research design will be utilized for the sake of exploring the field in a more constructive way (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:13). In this study focus group interviews formed the qualitative part of the study.

5.3 Research method

In the following section, a summary of the methods described in more detail in paragraph 2.2 will be given. For clarity's sake, in this research the concepts of parental roles and parental

involvement have been used. The lack of parental involvement and health promotion in schools could be considered as the most likely fallback concerning the well-being of children at schools and at home as well.

5.3.1 Selection of participants

Only parents from five primary schools in the D Cluster of the Southern Region in the North West Province participated in the study. Five groups of five parents each were randomly chosen to participate in the focus group interviews. Altogether 25 parents participated in the focus group interviews. The ages of parents ranged from 23 to 52, and most of them were females, with a representation of males of less than five participants in general. The participants are living in absolute poverty stricken areas where they live in shacks with no basic services, or on farms. Some of the participants are employed as domestic workers, and some are not working at all since they did not have any skills whatsoever.

5.3.2 Data collection

Qualitative data was collected by conducting 5 focus group interviews with five participants in each group. The main aim was to gather self-report data concerning the role of parents in schools, possible barriers and health promotion in schools.

5.4 Data analysis

The focus group interviews consisted of five questions each, and these questions were analysed individually in order to understand the roles of parents and what should be their roles

in Health Promoting Schools. For example, in the analysis of interviews (303, p4) stands for line 303 parent no 4.

5.4.1 Analysis of question 1

The first question parents were asked was to define their role in the schools where their children are attending. The question was: What is the role of parents in schools? The question on its own seems to be very simple to understand and even easier to answer. But the responses from the participants made it clear that there are many things that are still outstanding in terms of understanding what their role are in schools.

From this question six categories emerged. They are:

1. Assist children
2. Attend meetings
3. Be of assistance
4. Finance
5. Governance
6. Lack of knowledge

The first category indicates the role of parents in terms of assisting their children at school with various responsibilities. The second category referred to responses where all participants see themselves participating in terms of attending meetings, going to school only when they are invited or when they are concerned about certain issues at school. The third category was determined by what parents would do as a way of assisting the teachers at school. The fourth category was mainly focused on finance, like buying and paying the required school material or payments. The fifth category was all about governance in issues around decision making. The last response was the lack of knowledge.

In the first category, although parents felt the need to assist their children with activities like home work, projects and assignments, they were sometimes not sure as to whether what they were doing was right or wrong. They find it hard to participate, since they have no knowledge about Outcomes Based Education. Often they doubt their ability and leave their children not attended to. One parent expressed her feelings in this manner:

“But I feel that as a parent I am failing my child because I am not able to help my child to do things which are required by the school. Sometimes I find it hard to help, especially with this new system of education. I mean OBE. I certainly do not know what to do, because I do not know much about it and the school does not bother to help either with workshops or something else to help us cope with the daily requirements. Sometimes my child’s homework is not done because I had no idea.” (355, p2).

Like any other parent, this kind of frustration drives some parents away from school and they do not bother to come or even to ask about their children’s achievement: A parent who was turned away by a teacher said:

“I know that my role is to attend to school matters concerning my child, but it bothers me a lot when I try to find out about my child’s achievement or to get clarity about the assignments, I am turned down by her teacher. So I think it is better to do hands off because teachers think that it is their business alone.” (33, p2).

The first question seems to be easy, but the responses given by the participants were more or less the same. They display the same characteristic of parental involvement in schools, a characteristic that shows that they do not have a voice in the education of their children, except to do what they think is right. Like these parents who stated it this way:

“I only do what I think is right.” (50, p4)

“The role of parents is to help the child do her school work.” (138, p1)

“My role is to encourage my child to come to school every day.” (235, p1)

In some instances they even decide to stay away as far as possible, to avoid confrontations. Out of desperation one parent stated that:

“I agree with what she is saying. I understand that as a parent I have to be involved in the education of my child, but what worries me a lot, is that our teachers are really ignorant when it comes to any contact with a parent. Sometimes if you ask their mobile phone number to contact them if maybe there is misunderstanding about the task given to the child, they say they cannot just give their numbers to everyone ‘cause it is not safe to do so. The school is very much reactive instead of being proactive. If you try to display certain knowledge about certain issues in education then you know for sure they are not going to like you. Then how can I be involved in such kind of a school? ” (39, p3)

The second category, which has been labeled as attending meetings, also has a number of responses. In the beginning during introductions some parents mentioned that they were at school that day because they were invited to attend a meeting. This is how they introduced themselves:

“..... I am here today because we have a parent meeting.” (16, p2)

“..... I am here to attend a meeting” (139, p4)

“I think what we are doing now is something related to our role. We are here to attend a meeting. Is it not true?”(153, p3)

“I think attending meetings is the right way to be involved. I usually attend parent meetings, because I know that is where important information regarding my child is communicated. I’ve never missed any meeting because I know that is the best I can do for my child.”(344, p1)

“My role is to attend functions at school. That is important, because if I do not attend, the teachers are going to think that I am not a good mother. Maybe that is the reason why my son is behaving in a certain way.”(360, p3)

Parents sometimes wonder about what teachers think about them when they are not participating in school activities, they feel that they have nothing much to offer to the school, except to follow whatever instruction they receive from the school.

The third category implies being of assistance to the teachers. What does this mean? It only means that they wait for the school to tell them what to do next. Some parents describe it this way:

“The role of parents is to do what we are asked to do by teachers.” (30, p1)

“Maybe we can also add to help the teachers with anything they request us to do. We have no option.”(156, p3)

The fourth category is all about finances. It is a matter of concern especially for parents who are of low economic status in the community. Many parents are living on the edge of poverty. Even if though most parents in South Africa are earning social grants for their children, the money is not enough to supply the basic needs for the whole family and to add the school responsibilities. One parent expressed her frustration and sadness as:

“To be involved in school, to me I think there are things which I must do as a parent to support my child to enjoy being here at school. But I find it hard because right now, my husband nor myself, none of us is working, the only money we receive is the social grant which is not enough to do other things except to survive. You know what, it is sad when teachers ask children to bring money for things to be done here at school, and I am unable to provide for my child. How do you think my child is going to feel about this? We are living in poverty mam, and no one cares, even the government.”(142, p2)

There are also parents who know that they have to buy school uniforms and other resources for their children, and fortunately enough, in South Africa there are schools that have been exempted from paying school fees.

“..... I think it is to buy things like uniform and the other stationery which is not provided by the government.” (236, p2)

“Ehm, my role is to buy school uniform, pay school fees,” (496, p3)

The fifth category is about governance, parents are also concerned about the issue of governance within the school. There is a keen interest to be involved, as it was explained by some parents:

".....I really know that I must be involved, but what really bothers me most is that the school does not involve us in matters concerning governance of the school. I know that every school must have a governing body, wherein parents are involved in various issues concerning governance, but what we have here is that we are never called to share the ideas on how to improve things at school. We are only informed about what they are thinking. Our ideas do not seem to matter at all". (246, p5)

The following statement confirms the need for parents to get involved in the governance of the school. As a follow-up to the previous speaker one parent said:

"I want to be part of the decision making in the school. But, it is just unfortunate because the school is not willing to work with us." (240, p4)

The parents' interest to work in governance within the SGB seems to be very important, since one parent voiced it this way:

"I mean working in the SGB and be part of the decision making in the school." (165, p5)

The sixth category is the reality that many parents are not participating because they do not know their roles. The knowledge as to what to do to help a child at school is not there, and one cannot blame these parents if they are not participating. This parent frankly answered and said:

"Yo, I don't know exactly what to do." (53, p5)

This kind of response was repeated almost with any question in all these interviews with parents. It was mentioned not knowing what to do or literally not sure of what to do.

5.4.2 Analysis of question 2

In this question parents were asked: What is the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools? Before the interviews started, the participants were exposed to the questions to avoid confusion during the interviews session. Questions were clarified.

The following categories could be identified:

1. Child's well-being
2. Absence of knowledge about health promotion
3. School to decide how they should be involved
4. Father do not know that much

In the first category the response was to take care of the child's well-being. Health promotion is only viewed as physical and can be addressed by only looking at aspects such as when the child is sick and can be taken to the clinic. The role of parents in promoting the health of children in school is partially understood by some parents in terms of the following examples:

"My role in promoting the health of my child at school I think it will be to make sure that when my child is sick, I take him to the clinic. I can't just let my child to go to school when I know that he is not feeling well. Otherwise, I will be showing that I am not a responsible mother."(176, p3)

"Taking the child to the clinic when he is sick I think that has to do with health." (64, p4)

In actual fact, health promotion is perceived literally in the form of physical health, where children could be sick with influenza, chicken pox or mumps and must be taken to the clinic or referred to the doctor. One parent understood her role according to this question in this manner:

".....I think health has to do with medical staff only, the fact that parents can be involved in this, I find it strange." (384, p2)

In addition, some parents' understanding of health is embroidered in cleanliness of the body and eating healthy food:

"When she comes to school I make sure she is clean every day." (62, p2)

"I think my role is to bath my child every day, when he comes to school, he must be clean" (256, p2)

"The role of parents is to make sure that they are not sick, they eat healthy food and so on." (255, p1)

Some parents showed their wish to give healthy food to their children, but they were unable because of poverty. The following quotes were given to express the extent of poverty parents find themselves in:

"I like to give my child healthy food every day, even at home, but I can't afford to do so (261, p3). I am unemployed. If people say you live in the location it means that even your everything is affected with poverty." (263, p3)

"I think it can also include the type of food my child should eat, healthy food. But the problem is that it is not easy to provide healthy food. Poverty is the problem." (179, p4)

The second category in this instance was the absence of knowledge about the concept of health promotion and schools. The following examples given were:

"I do not know exactly what to do." (59, p1)

"This is the hardest question. I have no idea."(63, p3)

"I have no idea." (268, p5)

"..... although I would like to help to promote the health of my child here at school, I have no idea as to what I have to do. I don't think even the teachers know about this." (392, p4)

In the third category, the participants thought it was the responsibility of the school to decide how they should be involved to make sure that children were aware of health issues. In this

regard parents held the school responsible to teach their children and to instill knowledge about issues concerning their health, as it was stated as follows:

“I know that children learn health education at schools, which is now done as Life Orientation. I am sure the teachers are doing everything to make sure our children know about health issues. I really don’t know how I can be involved in this. It is part of the school duty.” (171, p2)

In the absence of knowledge, parents give the school the responsibility to decide on what they can do concerning health issues affecting their children:

“The school can decide on what we can do to promote health.” (168, p1)

The last category is an exceptional case where a parent made it clear that he is not aware of issues related to children’s health possibly because of his gender:

“You know as a father I do not know much about children’s health issues.” (392, p4)

5.4.3 Analysis of question 3

This question was aimed at determining whether there are possible barriers that exist that keep parents from executing their roles in schools. The question was: What possible barriers do exist that keep parents from executing their role?

From the interviewer’s observation, parents seem to have many things in common that prevent them from performing their roles in schools and in health promotion. They all seem to have more to say than in the previous questions.

In this question six categories could be identified:

1. School
2. Poverty/unemployment

3. Illiteracy
4. Time
5. Lack of knowledge
6. No confidence

In the first category the participants made it clear that the school is their main barrier in many instances such as:

"I am happy that above all, you are able to ask about barriers. Yes there are many barriers if I may say. My main problem is that the school just decides on our behalf as parents. They took decision on issues concerning us and our children without our concern, and yet they want us to be fully involved, for what?"(68, p1)

As the main barrier most parents described:

"I agree that there are possible barriers which hinder us from being involved in the education of our children. The first barrier I think it is the school. The school does not view parents as equal partners. The fact that we not teachers it does not mean that there is nothing we can do for our children. I think they doubt our abilities or they have no clue about how to involve us." (277, p4)

".....there are barriers between parents and schools I think it is the management of the school, especially the principal. She is very strict and I don't think she knows much about what is going on in education today. She is so defensive that you could see that everyone is dancing according to her tune. I visited the school last time when my child was not performing well. Instead of relating the problem to me she started to tell me what to do before she could hear my side of the story, telling that she has the best teachers in her school. I felt so irritated by that."(281, p5)

One parent was able to point specifically that the manager of the school as the leader of the school must be able to take the initiative to lead the staff:

"I think the main barrier is the principal of the school. Teachers cannot do that much if the principal as the leader of the school is not doing anything. If the principal is aware of the problems our children are encountering daily, then something must be done."(192, p2)

Other barriers concerning the school were the meeting place that is not conducive for parents. This raises emotions such as:

".....meeting the teacher in the principal's office I don't think it is a good idea, because the situation is tense, and I feel powerless, on the other hand the teacher was so defensive"(196, p3), and the way how communication is handled, " the way the teachers communicate with us I think it is not fair at all. They just send the children with information which is not clear or else they ask learners to copy important information on the board."(77, p1)

".....if they could have made copies to send home or do something to ensure that the information reaches us at the right time and in a correct way." (74, p3)

Teachers are also regarded as a barrier, especially if they decide everything on behalf of parents without their consent. It may sound like they are not cooperative. The following examples cite their frustrations:

".....do not let us participate in the lives of our children, I see it as a barrier, because I must know what is going on with my child at school." (542, p2)

"These teachers they think they are better than us. Therefore, they decide as they wish." (287, p5)

The second category was poverty and unemployment. In this category the participants made it clear that although they would like to be involved, poverty and unemployment are their main hindrances as they will not be able to assist their children: Parents voiced the issues of poverty likely as:

"If we have to talk about barriers now I think it can take much more than what you have planned. As parents we barriers see that there are plenty of barriers

(185, p1). If a may start with, unemployment, poverty are the main barriers. The conditions we live in are barriers by themselves. I do not see myself doing that much as a parent here at school if these problems are still there. Sometimes there are school field trips or projects wherein I have to pay so much for my child, if I do not have this amount how is it going to affect my child? What is the teacher going to say?"(188, p1)

"Definitely it is poverty. Poverty pulls everything down. You see, only those who have money are able to take their children to attend schools in town." (270, p1)

".....people who do not have money they become poor automatically in every aspect. What they eat, where they live, it becomes a mixture." (272, p1), (all participants nod their heads in agreement with what she was saying).

The third category is illiteracy that does not allow parents to be involved in the education of their children. Many parents explained the effects of illiteracy in this manner:

"This community is full of illiterate people. Therefore, how can anyone expect us to have a positive influence towards our children? It is difficult."(91, p5)

This quotation indicates that without education there could be no light in the life of the community:

"My barrier is that I didn't go to school myself. So I don't think I will know what to do about, you know. It is a problem (418, p4). My child was asked to do research about insects on the computer. I did not have a computer in the house neither to operate it."(421,p4).

"My barrier is that I am a granny. I didn't go to school myself. But I try my best."(426, p5)

The fourth category was time. Parents were at loggerheads with the decision of the school to call for meetings at awkward times that do not suit them at all. Many parents argued that the matter of time was one of the worrying factors as they expressed their views in this manner:

“Yes, there are barriers. I think schools are not involving parents enough. The fact that we live and work in the farm, does not mean that we do not want to be involved. During weekdays I work up until five o’clock. And by then I have to go home. I must cook, bath the children and help where I can with their homework, so where do I get time to attend evening meetings. On top of that I do not have a transport, and even a person who can look after my children when I am away. If the school is serious about our involvement, therefore we have to sit down and agree on the best possible time which is convenient to all of us. Otherwise, it is not going to work.”(404, p2)

“..... so if the meeting is during the day, some of us won’t be there, and if the meeting is in the evening , who is going to look after the children. You know? Things are complicated here. It is not that we do not want to be involved.” (83, p2)

“My problem is time. I find that it is not easy for me to come to school during working hours.”(403, p1)

“You know, parents are always busy. Therefore they do not have time to help their children.” (541, p1)

The fifth category was a lack of knowledge on how to be involved. Although it is crucial that parents must be involved in promoting the health of their children, not knowing when and how to be involved in promoting the health of their children could be a barrier on its own. Some parents interpreted it in this way:

“I think as parents we do not know what is expected from us. And on its own it is a barrier.”(203, p5)

“I think lack of knowledge is a barrier.” (555, p4)

“.....but I do not know how.” (557, p5)

The last single category was a lack of confidence. This category might not seem to be serious at all, since the issue of confidence is a personal matter that is known only to a person. Innocent

as it may be, parents could remain apart from the school despite many invitations by the school to be involved. One parent said:

“I do not have confidence to face the school, therefore I remain passive.” (202, p4)

5.4.4 Analysis of question 4

The fourth question was about the possible solutions. Parents were asked: What are possible solutions for these problems?

From this question five categories emerged. They are:

1. Schools should initiate parental involvement
2. Schools and parents should collaborate
3. Parents must be responsible
4. Government intervention
5. Do not know

In the first category, parents were very aware that the school must have some initiative to involve parents in the promotion of the health of their children. According to parents a solution could be reached if in the first instance:

“Teachers must stop undermining parents. They must not judge our abilities based on the assumption that we are not capable to influence any decision here at school.” (100, p3)

“Teachers must show us the way how things are done here at school.” (102, p4)

In this category, parents are expecting the school to initiate how they should be involved. They stressed that the school must involve them in issues concerning their children. They also

showed that they have faith in the school to find ways to involve them. The following quotes are examples to show their interest:

“The school must try to find means and ways to involve us as parents.”(211, p4)

“The school must involve us in everything they do concerning our children.” (294, p3)

“The school must involve parents. We both need each other.” (560, p2)

The second category was the collaboration of schools and parents. Some parents were able to acknowledge that there must be collaboration between school and parents. They stated that:

“Parents together with the school must sit down together and see what we can do to stop these barriers.”(98, p2)

“Schools must work with us.” (289, p1)

“There is no other way we need to work together.” (292, p3)

“As parents we know our children better than the teachers, if we can work together, then everything is possible.” (295, p4)

“....parents and schools must do something.” (212, p5)

In the third category, parents are very aware that the ball is in their court too, they must take responsibility. Parents understand that they must do something to turn the situation around in schools:

“As parents we must stand together and fight for the rights of our children.” (95, p1).

One parent mentioned that some problems a parent realized that they will have to solve them since they were regarded as personal should be solved by the parent and not the school:

“Some problems cannot be solved by the school. They are personal. Therefore, as parents we must see to it that we solve them.” (209, p3)

In the previous category of question 3 parents indicated that one of their problems is time. They did not have time to attend to school matters due to some work constrains, and in this regard one parent said:

“As parents I think we must create time to help our children in doing the schoolwork.” (559, p1)

Another parent acknowledged that information is needed as to how parents could be involved in promoting the health of their children in schools. A concerned parent aired her views like this:

“As parents we need more information on how to be involved.” (564, p4)

In the fourth category, parents could not resist the fact that government intervention could have some effect like providing workshops on how parents could be involved or even to provide basic services needed in the education of their children. These parents put the intervention of the government in short as follows:

“I think we also need government intervention. Providing us with workshops of some kind.” (103, p5)

“The government must intervene.” (428, p1)

The last category in this question comprises parents who do not know what actually should be done to solve the barriers that have just been mentioned. This statement alone can tell that there are parents who are passively involved in schools as they could not think of any means to solve the barriers. Some parents summarized it powerfully:

“I don’t know what can be done exactly.” (205, p1)

“...because truly we are in the dark here.”(431, p2).

“I mean we know nothing about our roles.” (435, p2)

In this question, the barriers that prevent parents from being involved in promoting the health of their children in schools can be eliminated only if vigorous steps are taken.

5.4.5 Analysis of question 5

The last question more or less aimed to find out about the things that were not mentioned in the previous questions, and parents had a choice to answer the question. The question was: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in schools?

Three categories were found in this question. The categories are:

1. Government intervention
2. Relationship change
3. Empower parents

In the first category parents wanted the government to intervene by providing infrastructure that can enable their children to learn better in a favourable environment, and to train them to have skills. Their concern was genuine, since they do not want their fate to be repeated for their own children. Their responses in this question were:

“The government must provide with extra classrooms. You find two grades in one class and one other thing if our children pass grade 11 they have to go to the location to study there. It is only possible to those who have relatives in the location, if not, their education end up in grade 11. And as you know they cannot get job anywhere without grade 12 or better qualifications.”(106, p4)

“The government must assist with resources for the learners. They do not have computers.” (442, p3).

“Here as we are we do not have skills. We do not want that to happen to our children. It is very bad. The government must do something.” (110, p5)

In the second category, the relationship between the parents and schools should change for the better:

“The relationship between parents and teachers is not perfect at all. If that can change.” (568, p1)

“The school must have a close relationship with parents and the community.”
(570, p2)

In the last category, parents showed keen interest to know more about their roles with regard to the health of their children. Therefore they also state the need to be empowered:

“...we also need to learn more about our roles as parents.” (441, p4)

“Parents need to be empowered. That’s all.” (569, p3)

All these answers have their own significance to resemble how parents perceive themselves in terms of their roles and health promotion in schools. Along the process of being involved there are also obstacles that prevent parents from releasing their full potential.

5.5 Discussion

Research about parental involvement in schools and health promotion has been an ongoing discussion in the education arena, where parents are invited to take part in the education of their children (Squelch, 1997 & Thomson, 2007). This was clear when parents mentioned among others issues such as: assist children, attend meetings, be of assistance, finance, and governance. Some even displayed their lack of knowledge concerning how they should be involved, although it sounds as if it was an obvious case of parents that are able to list their roles with ease. The responses clearly indicate that parents are not initiating anything at the school. According to Lombard (2007:116) parents need to be guided in how they could become involved in the education of their children. Parents only do as they are required to do, since they have to trust and accept the decision of professionals (Lindsay, 2004:16). The statement from one of the categories which says “we have no option” also indicates that the relationship between parents and the school is not good at all, they cannot suggest anything. They wait to be told what to do, and respond as they were told.

Schools should truly go the extra mile to involve parents in as many ways as possible (Lombard, 2007: 18; Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). This implies that parents should be taken seriously in what they want to do and say (Lemmer, 2000). Education is becoming more and more “demand

led”, with parents as stakeholders (Sliwka & Istance, 2006: 29). According to Wilson (2004: 228) parents should be viewed as visionaries, and of course their voices should be heard (LSUG AG CENTRE, 2005).

Unfortunately, in some cases, parents are often viewed as a threat to the child’s well-being, or people who want to take over from the teachers rather than the child’s most important source and support system (Petr, 2003:12; Swart & Phasha, 2006:223). Too often, parents feel under attack rather than supported by the school, which is trying to be helpful (Lombard, 2007:27). Therefore, parents are often uncertain about what to do and about their own importance (Bauer & Shea, 2003:93).

This kind of desperation is very often interpreted in a negative way by the school (Lewis, 2005), whereas parents often feel uncertain and unwelcome in schools (Swart & Phasha, 2006:222). In South Africa, the legacy of Apartheid left many parents with a negative attitude towards education (Lombard, 2007:28). As a result parents leave everything for the school to decide. Although today most parents are highly qualified and know best when to exercise their rights when it comes to the education of their children, their involvement is still not felt in the school arena (Thomson, 2007). According to the constitution of South Africa (cf paragraph 3.3.1), parents have the sole right to be involved in the education of their children, and this was clear from the first categories where parents indicated that their role is to assist their children, attend meetings and to be of assistance to the teachers. The constitution declares parents’ sole right and responsibility to be involved in making informed decision about their own children’s academic program and to contribute freely and without fear on issues concerning their child’s action, behaviour, attitudes language and culture (Salas et al., 2005:52).

One other fact is that parents have problems with Outcomes Based Education. They do not know how to assist with homework or other projects (Vally & Spreen, 1998; Reay, 1998). If they try to ask for clarification from parents, they are turned down (Vos, 2002).This clearly sends a message that even teachers do not know how to help (Epstein & Dauber, 1991: 290). In this case the school seems to be reactive instead of being proactive. Parents are frustrated by the way in which the school handles their matters of concern (cf. paragraph 3.6.1.2).

In general, parents wait for the school to invite them for a meeting or so. They do not have the guts to initiate anything concerning the education of their children. They wait to be informed by the school. Normally, when they are invited by the school they know for sure that they have to defend themselves from whatever allegations, because they believe that whatever way their child is portraying at school, is the mirror of what is going on in the home. This is confirmed by Fertman (2004: 82) and Lee & Ostrosky (2004:102) when they say that some professionals adopt a “parent as cause” attitude and blame or criticize the family for the child’s problems. This attitude of professional superiority where professionals project themselves as the most knowledgeable and the ones who could dictate to families on how to best meet the needs of their child, and even come to a point wherein parents are blamed for some behaviours, have to change (Engelbrecht, 2001: 18; Swart & Phasha, 2006: 220; Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003; Oosthuizen & De Wet, 2004).

Parents also showed their concern about the way in which teachers handle them, which is very negative, possibly because they do not have skills to work with parents (cf. paragraph 3.6.1).

Parents were able to acknowledge their basic obligations (cf. paragraph, 3.4.1) in issues around finance, wherein they have to provide for their children’s school fess, buy school uniforms and pay for some other initiatives required by the school.

In all the interviews governance seems to be the main concern. Parents were also aware that they must be involved in governance as well (cf. paragraph, 3.4.5). In some schools parents are ready and willing to be involved, but the school seems not to be open for parents, especially with regard to issues of governance (Visser, 1998; Naidu & Conley, 2004; Heystek & Bush, 2003) since they are not viewed as capable enough to be in the governance of the school (Carey & Farris, 1996: 4; Mda & Mothata, 2000: 64).

In each group of focus interviews parents were shocked to know that even in education there are issues about health that must be taken seriously in order to promote the health of their children in schools.

From the interviewer's observation, the themes that emerged from the question concerning the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools was not well understood or else parents have no idea at all as to what to do, since it is a new phenomenon which can be implemented into the curriculum (Mūkoma & Flisher, 2004). The literature review (cf. paragraph, 4.3) indicates less involvement by parents to promote the health of their children.

The literature maintains various reasons like parents who are not aware of the health promotion programs in the schools (Naidu et al., 2008:133), and this makes their attitude negative due to their past experiences (Wolfe & Havemen, 2002), and their behavioural intentions as role models to their children is not acceptable at all (Andersson & Stavrou, 2007: 71). This is mainly because parents do not even communicate about health issues (Department of Health, 2000; 2002). From the themes that emerged from this question, it seems that parents only know their involvement with regard to promoting the health of their children in terms of catering for their well-being. This was confirmed when health was understood in terms of physical health where children could go to the clinic or see a medical doctor when he/she is sick and nothing else.

The promotion of the health of the children was also understood in a more traditional way, where children should be kept clean when they go to school, and where they could eat healthy food at all times. Parents indicated a plight of poverty, which is a definite factor in the relationship between the home and the school (Lombard, 2007: 24) and does not enable them to do as they wish. In this regard schools do not perceive children with such difficulties the way parents express themselves, instead children who have serious medical conditions, who are not clean, who are malnourished from home are shunned away as if their parents don't care enough to keep them healthy (Health Promotion Task Team, 2000). In reality it is evident that no child can be fully understood without looking at the family system that the child comes from (Van Heerden, 2002: 10-11). Hence, the expected information about the topic was very shallow in this regard.

It is clear that parents do not have any specific knowledge that has to do with health promotion of their children in schools. They want the school to decide on how they should be involved.

The paternal involvement in the education of their children is not clear. The division of roles within the family or even in the community has crippled the roles of fathers, even with regard to their responsibilities towards their children in schools. Fathers have been pushed towards the periphery to such an extent that they leave everything to their wives (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002:393).

The issue of barriers was approached with great emotional charge, because all the participants knew they have some grievances, but they did not know to whom they should direct them. All the answers showed that there are really barriers that prevent the participants from being involved in the health promotion of their children in schools. Indeed parents are willing to be involved. This is clear when their answers correlate with the answers given in the first question. The first barriers that were mentioned by the first participants in each group encompass the general problems that parents have in relation to their involvement.

The school was viewed as the main barrier for parents in terms of their involvement. The teachers as well as the principal were seen as the main stumbling blocks for parental involvement (Mzulwini, 2001). If the principal does not encourage parental involvement in any way, things will remain the same (Ramisur, 2007). The principal as the manager of the school is responsible to invite parents and join hands to improve the health of children in schools. The other barrier within the school was the place of meeting, which parents felt was not conducive for better involvement (Gestwicki, 2007: 216).

According to Department of Education (2002:17) and Van Heerden (2002:8) there is a new acknowledgement of the rights of all stakeholders in the education of a child. So, the fact that the school just decides on its own to some parents means the school is not aware that they

have to partner with the parents. Schools perhaps doubt parents' ability, or they have no idea how to involve parents since they do not have skills to do so (Maree, 2000; Epstein, Saunders & Clark, 1999; Fullan, 2003). The rights of parents with regard to their child's education is juridically prescribed, and legislation now mandates that families, including parents, should be consulted by schools in the decision making processes or when recommendations are made that may have an impact on the education and future of the child (Spinelli, 2002: 22). Parents remain the primary caregivers of their child (Morton-Young, 1995:77; Nojaja, 2002:21) and no school can unilaterally decide what is best for a child any longer (Loock et al ., 2005:106).

Unemployment and poverty affect parental involvement, which is a sad thing for parents and their children (Asmal & James, 2002). Swart & Phasha (2006:221) state that the socio-economic status of families and the level of education in South Africa are closely linked. It is therefore important to note that parents have a greater impact on school based activities.

Unemployment, poverty and better standard of living are inseparable, they depend on each other. Parental involvement in the promotion of health of children in schools should therefore focus on empowering parents as well. Empowered parents play a key role in the social, emotional and educational development of their child (Fertman, 2004:81). Not only that, they are enabled families, who manage to exert greater control over their lives (Thompson, Lobb & Elling, 1997:100-101) Therefore, effective involvement should entail more than just getting parents to schools, they have to be empowered even to a point where they can uplift themselves from poverty and unemployment (Salas et al., 2005:52).

Other factors that contribute to the poor involvement of parents mentioned include illiteracy, which is increasing day by day. Lombard (2007:25) and Shindler & Bot (1999) maintain that poor literacy levels of many South African families hamper parental empowerment programs in schools. Therefore, families in general often depend on trained educational skills of the teachers

and other professionals to ensure that their children reach their optimal potential socially, emotionally, physically and academically (Nojaja, 2002:27, DoE, 2002).

Today the use of computers and other technologies is the most common way in which schools communicate with parents. However, many parents do not have access and knowledge about the recent technology used in schools due to their socio-economic status. The link between the family and the school is further complicated by poor communication due to a lack of telephones, especially in rural areas (Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001:194; Prinsloo, 2006b:27-32, 460; Swart & Phasha, 2006:221). Soon the inability to operate a computer will be regarded as illiteracy. The challenges brought by Outcomes Based Education require training on the side of parents together with schools to curb the gap between the previous system of education and the current system.

Barriers such as time, lack of knowledge and no confidence are common everywhere (Gestwicki, 2010). These barriers have been mentioned over and over again. With regard to time, the school should reach consensus with the parents on the best possible time to meet. The lack of knowledge and confidence can be addressed in that as it becomes possible for parents to be more involved in their children's education, and they will gain more confidence, more knowledge and start feeling more positive about their role as parents (Batey, 1996: 21; Epstein, 2002; 13), to such an extent that they could be more equipped to ask question and to challenge the status quo (Steyn, 2002: 20).

According to the responses of the participants on the possible solutions, it was clear that they were eager to be involved, and consequently they were calling for government and the school to initiate different ways parents can be involved in schools. They also raise the issue of collaboration, which is a very serious issue if parents are to be involved in health promotion.

Infrastructure was mentioned as something very serious that the government should provide. This poses a serious challenge to schools, since many of them are under-resourced (DoH, 2006). Approximately 25% of primary and combined schools have no access to drinking water (DoE, Education for All, 2000). Sanitation has also been one of serious challenges as 45% of schools in South Africa continue to use pit toilets and buckets (DoE, 2001), although the Schools Act states that toilets must be provided (SASA, 1996).

Collaboration between parents and schools was also stressed. The success of the family-school relationship depends on the collaboration between the parents and the school. According to Engelbrecht (2001:23) and (DoE, 2000b) parents and schools should work together and share their experiences and expertise to generate new solutions to mutually defined problems (Nxesi, 2004). Collaboration takes considerable time and energy from both parents and schools (Swart & Phasha, 2006: 219).

These responses will remain as barriers between the school and parents. Their impact will cripple the relationship between parents and schools. The argument of parental involvement in schools and health promotion will remain a mystery if the barriers above are not attended to thoroughly.

5.6 Limitations

In this study there were several limitations that will have to be taken into account before reaching conclusions:

- Only four public primary schools and one private school where only black children attend were chosen to participate in the study. The findings in this study are therefore not representative of the whole population of the schools in the D-Cluster, since some schools are ex-model-C. Therefore the results are only generalisable to the extent that involvement is involvement irrespective of the type of school children are attending. Problems are more or less the same. Another limitation includes the number of parents who participated in the interviews.

- The number of parents does not represent the population of the school itself.
- In the focus group interviews, the data presented was not that rich compared to the findings in the literature review about parent's roles and their barriers. The literature is information rich, whereas the interviews are almost empty, despite the fact that open-ended questions were asked.
- The responses were short and more or less the same. This is probably because parents were not at ease when the interviews started. They started to really participate almost towards the end of the interview session.
- Other limitations include the fact that most parents are of a low socio-economic class. Therefore, they do not have much information on what is going on in the education of the country in general.

5.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to conduct an empirical investigation into the role of parents in schools and what their possible contribution could be to Health Promoting School.

Five questions that were asked in the qualitative data collection were then analysed and various categories emerged from the interviews.

- Parents only saw their roles as attending the meetings and helping with homework. Their involvement is very traditional in a sense that they only wait for the school to invite them.
- They have no idea when it comes to their roles and Health Promoting Schools. Health is interpreted in terms of diseases or the absence of diseases. The relationship between health and school is not understood.
- The possible barriers that carried weight were the ones mentioned in the analysis of question 3 (cf 5.4.3). Poverty and unemployment affect parents' ability to be involved in

schools. In addition, if the school does not share important information with parents, their involvement will always be shaky with no ground.

- The other components in the health of children are not known. The combination of physical, mental, social, environmental, economic and spiritual health is not considered as such.

The following chapter will round off the report by presenting the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the research.

Chapter 6

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Finally, this chapter will conclude the study by summarising the findings and conclusions, and by offering specific recommendations for Health Promoting Schools, followed by recommendations to various stakeholders and for further studies. Throughout the process of reporting the findings, this chapter also aims to unfold the research questions posed in the beginning.

6.2. Findings

6.2.1 Findings resulting from parental involvement in the school (Chapter 3)

- The primary responsibility of parents has been to educate their children. Children were influenced by their parents, own experiences, their environment and their culture. Families worked together to protect the children from starvation, exposure to the elements, and disease as well (cf. paragraph 3.2.1).
- The development of civilization led to changes in the structure of education where formal education was added outside the home. Parents were expected to rear children in a way that grooms them to be the future bearers and hope for the future. This was seconded by three theories (cf. paragraph 3.2.2).
- From the early 90's there was a shift from a deficit model in which the professionals viewed parents as unwilling and not capable to be involved in the education of their children. This perspective does not view parental involvement as one of the four keys for

the success of the school. It is just unfortunate that parent's voices are not heard (cf. paragraph 3.2.3).

- In the Constitution of South Africa, the educational reform requires strong parental involvement. The same applies to countries like Canada, France and Germany. In South Africa the democratic government gives parents the right and responsibility to be fully engaged in the education of their children. However, the lack of knowledge hampers the chance for parents to be fully involved and to put parental involvement into practice (cf. paragraph 3.2.4).
- The investigations into parental involvement in South Africa showed that there is a great need for a broader conceptualization of parental involvement, which includes their participation in the school governance. Strategies to involve parents are very uncommon or they have been virtually non-existent due to political turbulence to the extent that parents had little say in school management and functioning. Fortunately enough in the Schools Act there is a striking provision for the inclusion of parents in mandatory School Governing Bodies. Quite a number of schools are not inviting parents because it is assumed that parents are fully occupied and lack skills as well (cf. paragraph 3.2.5).
- The Constitution of South Africa assigns a role to parents to fulfil children's socio-economic rights. These rights are amongst others a right to health care, food, water and social security, and a right to education. This is encouraged because the rights of children are of paramount importance (cf. paragraph 3.3.1).
- In South African communities parent development is at its worst as measured by levels of literacy, social and general well-being. In itself parental involvement can help children to succeed at school, while parents who have low esteem or have a low status job can always feel inferior towards the teachers or can even influence their children negatively (cf. paragraph 3.3.4).
- Parents from ex-homelands, poor labourers in white farming areas and those living in townships were excluded from power and decision making in schools and at many other levels. These parents are still among the poorest and most isolated workers in the country, and they remain the weakest foundation on which to build robust political participation (cf. paragraph 3.3.6).

- It was found that many children in South Africa are facing major challenges related to health and parental involvement in the holistic well-being of children is limited. It is highly restricted to wealthier social groups. The most difficult element in addressing these problems is that in schools parental involvement is viewed as a dustbin term, meaning everything to everyone. That is the reason why teachers expect parents to do something for them, instead of partnering with parents in finding solutions to the problems of children (cf. paragraph 3.4).
- Schools can no longer work in isolation. Collaboration with the community should be the priority so that they share the responsibility of school going children and build on their future success. If possible they should be allowed to visit classes from time to time (cf. paragraph 3.4.6).
- Parents of the disadvantaged and children from minority groups can make a positive contribution to their children's success, provided they receive adequate training on how they should be involved (cf. paragraph 3.4.7).
- Poverty and unemployment are closely linked and are present in every action, comment and activity of people living in poor economic backgrounds. Poverty and unemployment can go from generation to generation if members of the family are not educated. Children from these kinds of families even drop out of school because of the conditions they encounter in their day to day lives (cf. paragraph 3.4.8).
- Parents are only involved in the education of children when they are still young. As children grow older, or in high school, parental involvement declines drastically. This is possibly because parents think they are unable to help their children (cf. paragraph 3.4.9).
- Parents are seen as problems by the school depending on the way in which they want to be involved. Signs such as 'no parents beyond this point', 'please will parents not come into corridors' or 'parents are welcome if they make appointments' divide parents and schools. Parents are seen as problems if they rarely communicate with teachers (independent), show no interest in their children's learning (bad) or they are too eager (cf. paragraph 3.5.1).
- Parents are identified as customers who can shop around for the best schools of their choice. It is important nevertheless to note that in this aspect parents view teachers and

schools as experts in a sense that they perform their profession to the best of their ability, although in South Africa with the new system of education of Outcomes Based Education it is difficult for teachers to be experts. Parents are perceived as experts as well, since they can choose the best schools in which they can have a positive influence towards the development of school (cf. paragraph 3.5.2).

- Partnership is the most frequently used expression when it comes to the relationship between parents and schools. Schools often do not respect their partnership with parents, and that makes it difficult to work together (cf. paragraph 3.5.3).
- Parents are citizens of a particular community where they support every development to improve the schools. They support either by giving their time or by giving other resources. Their support continues even when their children are not attending a particular school (cf. paragraph 3.5.4).
- There are school centered barriers. These start with the teacher's ability and perception to work with parents. In some instances teachers do not understand how to work with parents, and as such they prefer a one-way flow of communication. This shows a lack of effective partnership. Principals can also be a stumbling block in the way in which they show their attitude towards parents. The same applies with the place of meeting, if it is not conducive it makes parents uncomfortable (cf. paragraph 3.6.1).
- There are parent centered barriers. These barriers range from a lack of time, parents feeling they have nothing to contribute, don't know how to be involved, lack of childcare, feeling intimidated, not being available during the time scheduled and above all, the unique cultural conditions that mainly stresses maternal parents as the ones who are supposed to be involved (cf. paragraph 3.6.2).
- It is a critical task for parents to be involved in the education of their children. When they show their willingness to be involved in the governance, they need to be recognized for their strength by the school. Parents prefer two-way communication and want to reconceptualize their traditional roles (cf. paragraph 3.7).
- When parents are involved there are benefits for parents, benefits for the school, benefits for the children and benefits for educators as well. Parents gain better understanding of educational matters, which also improves their confidence (cf. paragraph 3.8).

6.2.2 Findings on parents and health promotion in schools (Chapter 4)

- The South African government has taken a stand to promote the health and well-being of young people. The Department of Health is very aware of the health problems affecting young people. Consequently, parents should have total ownership in helping to resolve these problems. There is an urgent need for parents in the marginalized communities to be involved in a range of health problems that overwhelm both schools and communities (cf. paragraph 4.1).
- The concepts and practice of health, health promotion and Health Promoting Schools is becoming the vehicle for improving the health of children in schools, but less is said about the tangible role of parents and health promotion. Health promotion aims at improving the total being of children in schools, and not only at the absence of diseases (cf. paragraph 4.2).
- The definition of health is not clear since it does not mean the same thing at different times and in different cultures. The definition of WHO is not holistic in addressing the problems of children and its use in various contexts lacks consensus about its meaning. Health is also not only a business of health practitioners, it also includes parents, teachers, ministers, psychologist, doctors, and social workers as well (cf. paragraph 4.2.1).
- Health promotion is a process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. In education it means promoting learning and development by attending to factors that hinder effective teaching and learning in the school environment. This is achieved by empowering teachers, parents, businesses etc., beyond the school environment (cf. paragraph 4.2.2).
- Health Promoting Schools aim at achieving healthy lifestyles for the total school population by developing supportive environments conducive to the promotion of health. The learning theories emphasise that knowledge, attitudes and skills are not independent of the mental, physical and social context but they are rather part of the environment where they are learned and used (cf. paragraph 4.2.3).
- The International Conference on Primary Health Care brought about an awakening with regard to matters concerning Health Promoting Schools and health. The Health

Promoting School is defined according to three key components, including curriculum, teaching and learning, school ethos and environment as well as community links and partnership. The description also contains the six key features of Health Promoting Schools, which aim to promote health among learners, staff, families and community members (cf. paragraph 4.2.3.1).

- Schools are the most crucial place to promote the health of children, even though the health and well-being of children has been separated from other aspects of life. If the Health Promoting School is taken into consideration, it has a positive impact on children, schools, parents and community members, community groups and organisations, businesses, the nation and the world (cf. paragraph 4.2.3.2).
- The fact that health and education are inextricably intertwined resulted in considerable interest in school health programs that engage the total school system, instruction, services, community and environment. This is best described by the eight well developed and mutually reinforcing components that, when combined, offer a framework for coordinated school health program. The most important thing about these components is that they contribute in unique ways and yet they overlap with one another (cf. paragraph 4.2.3.3).
- The advantages of Health Promoting Schools are that this kind of approach forms the basis for schools to start venturing into health promotion within a particular school, depending on the needs. It also links the regional and local health services with the school to address specific health concerns that affect school children within the particular school (cf. paragraph 4.2.3.4).
- Since the advent of the democratic government there are visible changes in education. However, the intention to introduce school health services and health education by practitioners experience many hurdles, reflecting inequalities of years of discriminatory practices. These include the provision of services along racial lines to provide unequal resources to schools, disproportionate personnel to learner ratios, financial constraints and inadequate training of staff. In historically disadvantaged communities the legacy of Apartheid lingers to show its face even today. The lives of black learners have not yet improved. Although they have gained access to schools previously closed to them, they are still prepared for working class existence and even unemployment. Drugs, truancy,

alcohol abuse, bullying and theft, and a lack of discipline preoccupied teachers are among the problems (cf. paragraph 4.2.3.5).

- Parental involvement and health promotion in South Africa is not well established. There is confusion between education and health, thus, parents are not aware as to how they can be involved in the health of their children. This is clear when through their attitude and behaviour they do not seem to promote the health of their children even in their homes. In most instances parents do not engage in discussions to try and address health problems. If something is done in this regard, it is attended to in a more fragmented manner. The current intention by the government to establish school health is overcome by lack of resources, including professionals who can handle the programs in districts. The new trend of health promotion in schools have not yet been established in South African communities (cf. paragraph 4.3).
- From the literature review it was clear that parental involvement in health promotion does not happen in isolation, it takes place within a definite context. Parents all over the world are eager to take part in improving the health of their children; this is not always possible in many developing countries since there are not resources available to let them take part. The philosophy of health promotion emphasises the support of teachers by parents, community and family at large to promote the health of children. In most instances parents are caught up in poverty, either directly or indirectly (cf. paragraph 4.4).
- There are barriers in implementing health promotion in schools. These barriers range from lack of money, training and facilities to implement health promotion in schools, time to participate in various activities, the conflict of methods used in the education of children then and now, coordinated school program which seem difficult to implement and sustain due to the old patterns of thinking and acting which are hard to break, difficulty of understanding the relation between health and education, and finally parents who think they have nothing to gain (cf. paragraph 4.5).
- Parents have a central role to play in promoting the health of their children. They can support the Health Promoting Schools by offering their time, experience and resources; they can share facilities with the school; have consistent communication with the school; support the children's involvement in various activities; provide with the needed health services and to provide valuable insights (cf. paragraph 4.6).

- Initiatives for parental involvement in school health promotion are also strewn with challenges, but there is no doubt they can be overcome. Not only parents, but also the teachers have to face these challenges. Challenges for parents vary from the school diversity; different views on the application of health promotion; family health choices; discomfort or distrust; access to school; grade level differences and language barriers. Challenges for teachers include minimal commitment to parent participation; doubt about their abilities to work with at-risk parents; concern about sensitive health issues; concern that teaching authority will be undermined; lack of time and funding for school-parent communications; inadequate teacher access to communications technologies (e-mail, voice-mail); some parents being motivated by a single concern only, and therefore they do not become representative, as well as teacher expertise that is not recognized (cf. paragraph 4.7).
- In South Africa, parental involvement and health promotion in schools is an ongoing debate in the sense that children's health is attended to in a disjointed manner by schools and organisations, without a full contribution from parents. It has been noted in chapter 3 and chapter 4 that parental involvement in schools and health promotion yield positive results altogether. Parents who are neither informed nor empowered to increase control and improve the health of their children, further increase the risk of health in the children (cf. paragraph 4.8).

6.2.3 Findings on the empirical investigation: Parental roles in the creation of Health Promoting Schools (Chapter 5)

- Many parents regard their roles as assisting children, attending meetings, being of assistance to the teachers, contributing financially, getting involved in governance. However, some parents don't know what to do to show their involvement in the education of their children (cf. paragraph 5.3.3.1).
- The role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools was viewed by parents basically in physical terms like taking the child to the clinic if he/she is sick, making sure the child is clean and giving him/her healthy food. Some parents have no idea as they do not understand the concept of health promotion in relation to education.

Some parents felt that it should be the responsibility of the school to let them know how they should be involved. The division of roles in families is also visible in this regard when a father indicated that he does not know much about what he can do (cf. paragraph 5.3.3.2).

- In this study, parents view the school as the main barrier to their involvement. However, physical circumstances such as poverty/unemployment, illiteracy, lack of time, lack of knowledge and having no confidence, played a role in parents not being able to be involved (cf. paragraph 5.3.3.3).
- Parents were very aware of the fact that schools must play a greater part in this regard. Schools should join hands with parents to promote the health of their children. The government was also expected to intervene to redress the injustices of the past. On the other hand parents admit that they should be responsible too. As usual there are parents who do not know anything when it comes to offering a solution for the predicament they experience (cf. paragraph 5.3.3.4).
- It was highly recommended that the government should intervene by providing infrastructure to run schools smoothly. Parents expect to be empowered regarding issues around the health and education of their children, which could be possible if parents and schools work together (cf. paragraph 5.3.3.5).

6.3 Conclusions

6.3.1 Conclusions on parental involvement in the school

- Parents must continue to be the primary educators of their children and to protect their children from harm and diseases.
- Even today parents are still expected to groom their children to be better citizens of their country. This should be done only when parents know what is suitable for the children.
- Parental involvement cannot be determined by professionals, since professionals' perspective in relation to parental involvement is seen in a pessimistic way. Parents are the cornerstone for the success of the school, and therefore their voices must be heard.

- The schools should allow parents to exercise their rights and their responsibilities. This can be done by putting into practice parental education or workshops to help parents understand their roles in schools.
- Parents are part and parcel of the school community. Whatever goes on in the school, including governance, parents should be part of the decision making. Schools can agree with parents on how they can be involved in the governance of the school.
- The role that the constitution of South Africa assigns parents should also be the responsibility of the government, so that the government can empower parents with knowledge to make it possible for parents to fulfil these roles.
- The possibility for parents to play their roles in schools is marginal if the level of literacy remains very low. However, the government can also assist to purge illiteracy by introducing more, simpler means to educate parents on how to help their children in schools. This can also help to build self-confidence for parents when they have to meet with the school.
- The call for parents by the constitution of the country to be involved in the education of their children does not exclude parents in ex-homelands, farms and locations that seem to be in the disadvantaged communities. Their situation can be used to form the basis for a strong link and to build the education of their children in cooperation with schools.
- Parental involvement in the holistic well-being of children must not have boundaries. Parents of all background must have access to help their children to reach their potential. As a result, schools should find means and ways to partner with parents in fighting many health problems facing school children.
- Schools should work together with the community to help connect with parents, businesses and other organisations for the success of children. This should be clear when parents receive a chance to visit the school, in particular visiting classes, something that is impossible in South Africa at the moment.
- Over and over again, schools tend to disregard children from low socio-economic status for the reason that they are attached to their parent's state of affairs. Parents of disadvantaged and minority children should receive training on how they should be involved irrespective of their situation.

- Poverty and unemployment are the main stumbling blocks for parents to be involved in the education of their children. Thus, the government should endeavor to uplift parents by giving them decent jobs and training them for particular skills to change their status, so as to give a hand in serving their children in schools.
- Parents are very eager to be involved in the education of their children, particularly when they are still young in the primary school. When children grow older, parents feel they are unable to help, which should not be that the case. Their involvement should be uninterrupted. Parental involvement should continue provided that the children are still learning.
- Parents are there to be involved in the education of their children. So, signs that exclude them should be eliminated so as to have an open door policy to make it possible for parents to access the school. Parents should not be labelled in anyway, they should be encouraged to participate properly.
- Schools and parents should both be perceived as experts in performing their roles to motivate children to reach their potential.
- As a matter of fact, the relationship between parents and schools is hindered by a lack of respect from the side of the school. To make it possible for this relationship to grow between parents and schools, there should be admiration and encouragement.
- Parents should support every initiative by the school, irrespective of whether their children are still attending the school or not.
- Teachers lack experience in working with parents, and this holds back parental involvement in schools. As a result, teachers should receive training with regard to working with parents on a daily basis.
- Strategies should be put in place by the school to help reduce barriers which are encountered by parents when they have to be involved in the education of their children.
- The schools should pay more attention to parental involvement to help children succeed in their education.
- It is with no doubt that parental involvement should be encouraged in view of the fact that it yields positive results in the life of the school, children, and parents as well.

6.3.2 Conclusions on parents and health promotion in schools

- The stand taken by the government and the Department of Health to promote the health of the people of South Africa and the children should be sustained. Parents from the marginalized communities should receive instruction on how to promote the health of their children in schools.
- Tangible roles to involve parents in promoting the health of their children should be clear and strategic to make it possible for parents to be involved.
- The definition of health is still confusing, and it does not encompass the holistic being of children in school. The definition of health should be clear in order to be understood by parents and teachers.
- To accomplish health promotion in schools, teachers, parents, social workers and other people who support children in improving their health, should be empowered to promote learning and development by attending to elements that hinder effective teaching and learning.
- In the course of Health Promoting Schools, the total school population's healthy lifestyle can be achieved, as positive knowledge, positive attitudes and positive skills could form part of the environment where they are learned and used.
- With the introduction of Health Promoting Schools, the key components and six features aim at improving the health of learners, staff, families and communities.
- Schools should promote the health and well-being of children by focusing on other aspects of life as well, as the Health Promoting Schools have a positive impact on children, schools, parents and communities too.
- There is a close association between health and education that aims to engage the total school community. The most interesting thing is that they do not overlap with one another, yet they contribute in unique ways.
- Different schools have different needs. When schools want to venture into health promotion, they should focus mainly on their unique needs. This could also be possible if there is a local, provincial and national program in place.
- It is clear that there are visible changes in education, but the inequalities of years of discriminatory practices brought shame to black learners of South Africa. There should

be a clear focus on the effort of attending to the needs of black learners and their parents, who have been disadvantaged by the system of education, and which still continues to disadvantage them even today.

- Parents should be made aware of health promotion in the education of their children. This should be clear in their attitude and behaviour. The government should make a point of training more coordinators regarding Health Promoting Schools.
- Parental involvement takes place within a context. It is true that parents are willing to be involved although the socio-economic conditions in the country do not allow them. Poverty is the main enemy for parents in terms of their involvement in promoting the health of their children. The government should therefore take part in solving this problem.
- Barriers to parental involvement in the promotion of the health of their children in schools can be reduced only if particular strategies can be implemented. Parental education can also help to eliminate misunderstandings with regard to health promotion in schools.
- When parental involvement is successful, parents can contribute meaningfully to the promotion of the health of children in schools.
- The debate of parental involvement and health promotion in schools is an ongoing trend, and it should reach a point where parents are empowered to increase control and improve the health of their children in schools.

6.3.3 Conclusion on empirical investigation: Parental roles towards the creation of Health Promoting Schools

- Parents are not taking any initiative with regard to being involved in schools. They only wait to be invited by the school, which also makes them unenthusiastic. They are not showing any interest in the education of their children. It is high time parents should take initiative in showing interest in the education of their children.
- Parents do not understand the concept of health promotion in schools at all. The idea of health in the field of education doesn't make sense to many parents as they do not see any correlation between these two. It should be the task of the Department of Education to teach parents to understand their roles and to promote the health of their children.

- The school is seen as an obstacle to proper parental involvement and health promotion in schools. On the other hand parents' statuses also affect their roles to such an extent that they feel inferior. Schools should understand and know the parents it is serving.
- Parents, schools and the government are expected to join hands in establishing Health Promoting Schools.
- Intervention by the government is highly recommended in providing infrastructure within schools and to assist with workshops for parents to understand Health Promoting Schools better.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 General recommendations

- For adequate parental involvement and health promotion in schools there must be a particular program to equip parents with knowledge and skills to be able to be involved in various activities concerning the education and health of their children.
- Various stakeholders such as parents, learners, teachers, communities, businesses, social workers, nurses, and psychologists should be made aware of the program of parental involvement and health promotion in schools.
- The definition and explanation of how parental involvement and health promotion in schools should take place, should receive better attention from the Department of Education and the Department of Health as well.
- Schools must get in-service training on how to deal with parental involvement in health promotion with regard to various issues concerning the health of children in schools.
- In order for parents and schools to work together, the relationship between parents and schools must change to be a positive one.
- Barriers to parental involvement and health promotion in schools should be investigated further in order to be eliminated.
- The government must have a strategic plan to assist with the implementation of parental involvement and health promotion in schools countrywide. Not only schools that are in urban areas should benefit in this program, schools in rural disadvantaged areas as well as schools on farms should benefit.

- The school principals, as the main managers of schools, must take initiative to involve parents in promoting the health of their children in schools and should not intimidate parents.
- Teachers' responsibility does not end with the learners in the class; it must involve parents as well.

6.4.2 Specific recommendations on Health Promoting Schools

- The role of parents and health promotion in schools should form the main focus of the health promotion initiative.
- Schools should equip the community at large on issues pertaining to parental involvement and health promotion in schools.
- The issue of poverty and unemployment is urgent, it needs serious attention by the government as it prohibits parents from being involved in the promotion of the health of their children.

6.5 Conclusion

The findings and conclusions provide a basis for understanding parents' perspective regarding their roles in schools in general and Health Promoting Schools specifically. Parents are not involved enough in performing their roles due to lack of knowledge on how they should be involved and on promoting the health of their children in schools. The school policies that do not allow parents to raise their voices are also part of the problem. Therefore, it is important for schools and the Department of Education to find strategies that allow parents to fulfill their roles in promoting the health of their children in schools.

Parents are childrens' primary educators. If they are fully involved in promoting the health of their children in schools, many health problems in the lives of many children of South Africa can be prevented.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Attention: Dr Mvula

Department of Education
Temane Building
Potchefstroom

Dear Sir

Re: Research process within the Potchefstroom District

At present I am a student at the North West University currently studying for my M.Ed. degree in learner support. I would like to request to do research in the Potchefstroom District under the topic: **The role of parents towards the creation of health promoting schools.**

Seeing that parental involvement is essential in the lives of children, parents and the school, I am of an opinion that the research to be done could benefit other stakeholders and the Department of Education as well.

Bearing in mind that the topic is relevant and has a positive influence in all stakeholders, therefore I would like to request permission to do research within the Potchefstroom District.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

T.I Mashau



APPENDIX B

APPROVAL FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



education
 Lefapha la Thuto
 Onderwys Departement
 Department of Education
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Teemane Building
 8 O R Tambo Street
 Private Bag X1256
 POTCHEFSTROOM 2520
 Tel.: (018) 299-8216
 Fax: (018) 294-8234
 Enquiries: MR H MOTARA
 e-mail: hmotara@nwpg.gov.za

DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

**CES: PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICE
 OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

15 October 2008

Ms T I Mashau
 Student Number: 11730358
 North West University
 Potchefstroom Campus

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE HEALTH PROMOTION OF THEIR CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE POTCHEFSTROOM AREA – DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Potchefstroom Area – Dr Kenneth Kaunda District under the following provisions:

- the activities you undertake at school should not tamper with the normal process of learning and teaching;
- you inform the principals of your identified schools of your impending visit and activity;
- you provide my office with a report in respect of your findings from the research; and
- you obtain prior permission from this office before availing your findings for public or media consumption.

Wishing you well in your endeavour.

Thanking you

DR S H MVIJLA
DISTRICT EXECUTIVE MANAGER
DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

cc Ms S Yssel – APO Manager, Potchefstroom

0182948234

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

18/10/2008 08:20 FAX 0182948234

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS

THE PRINCIPAL

Re: Research with parents in your school

I am a registered Masters degree (M.Ed.) student at the North West University. I am presently busy completing my thesis.

I would like to approach your school for research on the topic of my thesis: "The role of parents in the health promoting schools in the North West province in the Tlokwe D-cluster.

The research will be conducted in terms of interviews with the parents. Only five parents will be interviewed, none of them will be exposed to individual interview. I included a copy of the letter of consent from the Department of Education as well.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above cell phone number.

Thank you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

T.I. Mashau (T.I. Mashau)

APPENDIX D

APPROVAL FROM PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, _____ the principal of the above mentioned school, certify that Mrs Mashau T.I visited our school on the 3rd December 2008 with the purpose to meet with the parents in connection with her research studies on the topic: The role of parents in health promoting schools.

The research was conducted in terms of interviews.

Thank you in anticipation

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, _____ the principal of the above mentioned school, certify that Mrs Mashau T.I visited our school on the 3rd December 2008 with the purpose to meet with the parents in connection with her research studies on the topic: The role of parents in health promoting schools.

The research was conducted in terms of interviews.

Thank you in anticipation

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby confirm that the management of the above mentioned school allowed Mrs. Mashau TI from North West University to conduct a research in 2008

The topic was as follows:

The parental roles towards the creation of health promoting schools in the D cluster Of the Southern region in the North West Province. She had a questionnaire, like Instrument that had to be answered by parents as community around the school

Thanks,

TO : Mashau T I

DATE : 07 December 2010

Sir / Madam

RESEARCH CONDUCTED AT DAN TLOOME PRIMARY SCHOOL

This serves to confirm that your application to do research at the above mentioned school was approved.

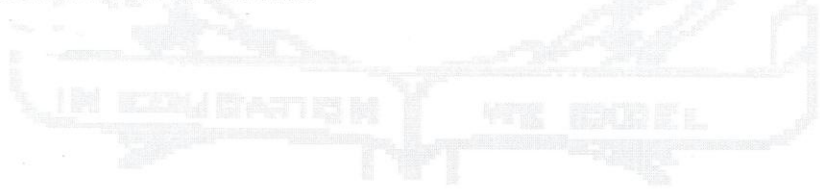
The topic on which research was conducted is "Parental roles towards the creation of health promoting schools in the cluster D of the Southern region in the North West Province". The research was conducted on the 8th December 2008 through interviews with selected parents.

I hope you find this in order.

Yours in Education

Duly Signed

.....



To whom it may concern

Topic : The role of parents towards the creation of health promoting schools in the Tlokwe D. Cluster
the North West Province.

This is to certify that Mashau T.I. conducted a research at the above mentioned School. With five
parents and it was successful. Hoping this will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours

Faithfully

To whom it may concern

Topic: The role of parents towards the creation of health promoting schools in the Tlokwe D. Cluster of the North West province.

This is certify that Mashau T.I. conducted a research at the above mentioned School. With five parents and it was successful. Hoping this will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours

Faithfully

APPENDIX E

EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES FROM QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

INTERVIEW 1

School 1

Group: Parents

Date: 5 December 2008

Time: 9 o'clock

Duration: 1 hour

Nr of participants: 5

Venue: classroom

P1= participant 1, participant 2, etc.

IQ= Interviewer question

IR= Interviewer response

GR= Group response

Group introductions

P1. My name is Lerato. I live here at Matlwang. I passed grade eleven here at this school. My child is also here at this school.

P2. Greetings in Tswana. I am a parent here at this school. I am here today because we have a parent meeting.

Hi. My name is Motlalepula. My child is a learner at this school. He is in grade eleven this year. I am happy about it.

IQ. Why are you happy?

P2. I am happy because it is his last year at this school. Then next year he is supposed to be in grade 12.

IR. That is good.

P3. I am Mamokete. I live here at Matlwang.

P4. I am also a parent here at this school.

P5. I am Johannes. I live here at Matlwang. My child is here at this school. I see I am the only man here.

IQ. Why do you say you are the only man here?

You can see that on your own mam.

IQ. I see.

IQ 1. What is the role of parents in schools?

P1. The role of parents is to do what we are asked to do by teachers.

IQ. Can you elaborate on some of the things you are asked to do by the school?

P1. I mean, if we are asked to come and clean the school yard.

P2. I know that my role is to attend to school matters concerning my child, but it bothers me a lot when I try to find out about my child's achievement or to get clarity about the assignments, I am turned down by her teacher. So I think it is better to do hands off because teachers think that it is their business alone.

IQ. So how do you respond to that?

P2. Normally, I leave it as it is. Because I have no power?

P3. I agree with what she is saying. I understand that as a parent I have to be involved in the education of my child, but what worries me a lot, is that our teachers are really ignorant when it comes to any contact with a parent. Sometimes if you ask their mobile phone number or contact them if maybe there is misunderstanding about the task given to the child, they say they cannot just give their numbers to everyone 'cause it is not safe to do so. The school is very much reactive instead of being proactive. If you try to display certain knowledge about certain issues in education then you know for sure they are not going to like you. Then how can I be involved in such kind of a school?

IQ. What do you mean by that?

P3. I mean that teachers are so insecure, they don't trust themselves.

IR. So that is the case?

P3. Of course yes.

P4. I only do what I think is right.

IQ. What do you mean by what is right?

P4. I mean what we are asked to do by the teachers.

P5. You I don't know exactly what to do. I only came here today because my wife is working today. So I am unemployed. I had to come.

IQ. If she was not working, were you not going to come?

P5. Yes. This is a woman thing. They know how to look after children better than men.

IQ2. What is the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools?

P1. I do not know exactly what to do.

P2. Maybe I can say that my role is to make sure that my child is healthy all the time.

IQ. How do you do that?

P2. When she comes to school I make sure she is clean every day.

P3. This is the hardest question. I have no idea.

P4. Taking the child to the clinic when he is sick I think that has to do with health.

P5. I agree with what she said.

IQ3. What possible barriers do exist that keep parents from executing their roles?

P1. I am happy that above all, you are able to ask about barriers. Yes there are many barriers if I may say. My main problem is that the school just decides on our behalf as parents. They took decision on issues concerning us and our children without our concern, and yet they want us to be fully involved for what?

IQ. So, how do you think decisions should be reached?

P1. I think parents must be part of the decision making irrespective of their status.

The way the teachers communicate with us I think it is not fair at all. They just send the children with information which is not clear or else they ask learners to copy important information on the board.

(Interruption). P3. You are right there. These teachers they do not communicate well with us. Just think about that time when we were supposed to come for that meeting with the people from the department of health, very few of us were able to attend. But the rest couldn't because the message was not clear at all.

P3. It was not clear at all because not all children were able to remember what was said. Maybe if they could have made copies to send home or do something to ensure that the information reaches us at the right time and in a correct way.

P2. Here at Matlwang as you can see, we do not have any factory or a place where the majority of this village can be hired, therefore the majority of people who are working, are working in Potchefstroom or Klerksdorp. So, if the meeting is during the day, some of us won't be there, and if the meeting is in the

evening, who is going to look after the children? You know? Things are complicated here. It is not that we do not want to be involved.

P4. Here as you can see we are in a village which does not have any basic service provided by the government. Therefore, we have to depend on this school for everything. If the school is not helping us who else will?

P5. This community is full of illiterate people. Therefore how can anyone expect us to have a positive influence towards our children? It is difficult.

IR. Yes, yes.

IQ4. What are the possible solutions for these problems?

P1. As parents we must stand together and fight for the rights of our children.

IQ. Do you think that is going to help?

P1. Definitely.

P2. Parents together with the school must sit down together and see what we can do to stop these barriers.

P3. Teachers must stop undermining parents. They must not judge our abilities based on the assumption that we are not capable to influence any decision here at school.

P4. Teachers must show us the way how things are done here at school.

P5. I think we also need government intervention. Providing us with workshops of some kind.

1Q 5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in school?

P4. The government must provide with extra classrooms. You find two grades in one class. And one other thing if our children pass grade 11 they have to go to the location to study there. It is only possible to those who have relatives in the location, if not, their education ended up in grade 11. And as you know they cannot get a job anywhere without grade 12 or better qualifications.

P5. Here as we are we do not have skills. We do not want that to happen to our children. It is very bad. The government must do something.

INTERVIEW 2

School 2

Group: Parents

Date: 5 December 2008

Time: 5 o'clock

Duration: 1 hour

No of participants: 5

Venue: school hall

P1= participant 1, participant 2, etc.

IQ= Interviewer question

IR= Interviewer response

GR= Group response

GROUP INTRODUCTION

P1. How are you good people?

GR. We are fine and you?

P1. I am fine. My name is Tebogo. I am a parent here at this school. I came here today to attend the meeting.

P2. My name is Johanna. I live here in Ikageng.

P3. I also live here in Ikageng. I am here today because we were invited for a meeting today at six o'clock.

P4. I am Mam Moseki. I am not a parent. I am here to attend a meeting because my grandchild is a learner here at this school.

IQ. Where is the child's parent/s?

P4. She has gone to work.

P5. I am Maria. (group laughing). I have three children here at this school. I am a domestic worker.

IQ1. What is the role of parents in schools?

P1. The role of parents is to help the child do her school work.

IQ. Which school work are you talking about?

P1. I mean to do things like homework, projects, assignments.

IR. Mmm.....

P2. To be involved in school. To me I think there are things that I must do as a parent to support my child to enjoy being here at school. But, I find it hard because right now, my husband nor I is working. The only money we receive is the social grant which is not enough to do other things except to survive. You know what, it is sad when teachers ask children to bring money for things to be done here at school and I am unable to provide for my child. How do you think my child is going to feel about this? We are living in poverty mam, and no one cares, even the government.

IR. I think you also said that you are also receiving a social grant.

P2. Yes mam.

IR. So I think the government is doing something.

P2. Yes. But it is not good enough. The money is very little. We cannot provide for everything we need.

IR. Oh I see.

P3. I think what we are doing now we are also doing something related to our role. We are here to attend a meeting. Is it not true?

GR. Yes, it is.

P3. Maybe we can also add to help the teachers with anything they request us to do. We have no option.

IQ. Is it true that you do not have an option?

P3. Yes. This is where the teachers exercise their authority here at school.

IR. Oh.

P4. Maybe if the teachers want us to come and clean the classes, we can come and do that because by then we are doing something for our children.

P5. Parents role include being involved in other issues as well.

IR. Will you please elaborate these other issues you are talking about?

P5. I mean working in the SGB and be part of the decision making in the school.

IQ2. What is the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools?

P1. The school can decide on what we can do to promote health.

IQ. So you think you cannot do anything?

P1. Up to now I think so.

P2. I know that children learn health education at schools, which is now done in Life Orientation. I am sure the teachers are doing everything to make sure our children know about health issues. I really don't know how I can be involved in this. It is part of the school duty.

IQ. So in other words you are saying the school should be responsible?

P2. Of course yes.

P3. My role in promoting the health of my child at school I think it will be to make sure that when my child is sick, I take him to the clinic. I can't just let my child go to school when I know that he is not feeling well. Otherwise, I will be showing that I am not a responsible mother.

P4. I think it can also include the type of food my child should eat. Healthy food. But the problem is that it is not easy to provide healthy food. Poverty is the problem.

P5. She is right. I think that a child must get something like breakfast in the morning before she goes to school. But it is unfortunate, as she has already had. Poverty.

IQ3. What possible barriers do exist that keep parents from executing their roles?

P1. If we have to talk about barriers now I think it can take much more time than what you have planned. As parents we see that there are plenty of barriers.

IR. That is what we would like to hear. What are those barriers?

P1. If I may start with unemployment, poverty are the main barriers. The conditions we live in are barriers by themselves. I do not see myself doing that much as a parent here at school if these problems are still there. Sometimes there are school field trips or projects wherein I have to pay so much for my child, if I do not have this amount how is it going to affect my child? What is the teacher going to say?

P2. I think the main barrier is the principal of the school. Teachers cannot do much if the principal as the leader of the school is not doing anything. If the principal is aware of the problems our children are encountering daily, then something must be done.

P3. Something is happening at schools. Various schools have a feeding scheme where children receive something to eat every day. I think concerning the principal, when it comes to setting meetings, meeting the teacher in the principal's office I don't think it is a good idea, because the situation is tense, and I feel powerless, on the other hand the teacher was so defensive.

IQ. Have you attended a meeting in this situation?

P3. Yes I did. But since that day, I never felt interested to come closer to the school.

IR. Mmm. That was an experience.

P4. I do not have confidence to face the school, therefore I remain passive.

P5. I think as parents we do not know what is expected from us. And on its own it is a barrier.

IQ 4. What are the possible solutions for these problems?

P1. I don't know what can be done exactly.

P2. Here we are as parents we can decide on how this barriers can be solved. Is it not so?

P4. I don't think we have that power to decide now.

P2. Ok.

P3. Some of the problems cannot be solved by the school. They are personal. Therefore as parents we must see to it that we solve them.

P4. The school must try to find means and ways to involve us as parents.

P5. I think so much has been said. Parents and schools must do something.

IQ5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in schools?

GR. (Looking at each other). P1, P2 and P4. We don't think there is anything.

Interview 3

School 3

Group: Parents

Date: 6 December 2008

Time: 5 o'clock

Duration: 1 hour

No of participants: 5

Venue: classroom

P1= participant 1, participant 2, etc.

IQ= Interviewer question

IR= Interviewer response

GR= Group response

P1. Greetings. We know each other here as parents. Do you think there is a need to introduce ourselves?

IR. Parents, do you think so?

GR. Yes, we do.

IR. Ok let us carry on with the interviews. (This group seemed to be tense. They were not willing to mention their names like in other groups)

IQ1. What is the role of parents in schools?

P1. My role is to encourage my child to come to school every day.

P2. My role.....ehm... I think it is to buy things like uniform and the other stationery which is not provided by the government.

P3. I agree with first parent that we should encourage our children to go to school, as we did not have that chance to go to school.

P4. I want to be part of the decision making in the school, but it is just unfortunate because the school is not willing to work with us.

IQ. What part of the decision making are you interested in?

P4. I would like to be part of the decision making when school rules, policies and issues concerning school fees are discussed. You know these people don't know how much we are suffering, they just decide on our behalf.

P5. Like what she said. I really know that I must be involved, but what bothers me most is that the school does not involve us in matters concerning governance of the school. I know that every school must have a governing body, wherein parents are involved in various issues concerning governance, but what we have here is that we are never called to share the ideas on how to improve things at school. We are only informed about what they are thinking. Our ideas do not seem to matter at all.

IQ. Who are they?

P5. I mean the principal and the teachers.

IQ 2. What is the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools?

P1. The role of parents is to make sure that they are not sick, they eat healthy food and so on. (laughing)

P2. I think my role is to bath my child every day when he comes to schools. He must be clean. It is amazing though, to see that some children are not clean when they go to school.

IQ. What do you think it could be the main problem why they are not clean?

P2. Some parents don't care, they don't care. The only thing they care about is drinking alcohol.

IR. Mmm. That is a problem.

P3. I like to give my child healthy food every day, even at home but I can't afford to do so.

IR. Problem?

P3. I am unemployed. If people say you live in the location it means that even your everything is affected with poverty.

IQ. What do you mean by your everything?

P3. I mean what you have, what you do, including your children, they are affected by poverty.

P4. I don't think I have much to say.

P5. I have no idea.

IQ3. What possible barrier do exist that keep parents from executing their role?

P1. Definitely it is poverty. Poverty pulls everything down. You see, only those who have money are able to take their children to attend schools in town.

P2. I think she is right. People who do not have money they become poor automatically in every aspect. What they eat, where they live, it becomes a mixture (all participants nod their heads in agreement with what she was saying)

P3. You cannot believe what we are saying Mam, but this is what we experience every day. Life here at extension eleven is not easy. We are suffering.

P4. I agree that there are possible barriers which hinder us from being involved in the education of our school. The first barrier I think it is the children. The school does not view parents as equal partners. The fact that we are not teachers it does not mean that there is nothing we can do for our children. I think they doubt our abilities or they have no clue about to involve us.

P5. Of course yes, there are barriers between parents and schools. I think it is the management of the school, especially the principal. She is very strict and I don't think she knows much about what is going on in education today. She is so defensive that you could see that everyone is dancing according to her tune. I visited the school last time when my child was not performing well. Instead of relating the problem to me, she started to tell me what to do before she could hear my side of the story. Saying that she has the best teachers in her school. I felt irritated by that.

P5. These teachers, they think they are better than us. Therefore they decide as they wish.

IQ4. What are possible solutions for these problems?

P1. Schools must work with us.

P2. Schools must know that we are very much interested in the education of our children. Therefore they must involve us.

P3. There is no other way we need to work together.

IQ. How?

P3. They must involve us in everything they do concerning our children.

P4. As parents we know our children better than the teachers, if we can work together, then everything is possible.

P5. I agree with everything which has been said. Working together should be the beginning.

IQ5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in schools?

P5. The school must know that not all parents went to school. Therefore, whatever task they would like to give us they must remember that.

P2. Our community is poor. The government must try to do something to make our lives much better.

Interview 4

School 4

Group: Parents

Date: 5 December 2008

Duration : 1 hour

Time: 9 am

No of participants: 5

Venue: Classroom

Code: P = Participants

P1= Participant 1 etc.,

IQ= Interviewer question

IR= Interviewer response

GR= Group response

I= Interviewer

Introduction

P1. My name is Maria. I live and work in the farm. I am a parent. I have two children here at this school

IQ. How far from here?

P1. What I know is that it is far away from here.

IR. Ok.

P2. Greetings in Tswana. I also live and work in the farm. My son is here at this school. He is in grade 4. We came here because it is a parent meeting today.

IQ. If it was not a parent meeting, were you going to come?

P2. No, no. the school is far from where I live. There is no way I would come here.

IR. Oh, I see.

P3. I am Josephine. I was born in the farm. My parents have been working here long time ago. I am also working here. My daughter is in grade 2.

IQ. How long have you been working there?

P3. You know, if you live in the farm it means that you also work as early as possible to help your parents.

IQ. Did you go to school yourself?

Yes I did, but I ended in grade 4 due to family issues.

IR. I understand.

P4. Yes, I am Johannes. I also live in the farm. I am also working in the farm. I am a foreman. I have two boys at this school. They are very naughty.

IQ. Why do you say they are very naughty?

P4. They are very naughty because I am called every now and then to come to school, but I don't come because by then I am at work.

P5. I am a grandmother. I am not a parent. My daughter passed away three years ago. So am looking after her little boy.

IR. I am sorry to hear about that.

IQ1. What is the role of parents in schools?

P1. I think attending meetings is the right way to be involved. I usually attend parent meetings, because I know this is where important information regarding my child is communicated. I've never missed any meeting because I know this is the best I can do for my child.

IR. Ok.

IQ. I hear you saying that important information is communicated in the meetings. What do you mean by important information?

P1. By important information, I mean things like how they are performing, how they are behaving at school, things like that.

IR. Hmm.

P2. I agree with what she said. Attending meetings, then we know what is required of us to do.

IQ. Don't you have something to say in addition to what she said?

P2. But I feel that as a parent I am failing my child because I am not able to help my child to do things which are required by the school. Sometimes I find it hard to help, especially with this new system of education. I mean OBE. I certainly do not know what to do, because I do not know much about it and the school does not bother to help either with workshops or something else to help us cope with the daily requirements. Sometimes my child's homework is not done because I had no idea.

P3. My role is to attend functions at school. That is important, because if I do not attend, the teachers are going to think that I am not a good mother or maybe that is the reason why my son is behaving in a certain way.

IQ. Which functions do you normally attend?

P3. Like today you see, there is this Korean guy who brings us things and we also get a free lunch. Here we eat.

IQ. Besides these functions, are there any other functions that you normally attend?

P3. I can't remember any of the functions which I have attended except functions like this one.

IR. Oh I see.

P4. I think my role is to talk to my children if they are doing something wrong at school, otherwise they will be in trouble.

IQ. How do you get the information to say that they are doing something wrong?

P4. Sometimes they come back home with letters, but I do not come to school, because as I have said already, by then I am at work.

IQ. You mentioned that they are naughty. What if they don't change their behavior?

P4. I believe at school teachers are parents too. They will see what to do.

P5. My role is to come to school when I am invited.

IQ. What if you are not invited?

P5. Then it is fine. It means that everything is going well with my grandchild.

IQ2. What is the role of parents in the promotion of health of their children in schools?

P1. I do not understand this question. But, I think it has to do with my child's health.

IQ. What do you mean when you say it has something to do with your child's health?

P1. I mean to see that my child is healthy when he comes to school.

P2. I support the previous speaker, I think health has to do with medical staff only, the fact that parents can be involved in this, I find it very strange. I am of an idea that if we have to do some workshops or information sessions where parents will have to be empowered.

IQ. Do you think workshops and info sessions can help?

P2. You see, we have no clue about this question. So I think it will be a great opportunity for us as parents.

P3. My role is to see to it that my child is healthy when he comes to school. Because if he is sick, I don't think he can come to school. Because if he is sick I don't think he can enjoy school for that day.

P4. You know as a father I do not know much about children's health issues. I think although I would like to help to promote health of my child here at school, I have no idea as to what I have to do. I don't think even the teachers know about this.

IQ. What makes you think that teachers do not know about health promotion?

P4. Because it was never mentioned to us by the teachers before.

P5. My role as a grandmother is to see to it that my grandchild is clean when he comes to school. If he is sick, then I take him to the clinic.

IQ3. What possible barriers do exist that keep parents from executing their roles?

(Interrupting the procedure). P4. Yes, yes, there are barriers. (Scratching his head after realizing that he interrupted the procedure).

P1. My problem is time. I find that it is not easy for me to come to school during working hours.

P2. Yes, there are barriers. I think schools are not involving parents enough. The fact that we live and work in the farm does not mean that we do not want to be involved. During weekdays I work up until five o' clock. And by then I have to go home. I must cook, bath the children, help where I can with the homework. So, where do I get time to attend meetings? If the school is serious about our involvement, therefore we have to sit down and agree on the best possible time which is convenient to all of us. Otherwise, it is not going work.

IQ. I hear you mentioning children. How many children do you have?

P2. I have three children. They are all still very young.

IQ,. Will it not be possible to ask your parents to help you?

P2. No, I have my own house. I live with my husband, and as you know I cannot leave children with him.

IQ. Why not?

(Participants laughing). P2. Men are not good with children.

P3. For me I think the barrier is not sure about what to do. I have no idea at all.

IR. Hmm.

P4. My barrier is that I didn't go to school myself. So I don't think I will know what to do about it, you know. It is a problem.

IQ. I heard you saying you didn't go to school. How does that affect you?

P4. I do not know how to help with the school work. My child was asked to do research about insects on the computer. I did not have a computer in the house neither to operate it.

Gr. Laughing.

P4. It is not a joke you know, I am very serious.

IR. Yes, it is.

P5. My barrier is that I am a granny. I didn't go to school myself. But I try my best.

IQ4. What are possible solutions for these problems?

P1. The government must intervene.

IQ. What do you mean when you say the government must intervene?

P1. I mean the government must help us to understand what we need to do.

P2. I think there must be a way where we can be trained. Because, truly we are in the dark here.

IQ. What do you mean in the dark?

P2. I mean, we know nothing about our roles.

P3. I think the school must show us how we should do our roles here at school.

P4. I agree with her. The school must do something.

IR. Oh I see.

P4. Teachers must try to work closely with parents.

P5. The school must help us as grandparents.

IQ5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in schools?

P4. I think we have mentioned enough. We also need to learn more about our roles as parents.

P3. The government must assist with resources for the learners and together with the learners. They do not have computers.

IR. Is that all?

GR. Yes.

Interview 5

School 5

Group: Parents

Date: 8 December 2008

Duration : 1 hour

Time: 9 am

No of participants: 5

Venue: Classroom

Code: P = Participants

P1= Participant 1 etc.

IQ= Interviewer question

1R= Interviewer response

GR= Group response

I= Interviewer

(Group introductions)

P1. Greetings in Tswana. My name is Maria. I live in Ikageng. My child is attending school here. That's all I can say.

IR. Thanks.

P2. I am Caroline. I also live in Ikageng. My child is attending school here. I like this school very much.

IQ. Ok. What makes you to like this school?

P2. You know what? If I can compare this school with other schools in the locations, this one is much better.

IR. Hmm

P2. I mean children learn to read and speak English fluently better than those children in the location. What more can a parent ask for?

IR. Oh I see.

P3. Em....., my name is Miemie. I am a parent at this school. I am a teacher myself. My child is attending here too.

IQ. I heard you saying that you are a teacher, are you teaching here or somewhere else?

P3. I am teaching at the location in one of high schools.

IQ. If I may ask, why did you bring your child here at this school?

P3. As you have heard from sister Caroline, things in the location are not well organised. There is no commitment with teachers. The culture of teaching and learning is not there. Learners do not have any zeal to learn. Most of them cannot read English fluently.

IR. That's terrible.

P4. My name is Punki. My child is attending this school. I didn't further my studies, I passed only grade 11. The reason why I brought my child here is because I want better education for my child.

P5. I am granny Mapitso. I look after my grandchild.

IR. Is there any reason why you are looking after your grandchild?

P5. Her mother is working in Gauteng.

IR. Thanks granny Mapitso.

IQ1. What is the role of parents in schools?

P1. My role is to teach my child.

IQ. What do you teach your child?

P1. I teach my child to behave at school.

IR. Oh.

P2. My role is to check whether my child's work is done.

IQ. If you can elaborate a little bit, which work are you talking about?

P2. I mean to check for homework, assignments or even projects, and if maybe there are other things to be done. I believe that I must help my child with anything possible I can.

P3. Ehm, my role is to buy school uniform, pay school fees, attend meetings and to help with homework. That is a must.

IR. Shoo. You have mentioned quite a lot of things. Why do you say helping with a homework is a must?

P3. It is a must because I have seen this often. Children who are not getting any help back home are not performing well. I think they feel neglected, and they are also disruptive in the class.

IQ. Do you experience disruptive learners in your classes?

P3. Very often. These kind of children are not motivated at all. They have no support back home.

IQ. I hear you stressing support back home. Is it very important?

P3. Definitely.

P4. I suggest helping with homework.

P5. My role as a grandmother is to look after my grandchild. To see to it that he is clean when he goes to school. He has enough food in his lunch box.

IQ2. What is the role of parents in the promotion of the health of their children in schools?

P1. The role of parents I think it is to see to it that their children are healthy all the time and by also teaching them at home.

IQ. What is it that they have to teach them at home?

P1. I mean to teach them to wash their hands before they eat, to take a bath before they go to bed everyday. Have you seen children who are not taught about these things at home that they are always dirty.

IR. Hm.

P1. They are so dirty even with their school uniform and their books. Its like one can take them and throw them away.

GR. Laughing.

P2. Parental roles in the promotion of health of their children I think it has to do with physical health possibly. I don't know much about this.

IR. Ok. It is fine.

P3. I think their roles is to see that their children are healthy when they come to school. I think issues around health are done at schools in life orientation.

IQ. What do they learn in life orientation at school?

P3. I think they learn many things like, how to look after themselves, they learn about hygiene, they also learn about diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

(Interruption). P5. We don't know much actually. You know this because you are a teacher.

P3. Not only because I am a teacher. These are basic things everybody should know.

P4. I think she is right.

IQ. Who is right?

P4. I mean what granny is saying.

IR. Ok.

P4. Parents can help byshoo (sighing). I think what others have just said is fine.

IQ. What do you say?

P4. I have no idea.

P5. The role of parents is to take great care of children. To make sure they eat their breakfast before they go to school.

IQ3. What possible barriers do exist that keeps parents from executing their roles?

P1. You know, parents are always busy. Therefore, they do not have time to help their children.

P2. I think sometimes the teachers can be a barrier. If they do not let us participate in the lives of our children, I see it as a barrier, because I must know what is going on with my child at school.

IQ. How would you like to participate?

P2. Many schools take decisions without consulting with parents first. So I would like to participate in the decision making.

IR. I see.

P3. For me I think the barrier can be externally and internally. I mean sometimes the barrier is from home or the barrier is just right here from school.

IR. What do you mean by that?

P3. I mean the barrier can be from home when parents are unable to attend to the needs of their children at school. And sometimes it can be from school when teachers are not willing to work together

with parents in matters concerning their children. For me it doesn't make sense when a teacher makes conclusion about a child's behavior without consulting with parents first.

P4. I think the lack of knowledge is a barrier.

IR. Hm.

P5. You don't know how much I want to be involved here at school. But I do not know how.

IQ4. What are possible solutions for these problems?

P1. As parents I think we must create time to help our children in doing the school work.

P2. The school must involve parents. We both need each other.

P3. You are right there. If the school, parents together with the community can learn to work together, we can have great schools. Excellent teachers, brilliant learners.

GR. Laughing.

P4. As parents we need more information on how to be involved.

P5. The school must tell us what to do.

IQ5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the role of parents in schools?

P1. The relationship between parents and teachers is not that perfect at all. If that can change.

P3. Parents need to be empowered. That's all.

P2. The school must have a close relationship with the parents and the community.

P5. I heard that there are schools which are school fees free, and that the government is supplying with free transport. I would like that to happen to us too, because our children are travelling few kilometers to school, the government must assist too.

APPENDIX F

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

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DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Christina Maria Etrechia Terblanche, id nr 771105 0031 082, hereby declare that I have edited the masters degree dissertation of Ignatia Mashau without viewing the final product. I declare that all payment for my services has been settled.

Regards,

CME Terblanche