

**THE EFFECT OF LITERACY LEVELS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE QWA QWA REGION**

DIPONTSHENG MERRIAM NYAMA

STD, ACE, B.ED HONS, PGDE

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

in

Learning and Teaching

in the

School of Educational Sciences

of

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

(Vaal Triangle Campus)

Supervisor: Prof. BJJ Lombard

2010

DECLARATION

I, DIPONTSHEG MERRIAM NYAMA, solemnly declare this dissertation entitled: THE EFFECT OF LITERACY LEVELS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE QWA QWA REGION is original and my own work. It has never, on any previous occasion, been presented in part or whole to any institution or Board for the award of any degree. I further declare that all information used and quoted has been duly acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to forward my sincere gratitude to the following people who contributed to the success of this study:

- Glory is to God Almighty, who gave me strength to continue even in hard times. You lifted me up when I could not move anymore, thank you Lord.
- My supervisor, Prof. B.J.J. Lombard for guidance and encouragement when it was tough and thank you for professional support and valuable inputs.
- The library staff, especially Danny Moloto who assisted me with the necessary information. Thank you for your outstanding patience and expertise.
- My mother who took care of my children when I was away. I could not have done it without you.
- My beautiful children, Neo and Nthudi for your patience and understanding. You are truly God send. This is for you!
- My relatives, friends and colleagues for your encouragement and support.
- Teachers, parents and learners, who took part in this research, thank you.
- Everybody who contributed positively to this study.

SUMMARY

Key words: Literacy, parental involvement, academic achievement, parent-teacher interdependence, socio-economic status.

Parents are considered to be important and indispensable stakeholders in education. Research shows that parental involvement in the education of their children is a crucial matter as it contributes directly to the learners' academic achievement. This study intended to investigate the possible effects of parents' literacy levels on their involvement in the education and the academic achievement of their children.

Approached from a constructivist point of view, the study specifically focused on schools situated in the rural areas of the Qwa Qwa region. The rationale for choosing the particular geographical focus was that it is frequently argued that learners educated in rural environments often find themselves in disadvantaged situations since their parents are financially poor, that they lack proper formal education and thus have low literacy levels, and that they are seldom involved in their children's education and academic achievement.

In order to direct the study towards the intended purpose, a literature study was undertaken to explore the phenomena of literacy and parental involvement. Literacy, its occurrence in the South African context and how parents' literacy levels relate to learner performance were examined. In addition, parental involvement was investigated by considering the parents' role as primary educators and by highlighting the importance of parental involvement in terms of its benefits towards children's education and academic performance.

By means of a qualitative case study, individual and focus group interviews were conducted with purposeful selected Head of Departments (HODs), parents and learners from four conveniently selected intermediate schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District of the Qwa Qwa region. In total four HODs, 14 parent couples and 14 Grade 6 learners

participated in the research. The results of this research show that the parents' literacy levels indeed affect their involvement in their children's education and academic achievement. Parents with low literacy levels appear that they want to be involved but that they find it difficult. Most parents with low literacy levels are not able to assist their children with schoolwork but depend on others, such as older siblings to assist. Furthermore the research reveals that parents do not often visit schools voluntarily but that they rather do so by invitation. However, relations between schools and parents appear to be healthy and the attitudes of parents towards their children's education are positive. Although parents with low literacy levels cannot always assist their children with their schoolwork, they motivate and value the education of their children since they realize that education remains the vehicle for social-economic development in any society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
SUMMARY	iii – iv
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY	
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1 - 3
1.2 PURPOSE STATEMENT	4
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	4 - 5
1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH	5 - 6
1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH	6
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN	6
1.6.1 The literature study	6 - 7
1.6.2 The empirical study	7
1.6.2.1 Empirical paradigm	7
1.6.2.2 Empirical research design	7
1.6.2.3 Research method	8
1.6.2.4 Population and sampling	8
1.6.2.5 Data gathering and analysis	8

1.7	DEFINITIONS OF TERMINOLOGY	8 - 9
1.8	RESEARCH OUTLAY	9 - 10
1.9	CONCLUSION	10
 CHAPTER TWO		
LITERACY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION		
2.1	INTRODUCTION	11 - 12
2.2	LITERACY	12
2.2.1	What is literacy?	12 - 13
2.2.2	Illiteracy statistics in South Africa	13 - 17
2.2.3	Socio-economic status in relation to literacy	18 - 20
2.2.4	Parents' literacy levels in relation to learner performance	20 - 21
2.2.5	The effects of illiteracy on parents themselves	21 - 23
2.3	PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION	23
2.3.1	Parental involvement defined	23 - 26
2.3.2	The importance and benefits of parental involvement in education	26 - 29
2.3.3	Parental involvement in relation to learner performance	29 - 30
2.3.4	Factors contributing to a lack of parental involvement	30 - 33
2.3.5	Challenges caused by the lack of parental involvement	33 - 34
2.3.6	Communication between the school and the parents	35 - 37
2.3.7	Parents as primary teachers	37 - 39
2.3.8	Home-school collaboration	39 - 43
2.3.9	A stimulating family environment in relation to learner achievement	43 - 44
2.4	CONCLUSION	45

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL STUDY: OVERVIEW

3.1	INTRODUCTION	46
3.2	RESEARCH PARADIGM	47 - 48
3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	48 - 49
3.4	RESEARCH METHOD	49 - 51
3.5	POPULATION AND SAMPLING	51 - 54
3.6	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT	55
3.6.1	Interviews	55 - 56
3.6.2	Criteria for administrating and conducting interviews	56 - 58
3.6.3	Pilot testing	59
3.7	QUALITY CRITERIA	59 - 61
3.8	THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER	61
3.9	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	61 - 62
3.10	DATA COLLECTION PROCESS	62 - 63
3.11	CONCLUSION	64

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1	INTRODUCTION	65
4.2	PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	65 - 66
4.3	PRESENTATION OF CODED DATA	67 - 81
4.4	ANALYSIS OF DATA ACCORDING TO A <i>PRIORI</i> CATEGORIES	81 - 87
4.5	INTERPRETATION OF THE COLLECTED DATA	87
4.5.1	Awareness of community profile (Q1)	87
4.5.2	Responsiveness to community needs (Q2)	87 - 88
4.5.3	Parental involvement (Q3)	88
4.5.4	Empowerment for / encouragement of parental involvement (Q4)	88 - 89
4.5.5	Predominantly involved parent (Q5)	89
4.5.6	Parental confidence (Q6)	89 - 90
4.5.7	Treatment of parents (Q7)	90
4.5.8	Parents' valuing of education (Q8)	90
4.5.9	Parents' attitude towards schools (Q9)	90 - 91
4.5.10	Communication to parents (Q10)	91
4.5.11	Parental attendance of meetings (Q11)	91
4.6	CONCLUSION	91 - 92

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

5.1	INTRODUCTION	93
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5.2	SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	93 - 94
5.3	GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	94 - 97
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	97 - 99
5.5	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	99
5.6	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	99 - 100
5.7	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	100 -101
5.8	FINAL CONCLUSION	101
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	102 -115
	Appendix A: Interview questions for the HODs, Parents and Learners	116- 117
	Appendix B: Translated interview questions for parents and learners into Sesotho	118
	Appendix C: Application to conduct research (Cover letter)	119
	Appendix D: Application to conduct research (Official form)	120 -123
	Appendix E: Registration of research by Department	124
	Appendix F: Permission to conduct research	125
	Appendix G: Letter to School Principals	126
	Appendix H: Consent: HODs	127
	Appendix I: Consent: Parents	128
	Appendix J: Consent: Learners	129

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1:	Population aged 20 years and older with no schooling or less than Grade 7 education by province: Census 1996 and 2001	14
Table 3.1:	Categories for determining parents' literacy levels	53
Table 3.2:	Outline of the selection of research participants	54

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	A graphical illustration of the 1996 and 2001 census statistics	15
Figure 2.2:	A graphical representation of South African literacy statistics according to race	16
Figure 3.1:	Data collection process	63
Figure 4.1:	Data analysis process	66

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education can be regarded as the most important path through which the child's potential can be developed. In order for the child's potential to be developed, teachers and parents need to work together to ensure that the child develops to the best of his or her ability. Kok and Rambiyana (2002:10) indicate that education should not be offered for the sake of the school but for the child, family, the community and even the state. Parental involvement is therefore viewed as one important contributing factor to improved learner performance. Driessen, Smit and Slegers (2005:509) suggest that parental involvement is an important strategy for the improvement and upliftment of the quality of education. Driessen, *et al.* (2005:510) further indicate that "parental involvement has indeed been found to influence the cognitive and social development of children". It is evident that the child's development, learning achievement and an understanding of the school's purpose are influenced to a large degree by the home environment and experiences in this milieu. According to Goodall and Harris (2008:278), "it is what parents do to support learning in the school and in the home that makes the difference to achievement", while Mmotlane, Winnaar and wa Kivilu (2009:527) declare that parental involvement promotes children's social and interpersonal relations with the whole schooling system. It is thus evident that the environment in which the child grows up has important implications for the child's academic achievement at school, level of aspiration, motivational level and attitude towards school.

Both the parents and teachers have the obligation to teach the child together even if it is at different levels. Even though parents are teachers in an informal way, it is important to further involve them in the years of formal education of their children. According to Burgers (1993) as cited by Grobler (2005:19), it is the duty of the parents and teachers

to teach the child. Parents should play their roles and teachers should acknowledge the family and the community as a major educational resource and therefore engage parents as complementary teachers. Kok and Rambiyana (2002:11) reckon that the parents need to know that they can be involved in their children's home learning and also assist with tackling their children's learning problems with the teachers. The question however still remains, to what extent are the parents able to take part in developing and teaching the child?

Calitz, Fuglestad and Lillejord (2002:124) state that parents in rural and predominantly black communities are often not actively involved in school activities; therefore it is difficult to establish effective partnerships between parents and schools. Some, if not most of the parents in rural communities, are not literate and find it difficult to assist and support their children and be in partnership with the teachers, and ultimately delegate their responsibility to the teachers. According to Singh, Mobokodi and Msila (2004) as quoted by Lombard (2007:44), "parents send their children to schools with the expectation that they will get quality education..." Parents must also play their role by supporting, guiding and assisting their children. When parents are not supportive enough the child does not experience healthy relationships with the family. Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010:176) indicates that the family is the main factor that contributes and influences the lives of school children. Often in a non-supportive kind of home environment, poverty and literacy are two factors contributing to insufficient stimulation. When parents are not supportive or are not involved in the education of their children they cannot offer and direct the child to a world that reflects the life pattern as presented by the school. Issues such as patterns of learning and child-rearing practices carried out within the home and family provide very important and useful information about social and cultural backgrounds of the children. It is therefore important that parents work together with the teachers as they assist to provide the necessary information about the child.

According to Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010:176), the educational level of parents is a powerful factor that influences children's academic success. Literacy levels of parents

may be a problem, but even if they cannot read or write, parents can still assist their children. Their interest and motivation can have a positive effect on the standard of their children's work. It is what happens in the home that supports the children's success in school. Therefore Mmotlane, *et al.* (2009:537) believe that making parents aware of the need to improve education for their children not only improves parents' involvement in their children's education but can also promote and improve the quality of education in general. Khan (1996:6), reasons that parental involvement includes a wide range of activities that have a common theme for seeking to bring together in some way the separate spheres of school and community.

After the South African 1994 democratic elections, a new education system and curriculum were put into place. In more than one way these changes represented a shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness which emphasizes the involvement of all stakeholders including the parents and the community in children's schooling. Due to the literacy levels of the parents their involvement can be difficult in areas of low socio-economic status like rural areas, and therefore the gap between the schools and communities in richer and poorer areas of the country widens. Calitz, *et al.* (2002:112) indicate that parents, especially in the rural areas, may not have the necessary knowledge and skills (literacy) to assist their children with school work. However, if motivated, they may still contribute positively in the education of their children because the parents and teachers must share the responsibility for the children's education and they must be accountable to each other for their contributions towards educating the child. Shilubana and Kok (2005:101) argue that parents have a critical role to play in the well-being of their children and are also expected to support the children's learning. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) and Gololo (1998) as quoted by Shilubana and Kok (2005:102) indicate that the success of any child at school does not depend on the child alone, but also on the factors such as parental support and the role played by the teachers and the community.

1.2 PURPOSE STATEMENT

There are many schools in South Africa which are situated in rural areas. The rural environment could be unfavourable to children's education, as parents in rural areas are often disadvantaged in that they are financially poor and lacking in adequate, formal school education which frequently results in insufficient levels of literacy. Misra (2006:169-170) indicates that rural people show little optimism for the future and think that education is a necessity for rich and urban people. Therefore, there is little evidence of the role they play in their children's academic achievement. Berthelsen and Walker (2008:35) state "they may feel unprepared to be involved" in their children's formal education. According to Misra (2006:168), "parents (in rural areas) normally think that if they can survive and earn with little or no education, then so can their children". It is therefore imperative that factors contributing to the impact and role of parents towards their children's academic success be identified in order to address and implement changes to benefit learners' achievements, especially in the Qwa Qwa region.

The purpose of this study is thus to explore **how** parents' literacy levels affect their involvement in the education and also the academic achievement of their children.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Derived from the purpose outlined above, it is evident that parents' literacy levels and their involvement in the academic achievement of their children are the main focus points of this study. The **primary research question** of the study can therefore be formulated as follows:

How do parents' literacy levels affect their involvement in the education and also the academic achievement of their children in the Qwa Qwa region?

Emanating from this primary research question, the following **secondary research questions** and **objectives** can be formulated:

1. What does literacy entail?
2. What are the significant factors identified in the literature regarding parental involvement in formal education?
3. What are parents' literacy levels in the Qwa Qwa region?
4. What is the importance of parental involvement in relation to children's education and academic achievement?
5. What are the effects of parents' literacy levels on their parental involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children?

To operationalize the purpose or aim of the research, the study will be structured according to the following objectives:

1. To clarify literacy in the context of the study.
2. To outline the significant factors from the literature regarding parental involvement in formal education.
3. To investigate parents' literacy levels in the Qwa Qwa region.
4. To investigate the importance of parental involvement in relation to children's education and academic achievement.
5. To investigate the effects of parents' literacy levels on their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

This study considers parental involvement as crucial to learners' academic achievement and that parents are indispensable stakeholders and partners in the education of their children. Constructivism, especially social constructivism will be followed as a guiding framework of this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:197), "constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as people construct or make it". Flick (2006:80) explains that "for social constructivism, the process of social interchange in the genesis of knowledge takes on a special significance and in particular, the concepts that are used".

In the context of this study, it is assumed that parents, together with teachers, should play pivotal roles in assisting children to maximize their potential at school in order to prepare them to realize their position in and contribute positively towards society.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Since the researcher is curious to explore the impact of the literacy levels of parents on their involvement and on learners' academic achievement, the researcher is of the opinion that if the parents are made to realize their impact on their children's education and the need for them to be involved, the parents' roles as partners in education can be improved. Consequently, this will also improve the children's academic achievement. The significance of parental involvement and more particularly, the relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement cannot be overemphasized. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995:7), "in examining a specific setting or set of individuals, the writer should show how he or she is studying a case of a larger phenomenon".

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design will comprise two sections, that is, a literature study and an empirical study.

1.6.1 The literature study

The researcher will consult national and international sources which include primary and secondary material such as books, journals, theses and dissertations, as well as relevant documents to find and provide the theoretical foundation for the topic under discussion. Databases such as EBSCOhost and ERIC will be consulted.

The following keywords will guide the search for relevant material: parental involvement, parent-teacher interdependence, literacy, academic achievement, socio-economic status.

1.6.2 The empirical study

1.6.2.1 Empirical paradigm

The literature review will be supplemented by an empirical study. Based on the interpretative paradigm, an empirical investigation will be done to address the aim of the study. Johnson and Christensen (2008:33) indicate that “a paradigm is a perspective about research held by a community of researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values and practices”. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:7), interpretivism is a school of thought that emphasizes the importance of interpretation and observation in making sense of the social world. For the purpose of this study the interpretive approach is appropriate because the participants’ interpretations, perceptions, experiences and their understandings are very important sources of information.

1.6.2.2 Empirical research design

As the purpose of this research is to explore a phenomenon by gathering first hand information as perceived by the individual participants, a qualitative research design will be followed. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:8), “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry”. Mouton (2001:271) adds: “qualitative researchers are interested in describing the actions of the research participants in great detail and then attempt to understand their actions in terms of the actors’ own beliefs, history and context”. The experiences with regard to parents’ literacy levels and how it impacts on their children’s academic achievement will be gathered from information rich participants.

1.6.2.3 Research method

For the purpose of this study, a case study as a qualitative research method will be used to gather the desired data. According to Babbie (2010:309), a case study is “the in-depth examination of a single instance of some social phenomenon”. In the context of this study a case study will provide a better understanding of how parents’ literacy levels affect their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children.

1.6.2.4 Population and Sampling

The population for this study will consist of the teachers, parents and learners from schools in the Eastern Free State (Qwa Qwa) because of its proximity to the researcher. The sample will comprise Heads of Department (HODs), parents and their children in grade six. The participants will be purposefully selected from four intermediate schools in Qwa Qwa (cluster two schools) in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District.

1.6.2.5 Data gathering and analysis

Interviews will be used as data gathering instruments because the data needed may not feasibly be available in any other form. The interview questions will be constructed to gather the required information from the selected HOD’s, parents and their children from the identified schools. Interviews will take the form of individual and focus group interviews whereby information will be gathered by following tape-recorded and transcription strategies. The experiences and perceptions of the participants will then be analysed and interpreted by making use of coding and categorization.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMINOLOGY

Terms that will be used throughout and which form the basis of the study, are synoptically clarified hereunder.

- **Literacy.** According to de Beer (2004:219), literacy is about functioning properly, dealing with matters at hand, acting in situations and coping with oneself and one's world. For the purpose of this study, literacy is understood to be the ability to read and write, and also being able to take part in decision making processes in the education of the child.
- **Parental involvement** is defined by Lemmer, Meier, and Van Wyk (2006:132) as a dynamic process whereby teachers and parents work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner. In this study parental involvement refers to the engagement of the parents in the child's learning at home and also in school activities, by working together with the teacher.
- **Academic achievement** is defined by Soanes and Stevenson (2004:6) as the accomplishment relating to education and scholarship. In this study academic achievement indicates the learners' performance in school work.
- **Qwa Qwa region.** Qwa Qwa was known to be a former homeland in the apartheid era in the Free State. The Free State province is divided into five district municipalities and Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality is one of them. Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality is then also divided into five local municipalities, namely, Maluti-a-Phofung, Dihlabeng, Setsoto, Nketoana and Phumelela. QwaQwa is located in Maluti-a-Phofung local municipality which is in the eastern part of the Free State. It borders the Kingdom of Lesotho and Kwazulu-Natal. Qwa Qwa is situated close to the Golden Gate Highlands National Park near Kestel and Harrismith. It is one of the most important tourism attractions in the Eastern Free State.

1.8 RESEARCH OUTLAY

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the report on the research will develop gradually as follows:

Chapter 1 forms the basis for the overall research programme. The description of the central problem and purpose of the research, the research questions and the specific objectives of the research, the research design and the identification of the key terms of the research, form part of this chapter.

Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review encapsulating the roles of literacy and parental involvement in children's education and academic achievement.

Chapter 3 will present a more particular perspective on the research paradigm, research approach, the research design, sampling and data collection instruments, the administration of the instruments, the research ethics, and validity and reliability of the results.

Chapter 4 will centre on the implications of parental involvement and parental literacy levels on learners' academic achievement based on the empirical research.

The research will be summarized in the form of conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on providing the background to the research. The description of the research problem, the aim of the research, the research design, definition of terminology and the research outlay were also discussed. The following chapter will focus on the literature review to lay the theoretical foundation of the topic under discussion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERACY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Okantey (2008) as quoted by Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010:176) maintains that educated parents, by virtue of their education level, are equipped to recognize the importance of parental involvement and the fact that parent-teacher relationship promotes educational attainment and academic achievement of their children. Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010:177-179) further indicates that educational levels as well as income are interconnected, meaning that parents who are educated possess the potential for increased income. Therefore children from high socio-economic status families are likely to improve their academic achievement, as their parents by virtue of their literacy levels have higher aspirations for their children.

According to Hemmings (1997:27), “apartheid South Africa was the only country in the world in which the government deliberately set out to limit education for the majority of its population”. Prior to 1994 the system of education was characterized by imbalances and inequalities that were politically intentional. The needs of the learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds were not considered important; moreover, parents of learners and the community were not actively involved in the education of their children. The reason for not involving parents and the community could probably be that the parents were not considered as valuable partners in education, or that parents did not regard themselves as influential to learners’ performance in any way. The post - 1994 Department of Education, introduced new policies to bring about change to ensure that parents and communities are involved and collaboratively work together to make this change a success. This is in line with Machen, Wilson and Notar’s (2005:13) argument that “school success and community success are linked”. The Department of Education (1997:1) also recognizes this connectedness when stating that “education is an essential component of reconstruction, development and transformation of South

African society". Driven by a new school curriculum, the Department of Education (2002:13) wants to promote a vision of a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice. This vision correlates with Wright and Stegelin's (2003:53) view that "the rearing and educating of children is a complex task and requires the work of parents, families, teachers, caregivers, community leaders, policy makers and others".

In view of the above, the purpose of this chapter is to review a variety of literature sources on literacy and parental involvement in order to provide a theoretical foundation for determining its effects on learners' academic achievement empirically.

2.2 LITERACY

2.2.1 What is literacy?

According to Soans and Stevenson (2004:831), the word literacy is often used to indicate that a person is able to read and write, and also illustrates that a person possesses knowledge and certain competences within a specified field. This implies that a literate person is aware of the changes that take place around him or her, and that he/she is able to contribute and make informed decisions with regard to political, economic, and social issues. Matjeke (2005:23) maintains "literacy is a powerful force in the economic (and political) empowerment process; it is also of particular importance for alleviating poverty that prevails amongst the largest proportion of the disadvantaged communities in South Africa". According to Manganyi (1997:3), "illiterate people are those that cannot read or write; some individuals who can read and write may be classified as undereducated because their skills are so basic that they cannot function as productive and employable citizens". Some people in disadvantaged communities, especially those that are illiterate find it very difficult if not impossible, to understand simple written materials that require only basic proficiency in reading. Malale (1996:19) states that literacy is not only about reading, writing and numeracy; it involves having

the ability to critically evaluate information as well as creating a critical consciousness of the society in which an individual lives. According to de Beer (2004:291), “literacy is about functioning properly, coping and dealing with matters at hand, coming to terms with one’s situation, and acting in situations. Briefly it is about coping not only with letters, with text or documents but, more so, about coping with oneself and one’s world and signs in the world, especially through language”. De Beer (2004:291) further indicates that what is desperately needed for the sake of human future is the development and cultivation of a comprehensive literacy that will enable people to not only perform necessary skills but enable them at the same time to live full, meaningful human lives. Machet (2002:4-7) points out that due to the high level of illiteracy in South Africa, some children grow up in an illiterate environment and this affects their exposure to books, it is therefore difficult to encourage children to read if there are no books in their home environment, and if the few which are available are not in their home language. This impacts negatively on the children’s lives in all spheres (health, social life and economic status).

Matjeke (2005:23) goes on to indicate that not only can literacy be regarded as a basic human right but also as a basic human need in so far that it can contribute to improving the development of the majority of people who find themselves in poor socio-economic situations. It is difficult for illiterate members of communities to effectively and efficiently take part in different activities of their daily lives. Illiterate members of the community find it difficult to contribute in decision making processes that affect their lives, and even in the education of their children.

2.2.2 Illiteracy statistics in South Africa

The statistics on illiteracy in South Africa, according to the census of 1996 and 2001 (the latest accessible) as outlined by Aitchison and Harley (2006:96), indicate that the number of Black (African) adults with little or no schooling is significantly higher than the proportion of Coloured, Indian and White South Africans. Represented in Table 2.1 the

figures provided indicate a large number of adults (aged between 20 years and older) who are illiterate (with less than grade 7 or no schooling).

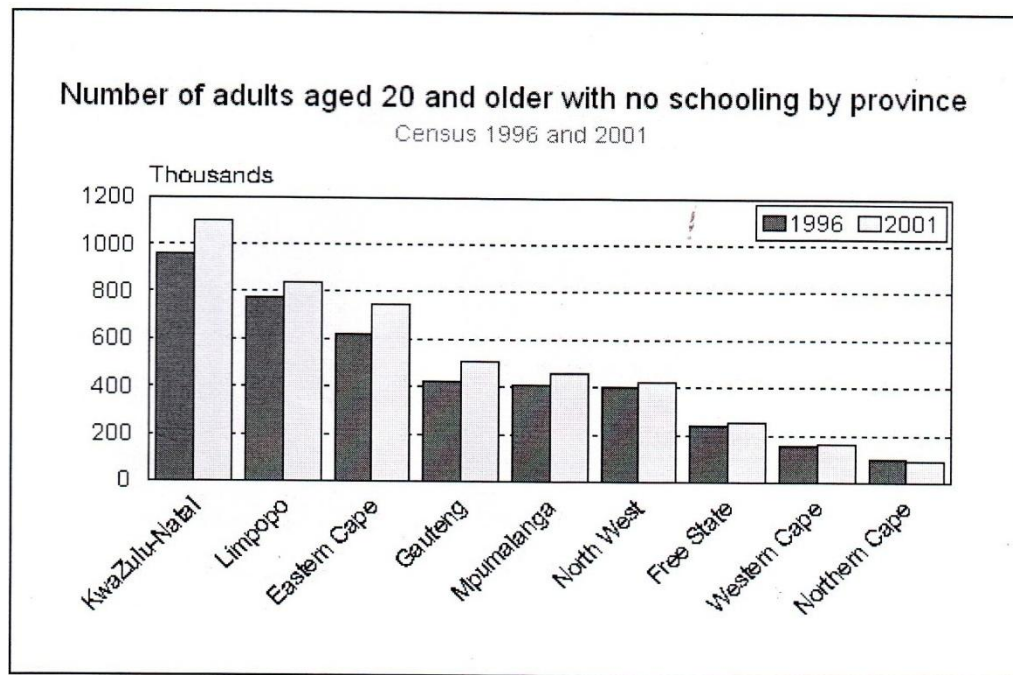
Table 2.1: Population aged 20 years and older with no schooling or less than Grade 7 education by province: Census 1996 and 2001

PROVINCE	No schooling		Some primary education (less than grade 7)	
	1996	2001	1996	2001
Kwazulu-Natal	957,217	1,100,291	747,586	849,144
Limpopo	771,587	835,485	252,287	352,437
Eastern Cape	617,796	743,700	635,475	643,921
Gauteng	419,157	504,619	516,624	673,283
Mpumalanga	410,336	456,747	211,216	264,548
North West	403,143	423,787	364,297	426,025
Free State	236,149	251,408	328,076	340,753
Western Cape	153,109	162,781	362,284	431,698
Northern Cape	97,691	88,680	94,570	101,934
Totals	4,066,185	4,567,497	3,512,415	4,083,742

(Source: Aitchison & Harley, 2006)

According to these figures there has been an increase in the number of adults with no schooling, except for the Northern Cape with a slight decrease, and an increase in all the provinces in terms of the number of adults with some primary education (less than grade 7) between 1996 and 2001. Though the fact that the population grew cannot be overlooked, these figures indicate that a lot still had to be done to reduce illiteracy since 2001. Below, Figure 2.1 provides a graphical illustration of the statistics in Table 2.1 (according to South Africa's nine provinces).

Figure 2.1: A graphical illustration of the 1996 and 2001 census statistics

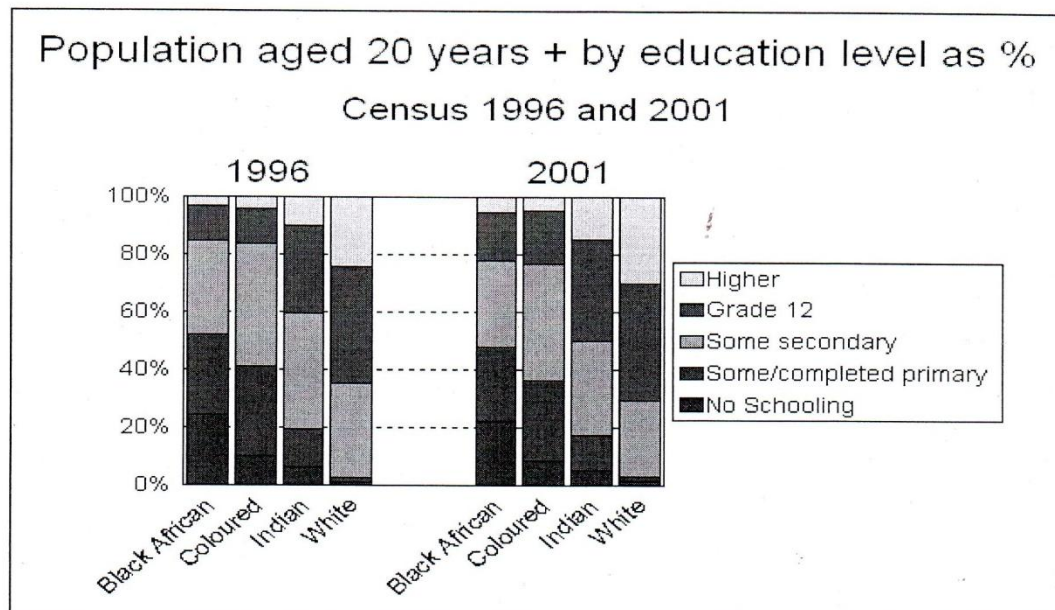


(Source: Aitchison & Harley, 2006)

Although there might be some changes or developments with regard to these numbers, it is evident that there is a great need for intervention strategies to improve the literacy levels of adults, which have to be translated into mechanisms that are sustainable for the success of the reduction of illiteracy in South Africa.

Figure 2.2 provides a graphical representation of literacy statistics according to race.

Figure 2.2: A graphical presentation of South African literacy statistics according to race



(Source: Aitchison & Harley, 2006)

According to proportions of different races in Figure 2.2, there is still much to be done to address the imbalance as it is evident that Blacks (Africans) remain the highest in terms of illiteracy levels. This could probably be ascribed to the fact that there are more Blacks (Africans) in this country than other races, or to the fact that education provision is not as easily accessible to people in rural areas. In the early 1990's Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) was introduced. ABET represents an important step in the reconstruction and development of the society in this country; it also introduces the citizens of South Africa to a culture of learning and encourages life-long learning amongst the members of the society, although it is not yet accessible to all.

The vision of the Department of Education for ABET as cited by Frow (1998:15) is, " A literate South Africa in which all citizens have acquired the basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio – economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation". The former

Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor said, “Even though significant strides have been made in reducing the absolute number of adults with no education at all, there are still too many adults with no education at all, and there are still too many adults who only have a primary school education. This creates a huge participation barrier in social and economic development, as well as in strengthening the democratic processes of governance in this country” (DoE, 2004:2).

Willenberg (2005:163) says, “Despite the high levels of illiteracy in South Africa, the government and civil society institutions tend to operate on the default assumption that consumers are literate, thereby making it extremely difficult for illiterate persons to navigate these systems. The advent of the internet has made vast amounts of information accessible to those who are literate, creating an ever – widening gap between the literate and illiterate in access to information”. The availability of information and resources that can only be used by literate people does not actually assist those that are illiterate. The question then remains: Is the Department of Education succeeding in dealing with illiteracy in this country? Another question can be: Is the Department of Education succeeding in reaching its vision that all citizens would be able to effectively participate in socio-economic, political processes and transformation as envisaged? According to Willenberg (2005:164), “the magnitude of the illiteracy problem in South Africa....and the potential for the number of adult illiteracy to increase necessitate a multi-faceted intervention strategy in order to progress towards achieving the goals for Education for All”.

The Department of Education (1997:9) developed a National Multi-year Implementation Plan in order to address the challenges it is facing with regard to strengthening measures of reducing illiteracy statistics. This plan aims at reversing the imbalances and provides a framework that will assist in setting clear targets and time frames to extend the provision of ABET in order to significantly reduce illiteracy statistics in South Africa within the next ten years. The Department of Education (1997:11) indicates that it aims to “develop a curriculum framework that will equip learners with knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical capacity to participate fully in all aspects of society”.

2.2.3 Socio-economic status in relation to literacy

Willenberg (2005:163) highlights the fact that low-literate adults in South Africa tend to occupy the lowest socio-economic strata and are poorly remunerated. According to Sloat and Willms (2000:229), “in many instances, parents in poverty find it difficult to understand and converse with their children’s teachers and because of their lower occupational status.... do not consider themselves equal to teachers”. Sloat and Willms (2000:229) further indicate that literacy and economy are interdependent. The socio-economic backgrounds of the learners therefore play a significant role in their learning process; hence it is important for the teachers to know the profile of the community and the learners that they serve. The social group in which the child finds himself/herself as well as the manner and the extent to which he/she cooperates with the group at home and in the community can play a significant role in improving the level of participation and academic achievement of the learners. According to Yinusa and Basil (2008:320), “a combination of a healthy family background living in a good environment plus the child being educated in a conducive environment will prompt academic performance and a lack thereof will retard academic performance”. Banda and Kirunda (2005:16) declare “The deprived socio-economic condition under which rural families find themselves lends itself to impoverished literacy practices”, especially in cases where there is a lack of resources and support from the parents.

Looking at unfavourable conditions in families where parents, especially the mother is unable to assist the child with schoolwork, Cooter (2006:698) refers to intergenerational illiteracy which she defines as a socio-cultural phenomenon whereby illiterate parents inadvertently sponsor home conditions that may seriously hinder their children’s reading and writing development, thus perpetuating a cycle of illiteracy. Intergenerational illiteracy often exists in high poverty urban and rural settings where it is common for teachers to find that three or more generations of a family have low literacy skills. This implies that illiteracy is closely related to poverty and low socio-economic status. According to Berthelsen and Walker (2008:35), “parents in families with low socio-economic status often have fewer years of education and possibly have had more

negative experiences with schools". Some contributing factors might be that most illiterate families have work pressures and do not have sufficient time to assist their children with their schoolwork. Children in families living at the poverty level typically have fewer words spoken to them in their homes. Cooter (2006:699) says, "specifically, less educated, lower income parents talk even less and use fewer differentiated words than do those in other socio-economic classes". Poverty poses a problem because parents of low socio-economic status are not able to provide adequately for the basic functional, social and academic needs of their children. According to Turney and Kao (2009:258), parents with higher income and greater educational attainment are more involved than parents of lower socio-economic status.

Quality education remains the ultimate tool for preserving democracy and combating poverty. Therefore parents must play their role to support their children so that the cycle of poverty in their families can be broken. Yinusa and Basil (2008:319) assert that the development of any nation or community depends largely on the quality of education of such a nation and further indicate that formal education remains the vehicle for socio-economic development and social mobilization in any society. Poor people often find it difficult to support their children; they cannot afford to keep their children at school until Grade 12 and their children lose interest in schooling along the way due to low socio-economic backgrounds. Their children resort to absenteeism which ultimately leads to them dropping out of school and this make a vicious cycle of poverty in their families. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:14) reason that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, the likelihood of children dropping out of school without completing their studies is reduced.

Stipek (1998:92) argues, "No child or adult enjoys confronting tasks that engender feelings of incompetence..... being confident of success is an essential ingredient for effective learning. Without this, students will not engage in productive learning behaviours". Children who feel that their parents love and support them perform better at school. According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:14), learners who are aware that their parents are interested in their school work, experience emotional stability and

security and are better able to overcome obstacles. Machet (2002:8) points out that many low - income communities have few resources available to them to enable them to provide their children with the opportunity to experience pre – school story book reading. He further indicates that a factor in the social environment which affects access to books is the lack of bookshops and libraries especially in disadvantaged communities.

2.2.4 Parents' literacy levels in relation to learner performance

Roman (2004:87) states that children whose parents did not complete school or have trouble with literacy skills are more likely to be illiterate themselves, and are more than five times as likely to drop out of high school as other children. Illiteracy also poses a considerable burden on the family or support system of the individual in question, as illiterate adults are highly dependent on others to function and survive (for example, not being able to read letters, not being able to fill the forms at the banks). Illiterate parents may not have the knowledge and skills needed to act and to respond to challenges they encounter in their daily lives (like reading letters from their children's schools, assisting their children with school work). This indicates that being literate in today's society demands a variety of functional abilities, which, when absent, can have dramatic health, economic, political and social consequences. Most illiterate parents feel that they cannot possibly help their children and feel embarrassed to participate and willingly contribute to their children's education, yet they can. Singh *et al.* (2004:304) found that even if some parents do not understand what their children learn at school; if they spend some quality time with their children each day tend to be good motivators to their children. Therefore, parents can play a valuable role in their children's education even if they are not educated, by showing interest, listening and encouraging their children when doing school work. According to Eggen and Kauchak (2007:298), when learners are motivated, they have more positive attitudes towards school and describe school as satisfying.

Rural education settings pose challenges for educators who seek to make a difference in the lives of the learners and their families in rural areas; such as learners losing interest and ultimately dropping out of school. Calitz *et al.* (2002:112) contend that parents, especially in the rural areas, may not have required time and skills to assist their children. Parents working far from home might not have time to assist their children with school work; other parents may find it difficult to assist their children due to the fact that they are illiterate. However, if parents are motivated, their motivation may still help their children to be better people. Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2006:138) highlight the fact that each community, even the poor rural ones, has a number of people who have special talents and knowledge that is not available in books that can be shared with the learners in the classroom. Even the illiterate people still have knowledge, skills, morals and values that they can offer to their children. Therefore parents, even the illiterate ones, can be involved in their children's education.

2.2.5 The effects of illiteracy on parents themselves

Sibiya (2004:175) points out, "illiteracy cannot be alleviated in a country where people are unaware that illiteracy is a national problem", meaning that people who are illiterate must realize they can improve their literacy skills. Sibiya (2004:175) further suggests that the people must be made aware that illiteracy is a problem that needs to be addressed. People must take the initiative to attend adult classes to assist them with basic education in order to acquire basic reading and writing skills. According to Willenberg (2005:166), "the high adult illiteracy means that many children lack opportunities to observe adults modeling literate behaviour".

Research conducted by Clarke (1997:54) on women illiteracy and how it affects their daily functioning revealed that these women are mainly bothered by their inability to sign their names and complete forms. This research by Clarke (1997:54) also revealed that illiterate women could not assist their children with school work, and attributed illiteracy to the feelings of humiliation, pain, inferiority, ignorance, isolation, incompetence and voicelessness. In most cases illiterate people do not take part in decision making

processes because they feel like they have nothing valuable to offer. Clarke (1997:16) further indicates that illiteracy has a negative impact on the lives of illiterate people, due to the fact that in most cases they hide their illiteracy. Illiterate people struggle to read simple material like prices when they buy groceries from the shops and they feel ashamed to ask for assistance.

Weigel, Martin and Bennett (2006:357) say that certain characteristics of the home and family, such as income, parents' literacy levels and literacy habits, and parent-child interaction in literacy activities have been found to be linked to the children's literacy and language skills. These characteristics really affect their lives negatively in the sense that illiterate people find it difficult to function alone and have to depend on others to read to them or write for them. They find it difficult if not impossible to assist their children with their school work. Illiteracy therefore becomes a barrier for them to function effectively in their daily activities. Weigel *et al.* (2006:358) indicate, "the home serves as a setting in which language and literacy are typically first encountered". Weigel *et al.* (2006:358) further indicate that joint book reading, parental valuing of literacy, the quality of the home environment and the overall supportiveness of the home environment are positively related to children's literacy abilities. Therefore the level of parents' encouragement and interest for literacy and their provision for its resources has an overwhelming effect on children's progress in reading and academic performance.

There is a need for the schools to ensure that necessary measures are taken to ensure that parents are encouraged to take part in educating their children and developing themselves, because children suffer when their parents are not involved in the education of their children because they lack literacy skills. According to Ebersohn and Eloff (2004:175), children who grow up in families where parents can read and write tend to develop a love of reading and writing as well. In order to increase the skills of future generations, the role played by their parents cannot be ignored. According to Cosin and Hales (1997:41), "children need adults who are interested in them...; they need support and guidance for their independence, interdependence and dependence".

In most cases it is difficult for illiterate parents to help their children even if they love to, as they rely heavily on the teachers for assistance. Kogut (2004:28) maintains that when parents do not have sound literacy skills, it is difficult for them to read to their children, help them with school work or show them the importance of reading, writing and mathematical skills in daily life.

According to Machet (2002:10), “disadvantaged children do not enter school with the requisite pre-literacy skills, as parents or care givers are more likely to be illiterate and therefore do not have books or other literate materials in their environment”. Machet (2002:10) further states that it is not surprising that although the motivation to learn to read exist in children, it is sometimes difficult to sustain and develop especially for the children from low-socio economic backgrounds. If there is a feeling of inferiority and helplessness among illiterate parents, their children are more likely to suffer.

2.3 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

2.3.1 Parental involvement defined

Lemmer *et al.* (2006:132), define parental involvement as a dynamic process whereby teachers and parents work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner; while Wong (2008:497) describes parental involvement as “the extent to which parents are interested in, knowledgeable about and willing to take an active role in the day-to-day activities of their children”. Parents are involved in the process of bringing their children up; it is on-going until their children have developed into responsible adults. Parental involvement should not only happen at home but parents should also work together with the teachers of their children to make learners’ success in education a reality. Mncube (2009:85) indicates that powers and responsibilities regarding the education of children should be distributed to all stakeholders. Parental involvement ensures cooperation and collaboration between the schools and home in order to close the gaps that exist between what the school intends to achieve and what the community expects about their children’s education. The process involves collaborating on educational matters,

setting goals, finding solutions, implementing and evaluating shared goals as well as inspiring and maintaining trust between the home and the school. Mapasa (2005) as quoted by Lombard (2007:51) indicates that many parents are only involved in as far as problems regarding learner behaviour are reported to the parents. Domina (2005:236) states, “when children have problems at school, involved parents learn about these problems earlier and know more about available solutions”. According to Mmotlane *et al.* (2009:528), parental involvement in school activities not only improve children’s cultural identity but also facilitate their socialisation, attitudes and behaviours towards those around them. Parental involvement therefore also includes active and voluntary participation of parents in a broad range of activities at school and at home, including among other things supporting, guiding and supervising the children’s schoolwork at home.

According to Mmotlane *et al.* (2009: 528) low parental involvement has been detected in South African black schools in recent years. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), hereinafter referred to as SASA, was put into place to guide the creation of a conducive and effective teaching and learning environment and to build partnerships in education. SASA stipulates clearly that all parents and the community should take responsibility for the organization of schools and points out that parents and members of the community can make important contributions and decisions to ensure proper school governance. Therefore the school governing bodies (SGBs) need to be assisted and capacitated to ensure that they know and understand their roles and responsibilities and assist them to be able to take part in decision making processes. Maboe (2005:45) emphasizes that parents are indispensable partners in the education process. They therefore need empowerment because it is a challenge for them to positively contribute in decision making. Du Toit, Froneman and Maree (2002:156) contend that “by involving the parents, an extra resource is created in the learning process”.

Machen *et al.* (2005:13) suggest that parents are an important part of the process of improving schools as it gives the parents an effective voice in decision making in schools. Parental involvement has also become a need for democratic school

governance, partnership and learning of the children to ensure that what is taught at school has a firm foundation of what is taught at home. Mmotlane *et al.* (2009: 527) argue that parental involvement in children's school activities is "one of the most valuable facets of successful education". Kyriacou (1997:61) reasons that the role of the family and parental involvement and encouragement is widely acknowledged to be of major importance in influencing the level of learners' academic motivation. There is a need to assist the parents in helping and preparing their children to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, responsible and contributing citizens in their communities and in the country as a whole. One way to foster the children's learning is when parents and teachers share the responsibility of creating a working relationship that will help the learners succeed academically. The working together of the parents and the school in the child's learning also helps to improve the relationship between the parents, learners and teachers and encourages a greater sense of appreciation and understanding and working within the same framework. Kok and Rambiyana (2002:10) state that parents' support is important; though it does not guarantee the success of reformed activities, lack thereof can sabotage even the most well-intentioned reforms.

It is therefore important for teachers to understand the profile, the culture and the context of the community that it serves, and also the importance of parental involvement as parents are also stakeholders in the building of children's future as responsible and contributing citizens. Maphanga (2006:27) indicates that the home, child and school form a trio that creates a special climate that is desirable for effective education. Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010:178) claims that even if parents are not educated and are not able to assist their children with school work, they still want them to succeed. Parental involvement therefore plays a very important role in the education of the children regardless of the children's socio-economic background. Nicholas-Omoregbe (2010:179) further indicates that academic aspirations of children positively relate to parental involvement and parents' education level because children imitate their parents and aspire to be as highly educated as their parents. Vassallo (2000: 1) indicates that parental involvement in a child's education is a strong predictor of learner achievement; typically the more involved the parent, the better off the child. Narian (2005:1) claims

that “if the child sees that his/her parents are enthusiastic about education, he/she is far more likely to view his/her schooling in a positive light, and be more receptive to learning”. It is therefore important for the child that his or her parents show interest in his or her education. Every possible effort should then be made to promote and encourage cooperation between teachers and parents in the interest and benefit of the learners. Berthelsen and Walker (2008:36) are of the opinion that schools play a significant role in determining the level, degree and nature of parental involvement.

2.3.2 The importance and benefits of parental involvement in education

Misra (2006: 166) maintains “development, whether personal or social, revolves around education”. Driessen *et al.* (2005:510) state that “parental involvement has indeed been found to influence the cognitive and social development of children”. Many parents are not aware of the real impact, contribution and improvement that a relatively small effort can bring about in their children’s lives. Blamires, Robertson, and Blamires (1997:33) indicate that “parents as a resource can provide valuable if not unique information for the professionals to make decisions in the best interest of the learners”. Parents lay the foundation for the teacher to build on and unless the foundation is sound and solid, teachers have nothing to build on. Driessen *et al.* (2005: 509) indicate that parental involvement is regarded as an important strategy for the advancement of the quality of education. Lombard (2007: 51) claims that parental involvement contributes towards better education. It is therefore imperative that the parents use the opportunity to be involved in their children’s education and understand that the educational processes do not only motivate children but also give them confidence and courage to continue achieving in education. Parents are indispensable stakeholders without which schools cannot do. It remains the responsibility of the school to ensure that parents feel free to actively take part and contribute to their children’s future.

According to Coatsworth, Pantin and Szapocznik (2002:128) “a child’s development is dependent upon the strength of the parent-child relationship, as well as the stability of the relationship among the adults who care for the child; most parents want to and are

able to help their children grow into healthy, capable adults". Although many parents do not know how to help children with their education, with encouragement, assistance, guidance and support they may become more interested and more involved at home with their child's learning activities and find themselves active and involved in their children's education. Du Toit *et al.* (2000:173) indicate that parents' attitudes play a significant role in motivating and encouraging their children towards better performance. Nkhi (2003) as cited by Lombard (2007:51) says, "open communication channels between home and school contribute towards increased parental involvement..." It is therefore important for the child that communication between the teachers and the parents is proper.

According to Hango (2007:1372) parental involvement in children's lives can have a long lasting impact on the well-being of the children. Parents' involvement conveys the message that they are interested in their children's development and this in turn signals to the children that their future is valued. Machen *et al.* (2005:14) allege that when parents are involved in the education of their children they send a valuable message that they care about their children's success". Turney and Kao (2009:258) confirm that "parents who are involved send a message to their children that education is important, and these children are more likely to value education themselves". Narian (2005:1) indicates that the role of a parent is extremely vital in the development of values, beliefs, interests and the identity of the child, and that the child needs on-going support and guidance of the parents. Parental involvement is important because it provides security and emotional stability for the child. It is therefore evident that when parents are involved, learners take into consideration the fact that they are not only accountable to their teachers, but also to their parents in terms of behaviour and performance. According to Pienaar (2003:273), "involvement with the child both at home and at school has a positive effect on their behaviour and discipline in the classroom". Children become motivated and refrain from wrong behavioural practices and focus on being the best they can be. Therefore parents should be visible in the education of their children. Shilubana and Kok (2005:105) affirm that if the parents are not available in the child's school life it puts a strain, not only affecting the child's school performance but also on

the child's emotional state. Blamires *et al.* (1997:17) assert that parents are “emotionally involved with their children in a way that professionals, however caring are not”.

According to Lemmer *et al.* (2006:132), “cooperation between the parents and the teachers improves and promotes home-school relations, reduces misunderstandings and conflicts, and ensures that continuity between home and school is maintained”. It is therefore important to assist and maximize the involvement of the parents by orientating them towards achieving the best for their children. It is also important to note that although active involvement is more beneficial than passive involvement, one could also say passive involvement is still better than no involvement at all. Mmotlane *et al.* (2009:529) state that “active involvement denotes that parents work closely with the teachers as partners in their children's education, whereas in passive involvement parents only have contact with the school when they come to pay school fees, or are called on by the teacher regarding the progress report of the child”.

Lemmer *et al.* (2006:132) highlight the fact that when teachers and parents improve the quality of their relationship and make it part of school practice, parents increase their interaction with their children at home and feel more positive about their abilities to help their children. Parents can be involved in education regardless of their income, educational level, or whether the parents are employed or not. Van der Westhuizen, Legetlo, Maaga, Sebego, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt and Steyn (2002:117) emphasize that establishing a good community relationship is a key ingredient to success in securing mutual participation of parents in decision-making, school activities, problem solving, providing assistance and offering services to a school.

Smith and Elish-Piper (2001: 157 – 158) state the following reasons amongst others, to highlight the importance of assisting parents to realize the importance of their involvement in their children's education:

- Adults who struggle with literacy are likely to have children who will struggle with literacy.

- Parents with low literacy levels are less likely to help their children with schoolwork, get involved in school activities, and communicate with their children's teachers.

In conclusion, Driessen, *et al.* (2005:514) postulate that parental involvement is important for “the functioning of the school as organization as well as for the local community”.

2.3.3 Parental involvement in relation to learner performance

Wells (1996:31) states that parental involvement and achievement are linked because the learners tend to adopt their parents' perspective with regard to achievement. If the parents show interest and like to be involved in their children's school activities, the children's attitudes towards school work improves. According to Lemmer *et al.* (2006:132) parents directly or indirectly help to shape their children's value system, orientation toward learning and view of the world in which they live. Penly (2004:15) further reasons that “children's educational success requires congruence between what is taught at school and values expressed at home”. There is a relationship between what the parents teach at home and what is taught at school, and when both the teacher and the parent work together the children will realize the link between home and school. Alyssa, Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems and Doan Holbein (2005:119) emphasize the value of parental involvement by indicating: “when parents are involved, they can set limits, provide encouragement, and act as resources as children encounter the academic challenges each new day brings. Parental involvement communicates to children how important they are to their parents”.

Dekker and Lemmer (1994:158) point out that when parents are involved in the teaching programme of the school, they are more likely to make school a priority for their children and their children are more likely to achieve better at school. It is vital that the parents play their part in helping their children to do their best and see the importance of their roles as primary teachers, because if they are not involved their children are negatively

affected. Vogel (2008:20) maintains that children who experience a lack of parental support and emotional instability often have poor relationships with their educators and peers which negatively affect their academic performance. The findings of the research conducted by Stevenson and Baker (1987) to examine the relation between parental involvement in schooling and the child's school performance revealed the following as cited by Narian (2005:28):

- The educational status of the mother is related to the degree of parental involvement in schooling, so that parents with more education are more involved.
- Parental involvement is related to the child's school performance, and that parents are more involved in school activities if the child is younger.
- The mother's educational level and the age of the child are stronger predictors of parental involvement in schooling for boys than for girls.

Vogel (2008:20) states that "parental involvement leads to parents' awareness of the importance of their children's education and the informed parent better understands the child – how the child perceives his or her world as well as the child's inner resources or potential to cope or whether the child has deficiency in coping with his or her world". In addition, Hill and Taylor (2004:162) assume that when parents are involved in their children's schooling, they meet other parents who provide information and insight on school policies and practices, as well as extracurricular activities.

2.3.4 Factors contributing to a lack of parental involvement

According to Narian (2005:5), "the rationale behind home and school working together is to ensure they are promoting similar or complimentary objectives and not conflicting or contradictory ones". Narian (2005:5) further states that it is important to uncover the factors that contribute to the gaps in educational achievement for all children. According to Machet (2002:5), "... parents frequently feel that they have nothing to give to their children that will be of educational value as a result they do not participate in their children's formal education". The reason might be that parents fear that they have little

or nothing to offer in the education world; especially those that are not educated themselves.

An analysis of the results of the research conducted by Smit and Liebenberg (2003:2) reveals that a main factor, among others, which contributes to poor parental participation in the education of their children, is that parents experience school staff as being out of touch with the realities of sub-economic living conditions. As a result, schools place unprecedented demands on the parents. This has two consequences:

- The stress of meeting these demands reduces parental ability for active involvement in their child's schooling.
- This stress also strains parent-child relationships.

As a result of the above mentioned, some parents withdraw from their responsibility to be involved in the education of their children. According to Sikhwari (1999:59), parents with poor backgrounds find it very difficult to ask for advice or talk to the teachers. Smit and Liebenberg (2003:3) highlight the fact that parental involvement under these circumstances may then become ineffective, parent-child relations may be strained, and many children may leave school as a result. More importantly, however, is the effect that these pose to children's school lives, making it difficult to break the "poverty cycle". Due to a lack of skills by many teachers for improving parental involvement, teachers can sometimes experience difficulties as parents may have different needs and expectations. Lemmer *et al.* (2006:131) emphasize the fact that teachers need to know and have information about their learners' home backgrounds, the family and community norms and values in order to create and to strengthen positive relations with the learners' parents.

Teachers also have to take note that parents are their partners in teaching the child. The attitude and treatment that parents and their children receive from school personnel may very well be sending them the message that they are no better than their context of poverty, thereby discouraging them and maintaining low levels of morale and initiative. It

is therefore of utmost importance for the teachers to realize and remove the barriers that hinder the smooth rendering of quality education and maximum participation and involvement of the parents in the education of their children, and also to understand the real needs of learners in order to provide empathy and understanding where needed. Calitz, *et al.* (2002:24) point out that providing opportunity for parents and community members to learn that they are partners with teachers in transforming schools is a crucial aspect of the democratic reform agenda. It is worth noting though, that the parents must also look for the opportunity to take part in the education of their children.

Hornby (1995:4) highlights some common professionals' attitudes towards the parents that cause tension on the relationship between the teachers and the parents. These include:

- Parents as problems
 - When parents are convinced there is something wrong with their child despite reassurance from professionals, they are considered to become over-anxious.
 - Labelling their children in this way tends to hinder the development of productive working relationships with teachers.
- Parents as adversaries
 - Teachers may have different goals and priorities than parents for the educational programmes of the children that they teach. (Parents sometimes become doubtful and this creates a conflict).
- Parents as vulnerable partners
 - Teachers may regard parents as being too vulnerable to be treated as equal partners.
- Parents as less able partners
 - There is a tendency for parents to be viewed as less observant, less perceptive and less intelligent than professionals. A more helpful view is to consider that while teachers are the experts on education, parents are experts on their children.

- Parents as needing treatment
 - All the parents should be given equal opportunities to exercise their right as partners in the education of their children.

In view of the above, the teachers need to take into account the way they relate to their learners' parents, and to address the behaviours and attitudes that hinder the success of parental involvement in schools. Gorman (2004:13) underlines the importance of sound relationships between teachers and parents when voicing the opinion that "all successful relationships are characterized by mutual respect, a clear understanding of roles, an opportunity for feedback, openness to change or adjustment, similar expectations and a defined common goal". Both parents and teachers need to be ready to accommodate one another in making parental involvement in education a success.

2.3.5 Challenges caused by the lack of parental involvement

Prior to the new education dispensation in South Africa, parents entrusted the education of their children to the teachers and expressed little interest in taking part in their children's education. When parents are not actively involved, teachers are faced with a huge challenge and responsibility of educating the learners' spiritual, moral, and social lives. Van der Walt (1994:414) points out that when the education task of the parents is taken over by other societal relationships such as the school, the family task is shrinking and becoming more and more limited to the upbringing, care and protection of the closest members. It is important that the parents take an active role in the education of their children and to assist the teachers in teaching and moulding their children to become better people.

It is sometimes difficult for parents to assist and check their children's school work as the children move to upper grades and due to the fact that the curriculum becomes more difficult and much more sophisticated. However, being there for their children with constant motivation, support and regular communication between the teachers and the parents about the learners' progress contributes more positively to the learners'

academic achievement. According to Greeff (2005:4), “every child needs encouragement, acknowledgement and acceptance”. The findings of the research conducted by Stevenson and Baker (1987) as cited by Narian (2005:28) to determine the relation between parental involvement in schooling and the child’s school performance, revealed that parental involvement is related to the child’s performance and that parents are more involved in school activities if the child is younger. In most cases, most parents are often underrepresented, considering the heavy duties and long hours of labour, embarrassment and shyness about their own educational level, language problems, and lack of understanding about the structure of education. Moloi (2002:80) expresses the opinion that “in order to facilitate collaboration and commitment, there is a need for fundamental shifts in attitudes...”. Therefore the school must be considerate of these circumstances, and provide proper and adequate encouragement for the parents to take part in school activities. This implies that the school staff must work on and improve their own attitudes toward the parents in their schools.

Parental involvement needs teachers to be open-minded and well organized in engaging the parents. Parents must be offered a variety of roles with supporting programmes to accommodate a variety of capabilities. The gap between the school and the child’s home should be closed. When parents are not motivated and encouraged to participate in their children’s education and the school perceives parental involvement as interference, parents will continue to play a minimal role in their children’s education.

2.3.6 Communication between the school and the parents

With parental involvement, the intention is to promote and support the learner’s learning, school performance and general well-being. Parental involvement also involves the transmission of the parents’ own knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to their children. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that there is proper communication between the parents and the teachers. Parents and teachers have a common goal which is to nurture and guide children to responsible adulthood (Wright &

Stegelin, 2003:19, 24). This relationship can be established by creating positive interpersonal working relationships through mutual support, mutual understanding and shared purpose for the benefit of the child. Though Cosin and Hales (1997:80) indicate that in most schools there is very little constructive communication between teachers and the most important teachers in a child's life, their parents, it is also true that most communication between home and school concerns only administrative matters or instructions from the school to parents. It is therefore an indication that communication is one-way and it is not effective. Parents need to be informed about their involvement and the school's expectations for them to be able to effectively participate in school activities.

Gorman (2004:124) emphasizes that communication must be a two-way street, in which the teachers by virtue of their position, bear the responsibility for initiating communication. Nonetheless, it is also the responsibility of the parents to communicate with the teachers for the benefit of their children. If there is effective and efficient communication between teachers and parents, parents will be comfortable, free and willing to share the necessary information with the teachers (Wright & Stegelin, 2003:24). Calitz *et al.* (2002:122) highlight the fact that it is important for the school to communicate not only negative issues but make sure that positive issues are also discussed. Thanking parents for their contributions and making them feel important is one way of doing it. If parents receive frequent and positive reports or messages from teachers, their interest is likely to increase and they will feel more valued than do parents who only receive negative comments and feedback.

Sikhwari (1999:2) expresses the opinion that "both parents and teachers want the same thing for children – the best possible education". Sikhwari (1999:36) continues by saying that "the role of the school is to supplement what the home has already started in terms of educating young people. Parents are therefore primarily the ones who build the foundation in the young people's minds". Myeko (2000:24) suggests that the manner in which schools communicate with parents is extremely important since the efforts of improving parental involvement cannot succeed without effective communication with

the parent community. When meeting with parents, the teachers must create a comfortable environment in which parents freely share the information, ask questions, and make recommendations in a way that encourages respectful two-way communication. Cowan, Swearer and Sheridan (2004:203) further point to the fact that the quality of a partnership depends heavily on the type of communication that occurs between parents and teachers. Concurring with the aforementioned, Smith (2006:49) suggests that open communication and informal opportunities, increases understanding.

According to Van der Westhuizen, *et al.* (2002:117), “a school is a unit within a society and can only exist through the cooperation of a school community”. Therefore there is a need for the school and the home to work together and there is also a need to acknowledge the fact that the parents and the teachers are interdependent. In order to realize this interdependence, the school must open the channels for effective communication between these stakeholders. The Department of Education (1994:12) also emphasises the interdependence when echoing: “children’s progress will be diminished if their parents are not seen as partners in the educational process with unique knowledge to impart”. Whatever professional assistance the teachers can offer, can seldom be effective unless it builds on parents’ capacity to be involved and unless parents believe that professionals take account of their contributions. Gorman (2004:6) reckons that the importance of communication in developing and maintaining good relationships with parents cannot be underestimated. Teachers therefore need organisational and communication skills in order to maintain reasonable contact with parents during meetings, visits, when they write letters and when making telephone calls. Gorman (2004:139) further suggests that maintaining collaboration requires good communication, conflict resolution skills and sensitivity to relationship boundaries. Teachers also need to shift their mind-sets with regard to how best they can involve the parents in school activities and also need to change their (teachers) perspectives and attitudes towards parental involvement.

Henning and Fourie (1997:121) add to the above by indicating that “through their involvement, parents must ensure that the formal education offered at the school

attended by their children is in line with their own values and culture". It is therefore imperative that the parents assist their children to link what they learn at school with their values and culture by ensuring that the school and home environments are conducive for learning in order to maximize the child's potential. Wright and Stegeline (2003:24) suggest that two-way communication strategies should be used to allow the parents to engage in verbal and written exchange with the teachers and school setting because successful home-school communication is based on the unique needs and characteristics of each family involved.

2.3.7 Parents as primary teachers

According to Singh (2005) as cited by Surujlal and Dhurup (2009:34), "parents by virtue of the fact that they are the first teachers of their children and by law are responsible for their children", while Lu and Liu (2009:71) believe that "family education is the first education a child receives". Parents are already involved as primary teachers of their children immediately after they are born, and it makes sense to continue involving the parents, especially in the early years of formal education. Lu and Liu (2009:71) further indicate that "the schooling process of a child is a dynamic process, and the early stage of basic education, family education and school education are integrated". This indicates that parents are also teachers in their own right and they need to continue sharing the responsibility of educating their children with the teachers at school.

Penly (2004:15) contends that parents are children's first teachers and have a life-long influence on children's values, attitudes and aspirations. Parents interact with their children on a daily basis; therefore the family is the support base for every child. According to Kanan and Al-Karasneh (2009:332), "the family as an institution is seen as an on-going and interacting social system". The family is children's first group of people and this is where their personal and social development begins. Before children become involved with groups outside the family, the foundations for the future development have been firmly laid. The family provides perspectives to guide children's behaviour. Weeto (1997:6) argues that "the needs of the children should be met at home and within the

family first before they are exposed to the outside world (school)". Sikhwari (1999:55) emphasizes that parents as primary teachers must involve themselves as partners and not as competitors in the education process as they remain the primary teachers of their children. Parents can assist in shaping their children into future adults with good values and morals that will help them to become responsible members of their families and communities.

Until primary education is taken seriously, and seen for what it is; it is doubtful whether the expectations people have of the nature of a post-apartheid society will be realized and achieved. Parents need to teach their children about their identity, beliefs and values as members of the community in which they live. The parents also need to show love and support for their children to recognize that they really care and are willing to assist in whatever way they possibly can. Parents should be encouraged and motivated to assist their children and be willing to at least listen as their children read to them. Kanan and Al-Karasneh (2009:332) indicate that parental encouragement refers to obvious verbal and nonverbal forms of encouragement for the child. Teaching children does not necessarily mean that their parents should be professional teachers, but it implies that they can assist their children by being there, by listening and encouraging them as they do their school work. Most parents do not know how to help their children with their education, but with guidance and support they may become involved in their children's learning activities and give guidance where necessary.

Even if the parents are not able to read to their children they can just listen to their children reading to them. Coelho (1998:127) adds to this statement when saying that if children read with or to their parents, they are actually engaged in more than simple act of reading or listening to a story. They may retell the story or parts of it and parents may engage in discussion, and ask questions that encourage children to make predictions about the story, to relate it to their own experience, or to elaborate on the story. As long as the parent shows interest in what the learner is doing, the learners' interest in school activities also improves. According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:41), "parents must show that they believe in their children and show them that they are important, loved

and capable". It does not necessarily matter what language is used for this discussion, as long as it is one that the parent and child can use to communicate effectively with each other. It then goes without saying that parents can assist their children by listening and encouraging them to read. Penly (2004:15) indicates: "most parents, regardless of economic status, educational level or cultural background care deeply about their children's education and can provide substantial support if given specific opportunities and knowledge".

2.3.8 Home-school collaboration

Vogel (2008:23) suggests that "effective parental involvement in the classroom requires a healthy partnership between the parents and the teachers". According to Burnett and Jarvis (2004:28), "parents should be active partners in their children's education". Home-school collaboration implies that there should be a partnership between two systems and that both systems work toward a common goal. For the children parental involvement is an indication that there is support from the parents and that they are interested in what the children do and learn.

Cowan *et al.* (2004:201) indicate that collaboration "is to work together toward a common goal or set of goals". According to Cowan *et al.* (2004:202), in a collaborative interdependent relationship parents offer what they know about their children's academic and behavioural strengths and limitations in the home and non-school settings whereas teachers offer their knowledge of learners' relative strengths and limitations in the classroom and educational settings. Teachers and parents must work together as partners to ensure that this inter-dependence works for the best. This means taking into account the different languages, traditions, faiths, attitudes to school and abilities of the parent population. Both the teachers and the parents can benefit from this interaction. When they work collaboratively as a unit in the best interest of the learner, this improves their relations and they get to know and understand one another better and also share the responsibility for the children. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:23) state that shared responsibilities of the teachers and parents emphasize the

coordination, cooperation and complementary nature of schools and families, and encourage collaboration between the two parties.

Home and school represent the primary environments in which children grow up and develop; therefore it is important that the school should realise the importance of parental involvement and home-school relationship. The foundation of a good parent-teacher relationship is imperative and depends on two-way open communication, mutual respect, shared responsibility and an understanding of what is best for the child. According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:17), teachers should take into consideration the literacy levels of the parents so that the parents can understand the information communicated to them by the teachers. Lemmer (1999:159) suggests that home-school collaboration focuses on the relationship between home and school and how parents and teachers can work together to promote the social and academic development of learners. Parents are likely to feel better parents if they are given the necessary support and guidance in an inviting environment. According to Cowan *et al.* (2004:203), the quality partnership can assist the learners to develop better attitudes toward school and improve their performance both in and out of the classroom. Therefore in order for this interdependence to succeed, the teachers and parents must take the initiative in ensuring that there is rapport between the school and home. This implies that it is the responsibility of both partners (teachers and parents) to make sure that they have good relations and also ensure that they work together to assist the children to give their best performance. Burnett and Jarvis (2004:28) indicate that parents should be active partners in their children's education as they are the single most important factor in raising the attainment levels of their children.

According to Struthers, Surujlal, Harrington, Shibane, Bevan, Wakefield, Cupido, Thomas and Sampson (2009:50), maximum involvement of parents can only be achieved if the barriers to participation are fully understood and eradicated. The school staff needs to address the barriers that they are aware of that affect maximum involvement of parents in school activities. It is important for the teachers to know and understand their communities. Gorman (2004:119) indicates that parents will feel more

interested in their roles if they feel that their culture is taken into consideration, and if the school demonstrates cultural sensitivity by accommodating parents for whom English is not their primary language. Therefore parents as valuable partners must be empowered and be acknowledged as equal partners and also as people with certain expertise and important skills. As partners in education the parents must be allowed to contribute something valuable in this relationship, (for example money, support and transmission of skills). Children's success and progress will be diminished if their parents are not seen as partners with unique information and knowledge to impart (Blamires *et al.*, 1997:1).

Bastiani (1993:105) suggests that if the school and the parents can join hands in ensuring that their partnership and interdependence work effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the child, the following, amongst others, will characterize their relationship.

- Sharing of power, responsibility and ownership.
- Shared aims and goals, based on common ground, but which also acknowledge important differences.

Martin and Waltman-Greenwood (1995:10) add that parent involvement implies that parents and teachers share common goals and responsibility; see themselves as equals and both contribute to the child's education. It will therefore be in the interest of the children to ensure that parents and teachers maintain good relations and share the responsibility to teach the children. If parents are actively involved in the education of their children, they will become more accountable for their children's success or failure. According to Ziegler and Davis (2008:30) effective partnerships among individuals and groups focus on specific goals through cooperation, collaboration and shared responsibilities. Both the teachers and the parents have shared responsibilities for the well-being of the child and neither of them can be freed from this relationship as they are both tied by a common goal that they share i.e. the child's success. Epstein (1996:6) highlights that if the school, the parents and the community members all have the same goals for their children, they will probably succeed in achieving such goals.

Stakeholders working together can assist the learners to easily link what they are taught at home to what they learn at school. Following Cowan *et al.* (2004:203) contention, “a partnership allows parents and teachers to work together to improve the educational system such that it is possible for them to work toward preventing future problems”. Cowan *et al.* (2004:203) further indicate that in a partnership individuals learn from one another and pool together expertise and skills in support of a common focus.

Schools that are most successful at forming partnerships with the parents have established a give-and-take atmosphere, where parents are expected to take part and at the same time schools are expected to offer real services to the families (Gorman, 2004:136). Ziegler and Davis (2008:31) maintain that effective partnerships need to be transparent and public about its activities; particularly on decision making processes and to communicate information in a variety of ways. Calitz *et al.* (2002:122) stress the fact that the relationship between home and school should not be a once-off situation but a continuous process, which never stops. Both teachers and parents can benefit from their partnership as it provides them with the opportunity to improve their relationship and begin to understand each other's perceptions regarding children's behaviour.

For Cowan *et al.* (2004:203), the partnership between home and school allows for a joint ownership of problems and concerns as well as joint commitment toward educational and behavioural goals for learners. Wright and Stegeline (2003:62) explain that if partnerships are to be successful, all stakeholders must be encouraged to make contributions of their knowledge, gifts, talents and resources to the lives of the children and families. When parents are actively involved in the education of their children, they become exposed to the challenges that teachers face with their children. Therefore parents are able to assist the teachers to solve behavioural problems and contribute to the discipline of their children. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:14) maintain that the home-school relationship improves learner behaviour and school attendance. It is therefore imperative for the teachers to take note that if they want parents to take part in school activities, communication channels should be opened and relationships with the

community must be improved, regardless of the literacy levels, language background and socio-economic status of the parents. When parents are involved in the education of their children, they develop a sense of belonging to the school. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:108) state that when parents are involved in decision making and school activities, they develop a sense of ownership of the school.

With regard to collaboration between the school and parents with low literacy levels, Smith and Elish-Piper (2002: 157) suggest that it is the responsibility of teachers to assist such parents to understand their roles, how the school functions and also that they are critical agents in their children's success and educational attainment.

2.3.9 A stimulating family environment in relation to learner achievement

A conducive home environment allows children to experience what is taking place at school as the extension of what has been taught at home and being able to feel free or be allowed to link that in a productive way. Experiences within the family have an enormous impact on children's learning and home background is the most significant factor in educational achievement at school and later in life. It is therefore solely the duty and responsibility of the parents to provide basic needs, support and care for their children. Machet (2002:3) adds that family practices actively channel children's development through the creation of sets of experiences and opportunities. Children will also learn the basic uses of literacy through watching their family; for example, they will see their mother making a shopping list, writing a message or a phone number. This will surely have a positive effect and by the time these children go to school, even though they may not be able to read and write, they will realize the importance and the role that literacy will play in their daily lives.

Burnett and Jarvis (2004:28) make it clear that parents are the key to creating and nurturing a learning environment where education in its broadest sense, is valued. Each family has a vision of success for its children and it should be a priority to talk with their children about positive attitudes, values and morals needed to be the best member of

the society. Surujlal and Dhurup (2009:43) assert that when parents are involved in their children's education there is a noticeable positive change in the self-esteem, sense of pride and self-confidence in the children. Positive attitudes towards learning, respect for self and others, developing awareness and appreciation of the world around them, are aspects that should be promoted. Issues like self-confidence, self-control, independence, cooperation, sharing, and respect for adults are the basis for sound development that will enable children to take their rightful place in the outside world. In this sense the primary school is vitally important since Lemmer (1999:73) is of the opinion that the elementary school should provide an environment in which each learner can develop as an individual and as a functioning member of society.

The family acts as a mediator between the home, the school and the society. The importance of a healthy family environment cannot at all costs be compromised. Family support therefore, no matter how secured or unstable, is the foundation of the child's learning throughout life. Goodall and Harris (2008:278) suggest that parents' influential role in their children's learning should not be underestimated because it is what parents do, whether at the school or at the home, that makes the difference to achievement of the learners. Burnett and Javis (2004:3) indicate that the only way a child can be assisted to maximize his or her potential is to create the right environment for learning at home. The social group in which the child finds himself or herself as well as the manner and the extent to which he or she cooperates with the group at home and in the community determines the extent to which the child becomes part of the teaching and learning process. This implies that the child's home background is of utmost importance for effective teaching and learning. Clark (2007:2) declares that it is important that parents and carers are aware of the contribution they can make to their children's learning by providing a stimulating environment for them. The family, school and the community are together responsible for and influential in the children's development (Uludag, 2008:809).

2.4 CONCLUSION

Parental involvement and partnership in education are aimed at strengthening and supporting teachers' and parents' skills in order to maximize the children's potential and to produce results, which signify great improvement for the children's academic achievement. It is therefore important for the teachers, the parents, the community and government to ensure that relevant measures and programmes are in place to address a lack of parental involvement in the education of their children for the betterment of the future of South Africa. The schools must work very hard to attain greater insight about parental involvement in education and have a variety of strategies to know and understand the parents' interests and desires and shape them to prepare for educator-parent interaction and inter-dependence in which all the stakeholders can exchange information and ideas as partners in the best interest of the children. Lessing and Mahabeer (2007:139) indicate that among other things, poor socio-economic environments, lack of parental involvement and low educational level of parents contribute to the academic achievement of learners. According to Sloat and Willms (2000:225), "parents with more economic and social capital are likely to talk more with their children, read to them more often, buy them more educational toys and generally provide them with a richer environment than parents with fewer resources". Yinusa and Basil (2008:320) state that "poor parental care with gross deprivation of social and economic needs of a child, usually yield poor academic performance".

Whereas this chapter focused on the literature review regarding literacy and parental involvement, the next chapter will centre on outlining the methodology followed to conduct the empirical research and on the data collection.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL STUDY: OVERVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this study is to establish how parents' literacy levels affect their involvement in their children's education, and consequently their involvement in their children's academic achievement. From the general aim, the following objectives were formulated to direct the study.

- To clarify the meaning of literacy.
- To outline the significant factors from the literature regarding parental involvement in formal education.
- To investigate parents' literacy levels in the Qwa Qwa region.
- To investigate the importance of parental involvement in relation to children's education and academic performance.
- To investigate the effects of parents' literacy levels on their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children.

Chapter 2 focused on a literature review which addressed the first four of the stated objectives. Henceforth, the study will focus on an empirical investigation to determine the effect of the literacy levels of a group of selected parents on their involvement in their children's education and academic achievement. To operationalize the empirical investigative methodology, an overview and theoretical justification of issues such as the research paradigm, the research design and research method, sampling, the data collection instrument, quality criteria, the role of the researcher, the data collection process and research ethics will be provided in this chapter, followed by a concurrent discussion of each aspect's applicability to the study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Babbie (2008:34) refers to a paradigm as: “a model or framework for observation and understanding, which shapes both what we see and how we see it”. It provides a structure for understanding a particular phenomenon under study. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:33) a research paradigm is a perspective about the research held by a community of researchers based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values and practices. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 48) indicates that paradigms “serve as the lens or organizing principles by which reality is interpreted” and refers to Lincoln and Guba’s (1994) identification of four research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism (57). However, Nieuwenhuis (2007: 58) mentions that critical theory and constructivism can be traced back to interpretivism.

According to Leedy (1997:104), the qualitative research approach is also referred to as the “interpretative, the naturalistic, the constructivist, or the post-positivist approach” while the quantitative research approach, is termed the “traditional, the positivist, the experimental, or the empiricist paradigm” (Creswell, 1994:4). Mason (1996:56) advocates that the interpretive approach to research is not only about seeing people as the primary sources of information, but also about seeking their perceptions and experiences on the researched phenomenon. Nieuwenhuis (2007: 59) adds that “interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them”. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:20), “interpretive knowledge is constructed not only by observable phenomena, but also by descriptions of people’s intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self-understanding”.

For the purpose of this research, selected participants’ opinions and perceptions were required to enable the researcher to determine the possible effects of parents’ literacy levels on their involvement in their children’s education and academic achievement. This implies that the researcher needed to interact and interpret the world as perceived and experienced by the participants in order to construct reality to such an extent that

the purpose of the study be addressed. Hence the study is founded on the interpretivist paradigm.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:31) define a research design as “the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions”. It describes the procedure that was followed when the study was conducted, and this includes when, from whom and under what conditions the data were obtained. Johnson and Christensen (2008:305) refer to a research design as the outline, plan or strategy that is used to answer research questions.

Three main varieties of research designs can be differentiated: qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods. Wiersma (2000:13) indicates that **qualitative research** is done for the purpose of understanding social phenomena, while Welman and Kruger (2001: 178) argue that qualitative research is best suited for describing authentic experiences of a small group of research participants. According to Schumacher and McMillan (2006:315), qualitative research is inquiry in which researchers collect data with the selected research participants in their natural settings. Mouton (2001:271) maintains that qualitative researchers are interested in in-depth description and understanding of actions and events in terms of the participants’ beliefs and context. Following the same line of argument, White (2005: 81) adds that qualitative research is about the understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of research participants. Qualitative research thus aims to describe and analyse people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, values, thoughts and perceptions. With qualitative research, the researcher tries to interpret and understand the phenomena of which information was obtained first hand from research participants in terms of the meanings that people assign to them. Since qualitative research provides for an open and flexible method of data collection, the participants are free to provide the information as they perceive and experience it. Johnson and Christensen (2008:388) further highlight the

fact that qualitative researchers tend to rely primarily on the inductive mode of the scientific method, and that this type of research is usually explorative in nature.

Quantitative research on the other hand refers to research where data are gathered in terms of which answers are mostly given anonymously and the results or findings are usually presented in numbers format. Creswell (1994:2) indicates: “quantitative research is an inquiry into a social or human problem based on testing a theory, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures”. According to Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 255) quantitative research signifies research which describes “the trends or explains the relationship between variables”.

Ivankova *et al.* (2007: 260) describe a **mixed methods research** design as a design in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research is accommodated. Numerical and narrative data are either collected concurrently or sequentially for addressing the particular purpose of a study. Houser (2009: 79) indicates that a mixed methods approach usually leads to better research outcomes.

Since the purpose of this research requires that it be approached from an interpretive paradigm the best way of gathering data would be through interaction with selected participants to get information at first hand as experienced and perceived by them. Therefore it was decided to follow a qualitative method of research to gather the desired data.

3.4 RESEARCH METHOD

Creswell (2009: 11) describes research methods or strategies of inquiry as “types of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs or models that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design”. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:305) there are four methods or strategies of inquiry that can be followed when conducting qualitative research. These include: ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology and case studies.

According to Leedy (1997:159), **ethnography** focuses on the features of a given culture with the purpose of describing the relationship between culture and behaviour. In **grounded theory** the purpose is to inductively generate a theory describing and explaining a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:394). Leedy (1997:161) defines **phenomenology** as a research method that attempts to understand the participants' perspectives and views of social realities. The **case study** is yet another method in which a qualitative research design can be operationalized; however, Nieuwenhuis (2007:75) points out that the term "case study" has multiple meanings. Leedy (1997:166) indicates that the purpose of a case study is to examine a single case in-depth in order to understand a person or a phenomenon. According to Creswell (1994:12) a case study is "a qualitative method in which the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon ('the case') bounded by time and activity". Houser (2009:67) describes a case study as "an intensive investigation of a single individual in an effort to treat or intervene with that person and/or to make inferences about others" and continues by saying that a case study may focus on one single case or several cases. Though confirming the above interpretations of a case study, Plano Clark and Creswell (2010: 243) add that "the focus of a qualitative study may be a specific issue, with a case (or cases) used to illustrate the issue". Yin (1984) as cited by Nieuwenhuis (2007: 75), underscores this understanding by indicating that a case study could investigate a "contemporary phenomenon within a real life context".

For the purpose of this research, a case study seems to be a suitable method or strategy of inquiry. Moreover, the method or strategy can be typified as an instrumental case study (Fouché, 2005: 272) since it will facilitate a better understanding of a social issue: parents' involvement in the education and academic performance of their children in terms of their literacy levels. In this particular instance the parents' literacy levels and how it affects their involvement with their children forms the conceptually bounded contemporary phenomenon or issue to be studied. Furthermore the study will be conducted within the boundaries of a specific region, namely Qwa Qwa. In order to collect relevant information there is a need for interaction with selected research participants. Leedy (1997:157) emphasizes the need for interaction in a case study by

indicating that the researcher assumes an interactive role with the participants, becoming personally involved with the people or the phenomenon under study in order to understand and perceive the world as experienced by the participants.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

According to Mertens (1998: 253) sampling refers to the selection of a smaller group of participants from a larger population to participate in a particular study. The population for this research comprises teachers, parents and learners from primary schools, but for logistical reasons this population is not accessible to the researcher. To select a viable, smaller research population without sacrificing the validity of the research a sampling process should be used to determine the number of research participants. Corbetta (2003: 210) explains sampling as a procedure for choosing a limited number of cases from a population by applying specific criteria. Maree and Pietersen (2007: 172) differentiate between two major classes of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling. In the case of probability sampling the random selection of research participants and the generalization of research findings are common features. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:86) non-probability sampling refers to sampling where “the probability of including each element of the population in a sample is unknown”. Huysamen (2001:44) adds that non-probability sampling is “less complicated and more economical in terms of time and financial expenses”.

Simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling are examples of probability sampling methods (Maree & Pietersen, 2007: 172) while convenience sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and purposeful sampling are mentioned as non-probability sampling methods (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993: 378).

Though the selection of the schools, based on their accessibility to the researcher, was subjected to convenience sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2007: 177), non-probability sampling in the form of **purposeful sampling** was primarily applied in this study. Plano Clark and Creswell (2010:253) describe purposeful sampling as the intentional selection

of research participants by the researcher in order to learn more about or to better understand a central phenomenon. Purposeful sampling, according to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:106) is based on selecting research participants who the researcher believes are typical and who most commonly are representative of the population under investigation.

This means that the participants are selected because they share certain characteristics that are significant for the study.

Mainly because of logistical reasons, the sample was selected from four intermediate schools in cluster two of the Qwa Qwa region, as demarcated by the Department of Education serving the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. Four schools were conveniently selected; representing fifty percent of the number of intermediate schools in cluster two. Because research participants should be “information-rich key informants” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319) to make an informed contribution towards the phenomenon under investigation the researcher argued that participants in this study should be purposefully selected to comprise Head of Departments (HODs), parents of children who are in grade six and learners from the same grade cohort of the selected schools.

Four HODs, one from each school, who headed the Intermediate phase (Life Orientation) were selected to participate in the research. The researcher believes that these HODs were in a position to contribute positively to the research since they were familiar with the households and the prevailing circumstances in the areas served by their respective schools. As members of their schools’ School Based Support Teams (SBST) they are the ones who usually interact with parents and know much about the profiles of learners attending their schools. Parents of learners, who were at the time of the research in Grade 6, were selected according to the under mentioned categories structured by the researcher. Since it was not possible to subject the prospective participants to any measurement tool to determine the parents’ level of literacy, it was decided to define and categorize literacy levels according to highest formal education qualifications. The categories and the rationale behind each are tabled in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Categories for determining parents' literacy levels

Formal education qualification	Rationale
Grade 7 and below	This category represents the completion of formal primary school education (Grade 7) or at least having completed some grades in primary school
Grade 9 (Grade 8-9)	This category represents the completion of compulsory schooling at the end of Grade 9 and also includes parents whose highest formal education qualification is Grade 8
Grade 12 (grade 10-12)	This category represents the completion of secondary schooling (Grade 12) and includes parents whose highest formal education qualification is any grade completed in the FET Phase
Grade 12+	This category represents the completion of any formal post-school qualification

Additional criteria for selecting the parents was that they had to be from two-parent households; thus representing an ideal family comprising of father, mother and children. To eliminate the factor of large differences in formal education qualifications within households, it was required that both parents should fall in the same formal education qualification category. By applying the said criteria with the help of the School Management Teams of the four schools, the researcher managed to identify fourteen parent couples to be interviewed. Determined by the selection of their parents as research participants, fourteen learners, currently in Grade 6 in the respective schools also took part in the study. The decision to include Grade 6 learners and their parents was based on the argument that this grade marks the end of the Intermediate phase and that these learners are considered to be quite receptive of their parents' involvement in their education and academic achievement.

Table 3.2: Outline of the selection of research participants

School A	School B	School C	School D	Sub total	Total
1 HOD	1 HOD	1 HOD	1 HOD	4	4 HODs
2 Parent couples in the Grade 7 and below category	1 Parent couple in the Grade 7 and below category	2 Parent couples in the Grade 7 and below category		5	14 Parent couples
	1 Parent couple in the Grade 9 (Grades 8 & 9) category			1	
2 Parent couples in the Grade 12 (Grades 10 – 12) category	2 Parent couples in the Grade 12 (Grades 10 – 12) category		2 Parent couples in the Grade 12 (Grades 10 – 12) category	6	
		1 Parent couple in the Grade 12+ category	1 Parent couple in the Grade 12+ category	2	
4 Learners	4 Learners	3 Learners	3 Learners	14	14 Learners

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews were used as the primary instrument to collect data in this research. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:140), “interviews can provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds”. There are several forms of interviewing and these include: ethnographic interviewing, phenomenological interviewing, elite interviewing and focus group interviewing, as indicated by Marshall and Rossman (1995:81). Nieuwenhuis (2007:87) lists open-ended, semi-structured and structured interviews as types of interviews, whilst McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 351-352) also mention informal conversation interviews, standardized open-ended interviews, key informant interviews and career and life history interviews. Derived from the above information, interviews may be conducted on an individual basis or in a group.

For the purpose of this study, interviews which can be typified as semi-structured, standardized open-ended interviews were used to collect data. All interview questions, which were prepared by the researcher beforehand, were the same for each interview and all participant groups; therefore the interviews were standardized for the sake of consistency. However, the interviews were composed of semi-structured questions in that the pre-determined questions “define(d) the line of inquiry” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 87) but also allowed the researcher some freedom to explore parents’ involvement in their children’s education and academic achievement in terms of their own literacy levels further by means of probing questions.

In the case of the HODs and the learners, individual interviews were conducted in a face-to-face situation in order to establish a personal relationship with participants. Though the parent interviews shared the same characteristics, these interviews were conducted in pairs where both parents were present. Since Nieuwenhuis (2007: 90) draws a distinction between group interviews and focus group interviews, it could be

said that the parent interviews exemplified group interviews because the intention was not to elicit debate about the generated responses. Even though the parent interviews could be categorized as group interviews the researcher aimed to stimulate group dynamics (amongst individual couples) in the same way as focus group interviews do. To substantiate this line of argument, the researcher took advantage of Kruger and Casey's remark (2000) as cited by Ritchie and Lewis (2003:171): "the focus group interview presents a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because the participants are influencing and influenced by others just as they are in real life".

Questions were phrased in English, but to accommodate the literacy levels of the parents, translation of questions into Sesotho (which is mostly spoken in the area where the research was conducted) was done. (See **Appendix B** for translated questions).

3.6.2 Criteria for administrating and conducting the interviews

In attempting to prepare and conduct the interviews in a scientific manner which would yield informative data, the researcher relied and adhered to the guidelines for conducting successful interviews as recommended by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) and Leedy and Ormrod (2005).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003:145) propose the following guidelines:

- Arrival
Welcome and calm the participants as to ensure that they become part of the research.
- Introduce the research topic
Make the intention and the value of the research known to participants to ensure that they are aware of the expectations and their role in contributing to the research.
- Beginning the interview
Start with the general questions and move to more specific ones to assist the participants to "open-up" and give full answers.

- During the interview
Phrase questions clearly and give guidance to the participants, exploring every subject (whether anticipated or those that emerge during the discussion) in depth with a series of follow-up questions and probes.
- Ending the interview
Notify the participants when the interview approaches the end to allow the interviewees to gradually return to the level of everyday social interaction. It is important not to leave any unexpressed feelings.
- After the interview
After the interview, thank the participants warmly and begin to help them to move out of the interview mode and reassure them about confidentiality and leave them feeling well.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 147 – 148) a successful interview is dependent on the following:

- Identification of questions in advance
Such questions are related to the purpose of the research and it will help the researcher to keep to the focus of the study.
- Interviewees should be representative of the group under study
The researcher should ensure that the interviewees will provide typical answers representative of the larger group under study.
- Use a suitable location
A location where both the interviewer and the interviewee feel comfortable and where disruptions are limited should be selected.
- Get interviewees' consent
Once the interviewees are introduced to the research and how the results will be used, each individual should indicate his/her willingness to participate in the research.

- Establish and maintain rapport
As the researcher wants as most as possible information from each interview, he/she should 'connect' with the participants in order to establish a relation of trust and willingness to share.
- Focus on reality
This will allow the interviewee to share actual views and experiences rather than fabricated views and experiences.
- Allow participants to express their views
Do not interrupt or interfere with a participant's thinking and the manner in which responses are provided.
- Record responses
It remains good practice to record interviews verbatim as it reflects an accurate account of responses.
- Do not react to responses
Surprise or disapproval expressed by the interviewer, may hamper the trustworthiness of further responses.
- Be aware that responses may be perceptions rather than facts
Although an interviewer is looking for facts, the sincerity of interviewees in this regard could not always be guaranteed.
- Consider group dynamics in a group interview
Some individuals are most likely to dominate. Awareness of this will enable the interviewer to involve everybody.

All of the above guidelines assisted the researcher in the preparation of the interviews and the way in which interviews were conducted. In retrospect, it can be stated that almost all of the mentioned guidelines were incorporated in the preparation and execution of the data collection process.

3.6.3 Pilot testing

To conclude the final preparation of the interview questions, a pilot study was conducted in one of the cluster two schools (not selected as part of the sample) in Qwa Qwa to ensure that the interview questions were clear in order to avoid ambiguity. Soans and Stevenson (2004:1086) explain piloting as testing a scheme or a project before introducing it more widely. Greeff (2005: 294) quotes Seidman (1998) saying that researchers are urged to try out their interviewing design with a smaller group of research participants. Not only does piloting assist the researcher to come to grips with practical aspects concerning interviewing, but also to finalize the interview schedule. The aim of the pilot study in this research was to get accustomed to the interviewing process and to test the research instrument in order to minimize errors. The researcher also contacted one of the researchers in education from the University of the Free State (Qwa Qwa branch) to ensure that the questions were understandable to avoid possible misinterpretations resulting in inappropriate responses. Some of the questions were reviewed and some were removed from the list.

3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

To ensure the soundness of any research, validity, reliability and objectivity are usually applicable.

Mouton (2001:122) maintains that validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration, while McMillan and Schumacher (2006:324) describe validity in qualitative research as “the degree to which the (data) interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher”. According to Brown and Dowling (1998:26), reliability is “a measure of the consistency of a coding process when carried out on different occasions and/or by different researchers”. Mouton (2001:119) explains reliability as a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time.

Following the reasoning of Lincoln and Guba (1985), De Vos (2005: 346 – 347) concludes that four alternative constructs to validity and reliability reflect the assumptions of qualitative research more accurately. These include credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability and each is briefly discussed below within the context of this study.

- **Credibility.** As alternative to internal validity, the parameters of a qualitative study need to be described accurately to ensure such a study's credibility. Within the stated parameters which serve as a framework for the research, the credibility of the study could be defended. With reference to this study, the discussion of the research questions and objectives, the literature study, and the research design which includes sampling and the data collection process are all aimed to establish to what extent parents' literacy levels affect their involvement in their children's education and academic achievement. Furthermore the researcher firmly believes that the stated matters provide sufficient information as to attest the credibility of the research.
- **Transferability.** This is comparable to external validity and indicates the extent to which the research results can be generalized. As a rule, qualitative research does not aim to generalize findings, but rather to provide an in-depth description of findings within a particular context. However, triangulation is proposed to address the transferability of a study's results. According to De Vos (2005:361) triangulation allows the researcher to take multiple measures of the same phenomenon, and to have confidence in the research results. In this study the procedure of data triangulation (De Vos, 2005: 362) was followed by including more than one data source (HODs, parents and learners) to enhance the study's transferability. In addition, a knowledgeable colleague in the field of qualitative research acted as peer reviewer (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010: 287) to validate the research procedures and data analysis.
- **Dependability.** According to De Vos (2005: 346) dependability is the alternative to reliability in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in

case of repeating the research. In this study the research was conducted in the Qwa Qwa region and although the chances of replicating the results of the study could be questioned, the description of the milieu in which the research was conducted as well as the research participants who were involved in the research, could help to produce the same findings in a similar environment.

- **Conformability** refers to the fact that research results could be confirmed by another similar research. The accuracy in which the data are presented thus provides for conformability in the sense that the researcher does not speak on behalf of the data but allow the data to speak for itself. By means of validating the data of this research in terms of triangulation and by following a peer review process, the researcher attempted to make provision for conformability.

3.8 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 344) describe the role of the researcher as “a relationship acquired by and ascribed to the researcher in interactive data collection”. In the case of the current study, the researcher mainly fulfilled the role of an interviewer. Secondary to the role of interviewer, the researcher also acted as participant observer since she tried to gain an inside perspective and make sense of how parents’ literacy levels impact on their involvement with their children’s education and academic performance in a specified geographical area.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

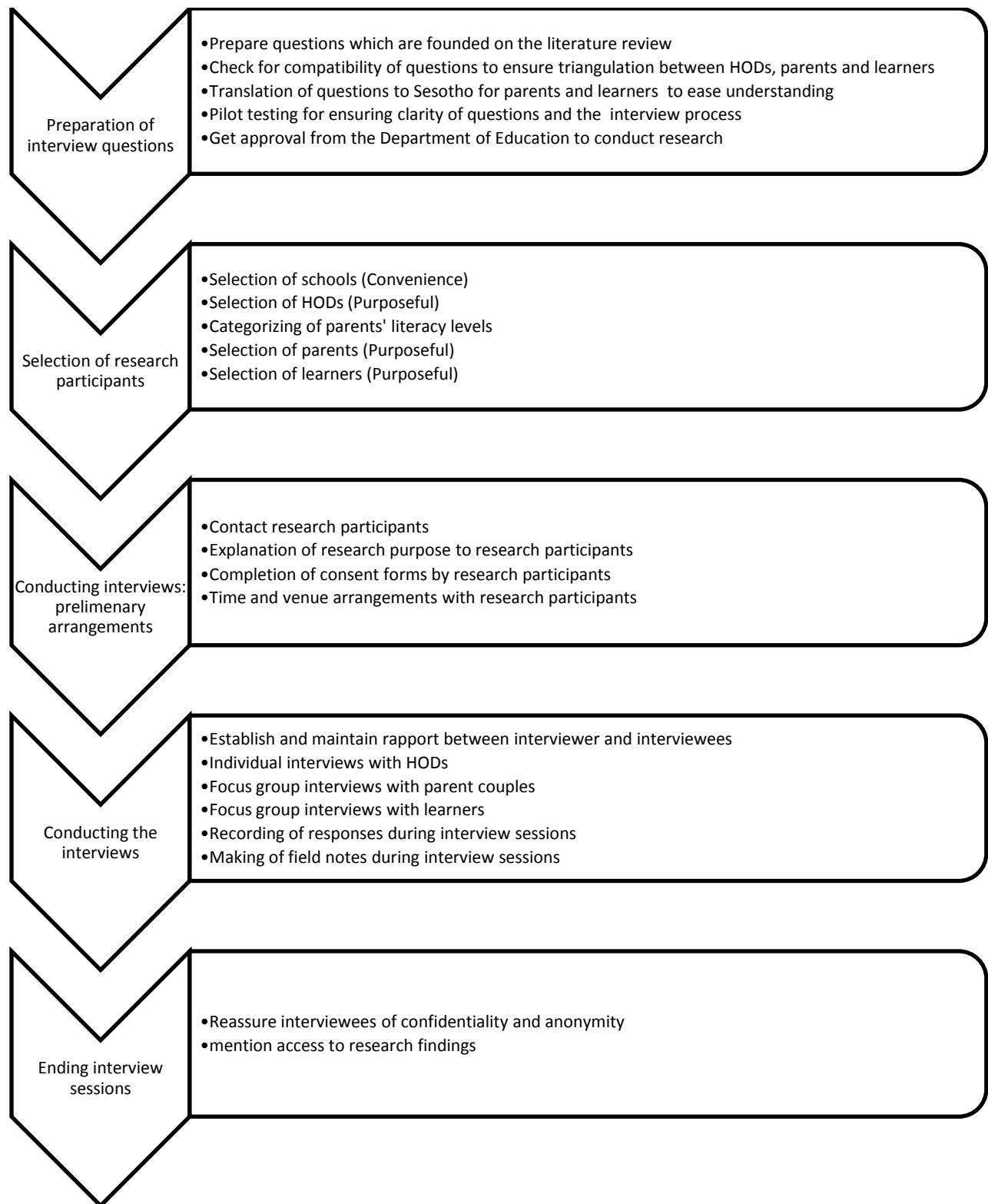
According to Soans and Stevenson (2004:490), ethics mean the moral principles governing or influencing conduct. Johnson and Christensen (2008:102) indicate that ethics are principles and guidelines that help people uphold the things that are of value to them and therefore refer to research ethics as a guiding set of principles that are to assist researchers in conducting ethical studies. For the purpose of this research the following procedures were followed to ensure that the research meets standard ethical requirements.

- Consent to conduct research in the selected schools was requested from the Free State Department of Education (See **Appendices C to F**).
- Once approved, the school principals and governing bodies of the selected schools were approached for their approval. For the purpose of confidentiality, the researcher clarified that the names of the schools and participants will not be revealed and that interviews will be conducted at such a time as to not influence the normal business of the schools.
- After approval was obtained from the two aforementioned official structures, the selected participants were requested to give their informed consent by signing the consent forms before taking part in the research (**Appendices G to J**). The participants were informed about the purpose of the research by also assuring them that the information gathered will only be used for research purposes. They were assured that they will participate anonymously without any chance that their identities will be exposed. Since their participation is voluntary the participants were also made aware that they have the right to withdraw anytime during the interviews, should they feel uncomfortable to continue. The participants were informed that the interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder; but only with their consent.
- Once consent was obtained from the participants, the researcher and the participants mutually decided on a schedule with dates and times for the interviews.

3.10 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Once the researcher got clarity on the various matters pertaining to the research design, the data collection process was planned and implemented. By considering the information already provided in this chapter and to provide an overview of the data collection process, Figure 3.1 represents the facets attended to during the data collection process.

Figure 3.1 The data collection process



3.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a theoretical overview and justification of the empirical research of the study was presented. In the next chapter the focus will be on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on a theoretical overview and justification of the empirical research, as well as a presentation of how the related empirical aspects are relevant to this particular study. This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the empirical research. The final findings from the analysed and interpreted data will serve to address the following specified objective:

To investigate the effects of parents' literacy levels on their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children.

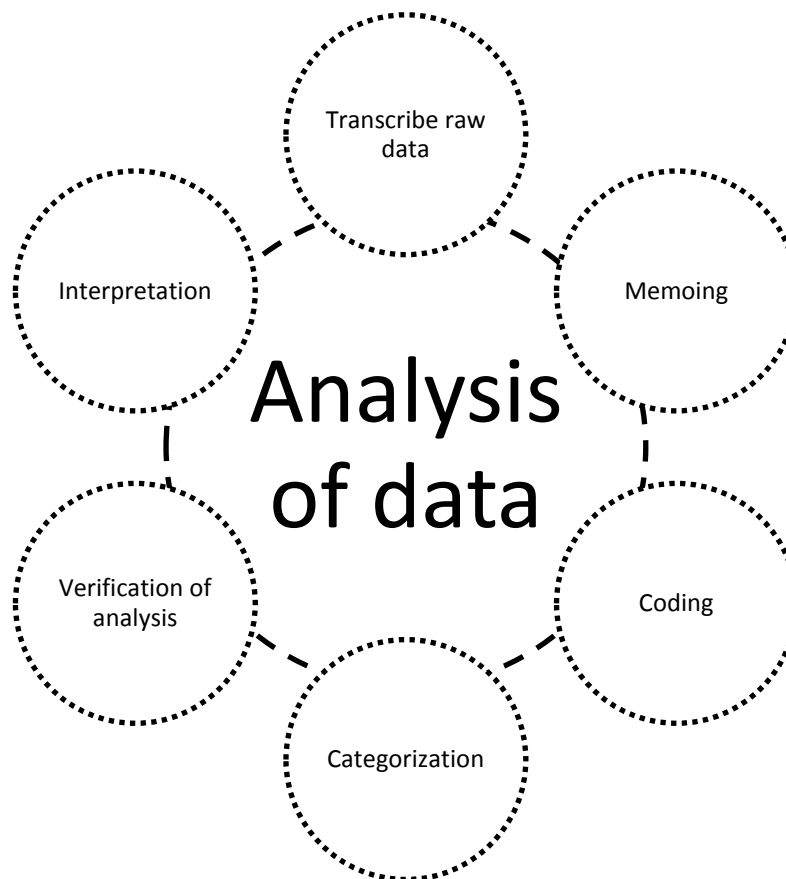
4.2 PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Nieuwenhuis (2007: 99) asserts that qualitative data analysis aims to ascertain how research participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon through either a process of inductive or deductive analysis which allows research findings to emerge from the raw data. Through constant engagement with the collected data, codes are eventually assigned to the transcribed raw data where after such codes are clustered into topics, themes or categories (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:100).

In the case of this study the research phenomenon comprised the effects of parents' literacy levels on their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children. By means of multiple measures (interviews with HODs, parents and learners), triangulated data on the phenomenon were obtained. The data were then transcribed by the researcher. Processes of memoing (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:104), where additional impressions of the raw data were captured and open coding (De Vos, 2005: 341), where meaningful segments were clustered together, followed. During both these processes the researcher read critically through, reflected upon and made condensed

notes which mirrored additional information and the core of the raw transcribed data. Finally, related codes were organized and combined into *a priori* categories (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:99) emanating from the literature study and which were determined while constructing the interview questions. A deductive approach was thus followed since the categories were pre-determined and directed the analysis of the raw data. All of the above processes were checked for verification purposes by a knowledgeable colleague in the field of qualitative research (*cf.* 3.7) and monitored by the researcher's supervisor. The data analysis and interpretation processes followed in this study are represented in Figure 4.1 below. The dotted lines signify the iterative process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 99) typically found in the data analysis of qualitative research.

Figure 4.1 Data analysis process



4.3 PRESENTATION OF CODED DATA

Following the responses of the research participants, the coded versions of the raw data obtained from each school's respondents are presented below. By using the same order in which the questions appeared in the interview schedules (**Appendix A**), the focal points derived from the participants' responses at the respective schools are noted.

School A

QUESTION	HOD	PARENTS	LEARNERS
1	• Deep rural area. • Many parents are unemployed, poor, and illiterate. • Many learners live with grandparents.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Visiting homes. • Taking care of orphans. • Projects: feeding scheme, food parcels, school garden. <u>Grade 7</u> • Teachers encourage community involvement in school. • School assists in resolving issues concerning education.	• Teachers are unaware about family circumstances.
2	• Try to provide learning materials (copies). • Feeding scheme, school garden. • Request clothes from teachers and other people visiting the school to provide to poorest children and orphans. • NGOs also support.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Teachers understand individual circumstances when explained by parents. • Teachers discuss learners' performance with their parents. <u>Grade 7</u> • School assists struggling parents. • Teachers do home visits.	• School provides food and uniform.

3	• School struggles a lot to get parents involved.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Try to assist with school work; although some learning areas are difficult. • Ask older children from the household or neighbourhood to assist. • Visit the school for assistance. • Assist with fundraising. <u>Grade 7</u> • Check the child's work and discuss with the teachers. • Attend meetings.	• Attend meetings. • Assist with homework.
4	• Encourage parents to come to grade meetings, quarterly meetings and school activities. • Encourage parents to voluntarily come to school. • SGB assist in motivating the parents. • Motivate parents to check learners' books and ask for assistance where needed.	<u>Grade 12</u> • School requests parents to come to school to ask for assistance. • School invites parents to attend school events like open days. <u>Grade 7</u> • The school encourages parents during meetings to help learners, and ask for help if they have problems.	• Invite parents to meetings.

5	• Depends on different circumstances.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Sharing responsibility. • Share different subjects according to expertise. • Mother assists because she is always at home. <u>Grade 7</u> • Father assists as he is not working.	• Mother assists because the father is working. • Father assists because the mother is working.
6	• Attendance of meetings is poor. • Many parents are reluctant and not eager to attend meetings. • Many parents do not always see the importance of their children's education. • Many parents are uninspired and therefore cannot motivate their children.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Schools are visited voluntarily. • Meetings are arranged for parents to attend. <u>Grade 7</u> • Not afraid to approach the school but do not have time to go.	• Parents are confident. • Only when invited
7	• Parents are treated equally. • All parents are respected. • Everybody is consulted.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Teachers try to accommodate and treat everybody equally. • Some parents like favours from teachers. <u>Grade 7</u> • There is no discrimination.	• Parents are treated equally.

8	• Parents whose children do not have problems value education higher. • Struggling learners' parents do not respond well being involved.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Less educated people struggle more. • Everybody needs a good education. <u>Grade 7</u> • Education leads to independence and a bright future.	• Parents' encouragement to attend school.
9	• Negatively; parents with low literacy levels show little interest. • Parents with some education show more interest.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Positive: school (teachers) work very hard. <u>Grade 7</u> • Parents feel proud about the school.	• Parents are proud of the school.
10	• Meetings. • Letters.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Letters. <u>Grade 7</u> • Letters.	• Letters.
11	• Quarterly, attendance is good (about 80% attendances). • Sectional meetings, attendance is poor as they are held during school days. • Surprisingly, some would say that they are unemployed but when asked to come to school they would say that they are working.	<u>Grade 12</u> • 100% attendance as they want to hear the information for themselves. • About 60% attendances. <u>Grade 7</u> • The father attends about 80%-90% of the meetings. • Not all, about 60% attendances.	• Range between 100% and 50% attendances.

School B

QUESTION	HOD	PARENTS	LEARNERS
1	• Young parents (less than 30 years of age). • Parents are not so literate, and they did not go further with their education. • Most of the parents did not pass grade 12. • Many children are orphans and are raised by grandparents. • There are cooperation and good relations with the parents.	<u>Grade 12</u> • School organises free trips for orphans and poor children. • School buys uniforms for orphans. • School discusses issues with the parents. • There is feeding scheme for learners. <u>Grade 9</u> • The school has time for parents to discuss children's issues. <u>Grade 7</u> • There is free transport for poorer children.	• Teachers discuss issues with the parents. • Teachers understand different circumstances.
2	• Provide food (feeding scheme). • Class teachers take responsibility for their learners; they even buy clothes for them.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Teachers understand and work with families to assist children. • Teachers discuss their concerns with the parents. <u>Grade 9</u> • Teachers understand family conditions. <u>Grade 7</u> • Teachers discuss the concerns with the family (parents). • The school understands different circumstances.	• Teachers understand and discuss issues with parents. • Teachers understand family situations.

3	• Involvement is not so good; most parents are ashamed that they are less educated. • Some parents are more involved and offer help (few).	<u>Grade 12</u> • Assist with homework. • The father is the chairperson of the SGB. • Attend meetings. <u>Grade 9</u> • Not involved with school activities, but assist with homework and ask older brothers and sisters to assist. <u>Grade 7</u> • Assist with homework.	• Mothers assist with homework. • Parents attend meetings. • Encouragement to do schoolwork.
4	• Call parents to meetings (open days). • Most of the parents do not help even if they are encouraged, due to their literacy levels.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Parents help with gardening and cleaning the school premises. • Parents are encouraged and invited to meetings. • Send letters and inform parents about school activities. • Invitation to voluntary visit the school. <u>Grade 9</u> • Invited to meetings. • Encourage parents. <u>Grade 7</u> • Encourage parents to take responsibility for their child.	• Invite parents to school activities like fundraising. • Encourage parents to attend meetings. • Motivate parents to assist their children.

5	• Mostly mothers, but some fathers also do (good learners are mostly those helped by fathers).	<u>Grade 12</u> • Mostly the mother as the father works shifts • Share the responsibility according to expertise. <u>Grade 9</u> • Share the responsibility of child. <u>Grade 7</u> • Mother assists because the father is working.	• Mothers assist because the fathers are working. • Mother assists as she is not working.
6	• No, not told or given freedom to come uninvited.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Father goes to school anytime (SGB chairperson). <u>Grade 9</u> • Father goes to school anytime. <u>Grade 7</u> • No.	• Parents are free to visit school. • No.
7	• Everybody are treated the same.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Everybody are treated equally and respected. <u>Grade 9</u> • Treated equally. <u>Grade 7</u> • All are equal.	• Parents are treated with respect and equally
8	• Parents attend price giving ceremonies. • Parents comment on the quality of work done.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Learner will assist and work for community. • To assist the family. <u>Grade 9</u> • For better job opportunities. <u>Grade 7</u> • For better work opportunities.	• To have better work opportunities. • Parents encourage them to learn.

9	• Parents' attitude is good.	<u>Grade 12</u> • Proud of their school. <u>Grade 9</u> <u>Grade 7</u>	• Parents are proud of the school.
10	• Letters	<u>Grade 12</u> • Letters. <u>Grade 9</u> <u>Grade 7</u>	• Letters.
11	• 70%-80% attendance.	<u>Grade 12</u> • 100% attendance. <u>Grade 9</u> • 70%-80% attendance. <u>Grade 7</u> • 70% attendance.	• 100%, father is the SGB chairperson. • Yes, but not all. About 70%-80% attendance.

School C

QUESTION	HOD	PARENTS	LEARNERS
1	• Many parents are illiterate. • School is situated in a semi-rural area. • Many parents are unemployed. • Many of the learners live with grandparents and relatives (affected by HIV and AIDS). • There are learners from surrounding areas and their standard of living is better. • The community struggles to assist their children.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • The father is the SGB chairperson). • The school knows different circumstances. <u>Grade 7</u> • School communicates timeously with parents and report issues relating to the child. • School gives uniform for struggling learners.	• Teachers do not know and understand different circumstances. • Profile forms for the learners are completed.

2	• SBST assists to support the learners who have special needs (affected by HIV and AIDS). • Orphans are given food. • There is a garden to provide vegetables for orphans and a feeding scheme to provide food during breaks. • Teachers ask for donations (clothes, food) from parents and NGOs. • Teachers understand different circumstances. • School provides uniform for learners.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • There is a feeding scheme for learners and the school takes the responsibility for vulnerable children. <u>Grade 7</u> • School provides uniform for their child.	• Teachers understand different circumstances. • There is feeding scheme. • Teachers ask for donations from other children.
3	• Parents support by giving permission to learners to participate in school activities. • Some parents come to school to support.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Assist with homework- both parents. <u>Grade 7</u> • Difficulty in assisting with homework, ask older brother to assist. • Parents take care of their child even if they cannot assist with schoolwork, but they encourage and motivate him. • Assist with homework where possible.	• Father visit school, SGB chairperson. • Father checks books and encourage with incentives. • Assist with homework. • Check books. • Invited to come to school for open days and even for other events. • Parents assist to read and with homework.

4	• Have gatherings to motivate parents and to assist them to help their children.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • The school informs parents of school activities. <u>Grade 7</u> • School invites parents to meetings and encourages them to assist their children. • Invite parents to meetings to inform them of the school developments.	• Invite parents to meetings and encourage them to check books. • Encourage parents to assist with schoolwork and ask for help if they don't understand.
5	• Most learners are living with mothers. • In two parent-households, it is usually mothers who assist the child • Learners are open to their mothers than to their fathers. • Mothers usually take action faster to assist the child.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Father assists with homework and encourages with incentives. <u>Grade 7</u> • Mother is available and the father is not able to assist. • Mother has a little light, father can't help.	• Father attends meetings, mother works far from school. • Father assists with homework. • Feels comfortable with father. • Mothers assist because they are not working. • Father arrives late.
6	• Many parents who are illiterate do not come to school and only few literate parents come to school. • Parents phone to ask about their children's performance. • For children who live with their grandparents school visits are rare.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Always go to school as he is the SGB chairperson. <u>Grade 7</u> • No, only when invited.	• Father always comes to school.

7	• School treats and respects all parents regardless of their status.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Teachers encourage parents to feel free and treat them equally. <u>Grade7</u> • Yes, parents are treated equally.	• Teachers treat and respect all.
8	• Parents want their children to be educated; make effort even if they cannot afford.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • For better life and work opportunities. <u>Grade7</u> • In order to help family. • For better work opportunities.	• Encourage child to work hard. • Encourage and motivate children.
9	• Positive.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Proud. <u>Grade7</u> • Proud.	• Proud and happy with the school.
10	• Letters. • Sometimes telephone if it's urgent.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Letters. <u>Grade7</u> • Letters.	• Letters.
11	• 90% attendance.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • 80% attendance. <u>Grade7</u> • 70% attendance.	• 80%-90% attendance.

School D

QUESTION	HOD	PARENTS	LEARNERS
1	• Many parents are not so educated. • Many parents have not passed grade 12. • Most parents are unemployed and are dependent on grants.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Feeding scheme at the school. <u>Grade 12</u> • The school understands different circumstances. • Yes, school feeds the needy and orphans are given uniform.	• Teachers ask learners of their family circumstances and provide for the needy. • Profile forms for the learners are completed on admission.
2	• Invite the parents to meetings. • There is feeding scheme at school.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • The school buy uniform for orphans. <u>Grade 12</u> • School communicates to parents with children with special needs. • School understands conditions. • Provide uniform and food. The school also does gardening for needy learners.	• School gives uniform and resources for the needy.
3	• Teachers ask the parents to help the learners with homework. • Parents are invited to open days and the response is positive. • The school does gardening and parents volunteer to cook for the learners.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Assist with homework and support during school activities. <u>Grade 12</u> • Assist with homework. • Visit school to ask about learner's performance. • Assist with finance. • Attend meetings and open days to check the child's schoolwork.	• Check and sign children's books, assist with homework and attend meetings. • Both parents are working, only assist with schoolwork.

4	• Invite parents to meetings and encourage them to assist with homework.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Teachers invite parents to school to encourage them to assist their children with homework <u>Grade 12</u> • Teachers request parents to check their children's books and assist with homework. • Encourage parents to assist with cleaning the school environment if they are unemployed.	• Advise parents to motivate their children. • Invite the parents for open days. • Parents are advised to motivate learners to do their work.
5	• Mothers assist. • Most learners are from single-parent households living with only a mother.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Mother assist, father not available as he is working far from home. <u>Grade 12</u> • Both parents take the responsibility as they are both working. • Parents share according to expertise.	• Mother assist, father works outside Qwa Qwa. • Both parents share the responsibility.
6	• No, not voluntarily, most parents come at the end of the year to make queries about their children failing and not during the year.	<u>Grade 12+.</u> • Freely go to school without being invited. <u>Grade 12</u> • Freely go to school if they have time.	• Freely go to school. • They only go to school when invited due to work.

7	• Yes - all treated equally.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • No, poor parents are not assisted on time. The school concentrates more on those who can afford it (money). <u>Grade 12</u> • Yes, treated equally. The school provides for assistance.	• Parents are treated equally, never heard any complaints from parents.
8	• Some parents see the value of education, but there are those that do not show interest.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • To learn more about life. <u>Grade 12</u> • To study further: education is the key to life.	• Parents motivate to work hard and to complete studies. • For a better future. • For work opportunities.
9	• Some are positive; some seem not to be interested.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Happy with some educators, but not happy with some. <u>Grade 12</u> • Not happy, some parents prefer private schools but cannot afford it. • Happy, the child works and performs well.	• Happy, never heard the parents complain.
10	• Letters. • Sometimes verbally.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • Letters, sometimes verbally. <u>Grade 12</u> • Phones.	• Letters, sometimes verbally.

11	•80%-100% attendance.	<u>Grade 12+</u> • 90%-100% attendance. <u>Grade12</u> •Few meetings attended due to work. •40%-50% attendance.	•100% attendance. •40%-50% attendance.
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4.4 ANALYSIS OF DATA ACCORDING TO A *PRIORI* CATEGORIES

In this section, the coded responses obtained from the HODs, parents and learners from the respective schools (*cf.* 4.3) are consolidated into *a priori* categories to present an overall view of the various research participants on each particular category.

Category: Awareness of community profile (Q1)	
HODs	The HODs from all four the schools indicated that their schools match more or less the same characteristics. These include that the schools are situated in areas typified as semi-rural and deep rural areas; that many parents are young, unemployed, illiterate, poor and with a low levels of education. Moreover, it seems as though many parents project little ambition to further their education. The surrounding communities feeding the schools are mostly poor and dependent on grants and apparently struggle to support school going children. It was also indicated that many learners are orphans, living with and being raised by their grand-parents or other relatives. However, respondents gave the impression that good relations exist between the schools and the communities in which they are situated.

PARENTS	All parents responded positively about the schools' awareness of the communities that they serve. The schools provide for material support in the form of uniforms and transport; especially for those learners coming from exceptionally poor households and orphans. There are also feeding schemes at most of the schools. Many of the parents also mentioned that schools discuss issues related to the learners with their parents.
LEARNERS	Although many of the learners indicated that schools and teachers understand the different circumstances of the communities which they serve, an exception to the rule was mentioned at one school where learners expressed the opinion that their school does not know their family situations. The completion of learner profiles was also mentioned; indicating that schools are in possession of learner records reflecting learner circumstances.
Category: Responsiveness to community needs (Q2)	
HODs	It was mentioned again that schools occasionally provide food and clothing to orphans and needy children. It was indicated that the SBSTs, class teachers, NGOs and community members sometimes take responsibility for this by raising donations or even paying for it from their own pockets. The schools also try to make learning material freely available and to invite parents to meetings.
PARENTS	According to parents schools understand different family circumstances and conditions and they work together with the parents to assist their children. In some instances teachers even visit learners' homes and discuss learners' problems with parents. Some schools also provide for material needs in terms of food and uniforms.
LEARNERS	Learners indicated that their schools understand different circumstances and provide food, clothing and other resources to needy learners. Educational related matters are also brought to the attention of parents.

Category: Parental involvement (Q3)	
HODs	HODs are of the opinion that parental involvement is not so good, due to the fact that parents are not always highly educated. However, there are exceptions. Some parents do visit the schools, especially on open days and they support their children by giving them permission to participate in school activities. In some cases parents volunteer to help with the schools' gardening and feeding schemes. The schools also appeal to parents to help their children with homework.
PARENTS	Parents indicated that they attend meetings and open days and assist with finances in terms of fundraising where possible. Two parents indicated that they are SGB chairpersons and always assist with school activities. Parents also indicated that they assist their children with homework or ask older siblings or children from the neighbourhood for assistance where they cannot help due to their literacy levels and the fact that they are not always familiar with the new learning areas. Indirect support is also provided to learners by means of encouragement and motivation.
LEARNERS	In most cases learners indicated that their parents try to assist them with their school work by also checking their books and that their parents attend meetings. In one case it was indicated that motivation took place by offering incentives. Cases were also reported where both parents are working and that they only assist with homework.
Category: Empowerment for / encouragement of parental involvement (Q4)	
HODs	Parents are encouraged to attend meetings and are invited to open days to check their children's work. This is primarily done to motivate parents to get involved in their children's education and to assist them with their schoolwork. However, parents' educational backgrounds are failing them to become fully involved. Parents are also motivated to visit the schools voluntarily and to be involved in other school activities.

PARENTS	Parents indicated that they are invited to schools to assist and take part in school activities. They are invited to meetings and encouraged to take responsibility for their children's education. They are also encouraged to ask for assistance where needed.
LEARNERS	The schools invite their parents to meetings and other school activities and motivate them to assist their children.
Category: Predominantly involved parent (Q5)	
HODs	HODs indicated that mothers are mostly the ones who are involved in their children's education and academic achievement. Although it was indicated that a few fathers also assist in their children's' education, involvement is determined by different circumstances. Apparently, some children are closer to their mothers than their fathers while the opposite is also true; especially in the case of better performers.
PARENTS	Some parents indicated that they share their educational responsibility according to expertise. However, it seems as though the mothers are primarily the ones who assist their children as the fathers are mostly working.
LEARNERS	In most cases the learners said that they are assisted by their mothers; except for two learners who indicated that they are assisted by their fathers.
Category: Parental confidence (Q6)	
HODs	HODs indicated that parents do not voluntarily come to school. In one case it was indicated that parents are not invited to voluntarily come to school as this is disruptive.
PARENTS	Parents indicated that they are not afraid to go to school, but do not go because they are invited to open days to check their children's schoolwork. Two parents indicated that they freely go to school anytime, but these are exceptions since they serve as SGB chairpersons.

LEARNERS	Learners indicated that parents are not afraid to go to school, but they only go when invited to meetings. Two learners indicated that their parents visit the school at any time, but that they are office bearers. (SGB chairpersons).
Category: Treatment of parents (Q7)	
HODs	All the HODs responded positively by indicating that all parents are treated equally with respect regardless of their educational or societal status.
PARENTS	The majority of parents indicated that they are all treated well and with equally respect by the schools. In one case a parent who holds a post-school qualification, remarked that the school do not assist poor parents on time.
LEARNERS	All the learners were under the impression that their parents are treated equally and with respect by the respective schools.
Category: Parents' valuing of education (Q8)	
HODs	Mixed responses were obtained. Some HODs responded positively by indicating that parents attend meetings when invited which shows that they want to see their children succeed. It was also noted that although it is not always affordable to them, parents make efforts to support their children's education. There were also cases mentioned where parents, especially those of struggling learners, do not show interest in their children's education.
PARENTS	Most of the parents responded optimistically by suggesting that education is important for their children to get better job opportunities and brighter future prospects. It was also mentioned that by creating better opportunities for their children, they (the parents) could also benefit.

LEARNERS	The majority of the learners said that their parents value their education. This was explained in terms of better futures and better work opportunities.
Category: Parents' attitude towards schools (Q9)	
HODs	Parents' attitude is generally positive; however, some parents do not show interest in school activities. These are mostly parents with low educational levels.
PARENTS	Almost all the parents indicated that they are proud of their children's schools. However, parents with higher educational levels seem to be more critical as it was indicated in some cases that they are not happy with some of the teachers at their children's schools or that they prefer private schools, though they cannot afford it.
LEARNERS	By and large the learners indicated that their parents are proud and happy about their schools.
Category: Communication to parents (Q10)	
HODs	In most cases HODs mentioned that information is communicated to parents through letters. Phone calls were mentioned in cases where urgent messages need to be communicated to parents. Verbal means of communication are sometimes also used.
PARENTS	The majority of parents responded that information is communicated through letters from the respective schools; though verbal and telephonic communication is also used.
LEARNERS	The learners affirmed that information is primarily communicated through letters; sometimes verbal communication was also mentioned.
Category: Parental attendance of meetings (Q11)	
HODs	HODs indicated that 80%-100% of parents attend meetings but the percentage dropped during weekdays.

PARENTS	Parents calculate their attendance of meetings between 40% and 100%. The differences are due to working conditions.
LEARNERS	Learners indicated a 50% to a 100% attendance of their parents at meetings. The percentage is subject to their parents working hours.

4.5 INTERPRETATION OF THE COLLECTED DATA

Derived from the coded data obtained from the research participants of the respective schools (*cf.* 4.3) and the pre-determined directory of categories in which data were clustered (*cf.* 4.4), this section offers an interpretation of the data by also relating and justifying the findings with what was found in the literature review. The discussions will be based on the *a priori* categories as reflected by the interview questions.

4.5.1 Awareness of community profile (Q1)

As stated in 2.3.1, it is important for teachers to understand the profile, the culture and the context of the community they serve. To expound on the aforementioned, it is imperative for teachers to know and have information about their learners' backgrounds, the family and community norms and values in order to create and to strengthen positive relations with the learners' parents (*cf.* 2.3.4). The majority of the interviewees (HODs, Parents, and Learners) indicated that the schools are knowledgeable and considerate about the profiles of the communities that they serve. This signals an awareness of the sample schools regarding the general circumstances, living conditions and education levels of their communities. Consequently this awareness also impacts on the schools' encounters with parents' literacy levels and parents' involvement in their children's education and academic achievement.

4.5.2 Responsiveness to community needs (Q2)

Although teachers' awareness of the community profile in which their school is situated is laudable, it is far from being adequate. Therefore awareness should be extended to

include responsiveness to such a profile. All the interviewees highlighted the measures that the schools have in place in order to respond to the needs of the community. The fact that the schools provide uniforms and food to underprivileged learners is an indication that the material requirements of the community are addressed, and that they are making efforts in improving the lives of their communities. From the responses it is also evident that educational needs are addressed by making learning resources available and by notifying parents about educational matters.

4.5.3 Parental involvement (Q3)

Although the schools are trying to involve the parents of all the learners, teachers find it somewhat disappointing that parents are not fully involved in their children's' education. Nonetheless, parents do attend meetings, open days, fundraising opportunities and help with feeding schemes. These could be regarded by some parents as "gatherings" of the community (given the rural environment in which the schools are situated); rather than to be driven by the real intended purposes. Moreover, the literature review points to the fact that parents are sometimes underrepresented in meetings of educational nature due to their lack of understanding about the structure of education (*cf.* 2.3.5). This was echoed by parents' responses when indicating that they are not familiar with the "new learning areas". The fact that schools motivate parents to assist their children with schoolwork and the willingness of parents to do this is encouraging. However, when parents do not have sound literacy skills, it is difficult for them to read to their children and assist them with schoolwork (*cf.* 2.2.5). This is affirmed by the participants when indicating that older siblings or other children from the neighbourhood are sometimes called for assistance or that parents only provide help in their "specialized" areas.

4.5.4 Empowerment for / encouragement of parental involvement (Q4)

Schools must provide proper and adequate motivation and encouragement for parents to take part in school activities otherwise parents will play a minimal role (*cf.* 2.3.5). In this regard the participants from the sample schools indicated that parents are invited to

meetings and open days to motivate and encourage them to take responsibility for their children's education and to ask for assistance in cases where they need help but also to take part in the broader spectrum of school activities. It is, however, important for schools to be cognisant of the fact that meetings of educational nature should be "inviting" in that it should allow everybody to participate in a relaxed and respectful atmosphere (*cf.* 2.3.6).

4.5.5 Predominantly involved parent (Q5)

Most of the participants indicated that the mothers are more involved in their children's general education and academic achievement; though a few participants remarked that their fathers also help sometimes or that their parents share these responsibilities according to their "expertise". However, from the obtained data, it is evident that the mothers are perceived to be the ones who are predominantly involved in the education of their children, and who also assist their children to achieve academically. Possible reasons for this could be ascribed to factors such as working fathers, better relationships with the mothers, and more immediate support from mothers. This finding seems to be contradictory with what was stated in 2.2.5, namely that mothers, especially those whose literacy levels are low, find it difficult to assist their children with schoolwork.

4.5.6 Parental confidence (Q6)

Though some of the interviewees indicated that many parents are not afraid to visit the schools, it generally appears as if a lot of parents do not voluntarily visit the schools unless invited. This is underscored by the literature review where it is stated that parents with low literacy levels do not take part in schools' decision making processes because they feel they have nothing valuable to offer (*cf.* 2.2.5). On the other hand, parents who are closely involved with the school's activities, such as to serve on the SGB, appear to be more confident to visit the schools whenever they wish. In one exceptional case the HOD reported that the school prefers that parents do not visit the

school without being invited, which is somewhat disturbing since this could reflect the teachers' unwillingness to reach out to their surrounding community.

4.5.7 Treatment of parents (Q7)

In one instance a parent with a higher education background indicated that poorer parents are less attended to when visiting the school than those parents who are financially stronger. However, most of the interviewees indicated that all the parents are treated equally and with respect regardless of their educational and societal status which shows that relatively good relations exist between the schools and the communities that they serve. The manner in which parents are treated by the schools thus stresses the fact that teachers should be sensitive and need to take into account the ways in which they relate to their learners' parents and to address the behaviour and attitudes that may hinder the success of parental involvement in their schools (*cf.* 2.3.5).

4.5.8 Parents' valuing of education (Q8)

Parents' involvement in the education of their children sends the message that they care about their children's success and that they regard education as being important (*cf.* 2.3.2). Most of the participants indicated that the parents, irrespective of their literacy levels, generally value the education of their children since they realize that less educated people tend to struggle more in life and that education is the passport to independence and a brighter future for the learners as well as for their families.

4.5.9 Parents' attitude towards schools (Q9)

Many of the responses show that the parents are proud of their children's schools but that parents with a lower level of education tend to show less interest. It was also indicated that private schools are preferred subject to affordability. The presented data shows that the attitude of the parents towards their children's schools is chiefly one of

pride, which could point to the fact that that they value what the schools are doing in terms of the education of their children.

4.5.10 Communication to parents (Q10)

As was indicated in the literature review, the foundation of good parent-teacher relationships depends on sound and clear communication (*cf.* 2.3.8). The majority of the interviewees mentioned that the information from schools is usually communicated through letters to parents. Sometimes communication takes place verbally or telephonically. It is, however, not clear from the responses how schools accommodate less literate parents if the primary source of communication is in written form.

4.5.11 Parental attendance of meetings (Q11)

Most of the participants indicated that parents' attendance of meetings is better if the meetings are held over weekends, and that meetings are attended less frequently during weekdays due to work commitments. The latter is underlined by the literature review (*cf.* 2.3.5) where it is stated that parents' long hours of labour often prevents them from attending meetings. Generally it appears as if parents' attendance of meetings is good and that parents' are thus accommodated by their children's schools when meetings are scheduled.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews with selected HODs, parents and learners. Though the responses of the participants indicated that the impact factor of the literacy levels of the parents on their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children is relatively small and that they all participate in school activities, it is evident that the literate parents are mostly the ones who were able to indicate certain concerns about the schools or the

teachers whereas the parents with lower literacy levels seemed to be more satisfied with everything that happens at their children's schools.

The next chapter will focus on a summary of the study, where after conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted with the purpose of examining the effect of literacy levels on parental involvement in the education and academic achievement of children in the Qwa Qwa region.

This chapter intends to provide a synoptic overview of the study, followed by general conclusions based on the objectives which guided the study. This will be followed by recommendations as derived from the findings from the research as well as recommendations for further research. The limitations of the study will be highlighted after which the study will be finally concluded.

5.2 SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 offered the motivation for the study by presenting the purpose it wishes to address, the research questions and the objectives which guided the research, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in which the research is located, and the research design. Terminology frequently used in the research was defined and the expected outlay of the research was provided.

Chapter 2 presented the literature review encapsulating the phenomena of literacy and parental involvement. Literacy was defined and illiteracy statistics in South Africa, socio-economic status in relation to literacy, parents' literacy levels in relation to learner performance, and the effects of illiteracy on the parents themselves were discussed. The meaning of parental involvement was also explored by looking into its importance and benefits, specifically in relation to learner performance. The factors that contribute

to the lack of parental involvement, challenges caused by the lack of parental involvement, home-school communication, parents as primary teachers and home-school collaboration were amongst the factors discussed. The chapter was concluded by emphasizing parent-teacher interdependence and the importance of a stimulating learning environment in relation to learner performance.

Chapter 3 presented an overview of the empirical research. The research paradigm, the research design and method and the population and sampling were justified. This was followed by an elucidation of the interview as data collection instrument. For ensuring the soundness of the research, applicable quality criteria were discussed as well as the role of the researcher and ethical considerations. An overview of the data collection process brought the chapter to an end.

Chapter 4 presented the research findings in terms of the analysis and interpretation of the research participants' views on parental involvement in the Qwa Qwa region. Initially the coded data from the transcribed raw data were presented, followed by the classification of the data into *a priori* categories. The data were then interpreted according to the said categories by means of cross-referencing with information obtained through the literature review.

The next section will present the general conclusions derived from the study and based on the objectives which guided the study.

5.3 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to establish how parents' literacy levels affect their involvement in the education and also the academic achievement of their children. To operationalize the purpose of this study, the research was structured according to the objectives listed below to direct the research. Consequently, the most important aspects signifying the achievement of each objective will be highlighted.

- **To clarify literacy in the context of the study**

Established from the literature review, literacy indicates that parents are able to read and write; show awareness of the changes that take place around them, and contribute and participate in decision making processes with regard to political, economic, and social issues. Furthermore, literacy involves the ability to critically evaluate information in order to react confidently to such information when required (*cf.* 2.2.1). The literature also revealed that low levels of literacy create participation barriers in social and economic growth (*cf.* 2.2.2).

- **To outline the significant factors from the literature regarding parental involvement in formal education.**

The literature revealed that parental involvement and encouragement are significant in influencing learners' academic motivation. Teachers and parents must work together in partnership to ensure that what is taught in school has a firm foundation with what is taught at home and vice versa. Sound partnerships will not only improve the relationships between parents, teachers and learners, but will also encourage working together within the same educational framework (*cf.* 2.3.1). Cooperation between parents and teachers is thus a key ingredient to educational success. In addition to the fact that parental involvement influences the cognitive and social development of children, parents are indispensable stakeholders without whom schools cannot do. They are the resources that can provide valuable information about their children and they lay the foundation on which teachers can build on further. When parents are involved in their children's education, children will refrain from misconduct and focus their attention to be the best they can (*cf.* 2.3.2).

- **To investigate parents' literacy levels in the Qwa Qwa region.**

The census figures of 1996 and 2001 indicate that the number of adults with no schooling and those with some primary education (less than grade 7) was higher in the Free State in 2001 as compared to 1996. Blacks (Africans) represent the population

group with the lowest literacy levels (*cf.* 2.2.2). Inferred from the aforementioned, it could be said that parents' literacy levels in the Qwa Qwa region is remarkably low.

- **To investigate the importance of parental involvement in relation to children's education and academic achievement.**

Research shows that when parents are involved in the education of their children, the possibility of their children dropping out of school without completing their schooling careers is minimized (*cf.* 2.2.3). Parental involvement in children's school activities facilitates socialization, positive attitudes and socially acceptable behaviour. Regardless of their own educational backgrounds, parents play an important role in their children's education since parental involvement is a strong predictor of learner achievement. The more involved the parents are, the better off their children are because they will be more receptive of learning and will view schooling in a more positive light (*cf.* 2.3.1). When parents are involved in the education of their children, their children are more likely to achieve better at school as parental involvement is related to the child's school performance (*cf.* 2.3.3).

- **To investigate the effects of parents' literacy levels on their involvement in the education and academic achievement of their children.**

Children whose parents did not complete formal education or who experience problems with literacy skills are most likely to have low literacy levels themselves. Since low literacy levels can be related to poverty and low socio- economic status, parents are sometimes unable to adequately provide for the basic functional, social and academic needs of their children (*cf.* 2.2.3). Most parents with low literacy levels feel that they cannot possibly help their children and feel embarrassed to participate and willingly contribute to their children's education (*cf.* 2.2.4). The literature further reveals that such parents find it difficult to read to their children or to highlight the importance of reading, writing and mathematical skills for daily survival.

The results of the empirical research showed that the parents' literacy levels indeed affect their involvement in their children's education and academic achievement. Parents with low literacy levels in this research appear to be more passively involved (*cf.* 2.3.2), confirming the suggested classification of Mmotlane *et al.* (2009:529) of passive and active parental involvement. Most parents with low literacy levels in this research are not able to assist their children with schoolwork but depend on others, such as older siblings or children from the neighbourhood to assist. Despite their apparent disinterest in their children's education, they motivate and value the education of their children since they realize that education remains the vehicle for social-economic development in any society. Furthermore the research revealed that mothers are more involved in their children's education and try to assist them to achieve academically and that parents do not often visit schools voluntarily but that they rather do so by invitation. However, relations between schools and parents appear to be healthy and the attitudes of parents towards their children's education are positive.

With regard to this research it could thus be concluded that the parents' passive involvement in their children's education is a direct consequence of their low literacy levels, but that they nevertheless reflect a positive attitude towards their children's education and that they value their children's academic achievement. It further showed that these parents are there for their children to provide guidance, encouragement, and support.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the purpose of the research and the general conclusions, the resultant recommendations are suggested.

Recommendation 1

In order to improve the literacy levels of parents with low levels of formal education and literacy, the use of volunteer teachers can assist schools in helping such parents with regard to improving their literacy levels.

Recommendation 2

Schools, especially those situated in remote areas, should make provision for special programmes intended to empower parents with regard to educational changes such as curriculum development; as well as empowering parents to take part in decision making processes to contribute positively towards the education of their children.

Recommendation 3

Reluctant parents must be identified and provided with guidance and direction as to how they can be involved to assist their children.

Recommendation 4

Teachers, through the school, must make special efforts to keep regular contact with the parents. One avenue is to create opportunities where parents could be invited to participate in small group interactions in a positive non-threatening school environment where everybody's contribution is valued.

Recommendation 5

Schools should make special efforts to ensure that they are familiar with their learners' backgrounds and that they are able to respond effectively to any particular needs in order to assist where necessary.

Recommendation 6

School meetings must be conducted during the weekends to enable the working parents to attend these meetings. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that the parents' participation in school activities and their children's schoolwork is maximized.

Recommendation 7

Schools should not underestimate what parents with low literacy level could potentially contribute towards their children's education. In this regard curriculum content could incorporate parents' life experiences which means that learning content could be

structured in such a way that learners are encouraged to draw on the knowledge of their parents. By doing this, parents will feel more valued in contributing towards their children's learning.

5.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was attempted to assist in improving the quality of education by identifying and understanding certain phenomena better. In the case of this particular study the understanding of parental involvement within a certain context (Qwa Qwa) formed the focus. In addition, improved relationships between schools (teachers) and parents (communities) can only be realized when contextual circumstances are considered. The study thus envisaged information that could help to shape complementary and collaborative partnerships between parents and schools by considering and better understands how parents' literacy levels impact on their involvement in their children's education and academic achievement.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Areas for further research could include the following:

- Research, which includes a bigger sample and additional research instruments that focuses on a wider spectrum of rural areas, can expand on the current research topic in order to increase the validity of the findings.
- An extensive needs analysis, comparing rural and urban areas, could be carried out amongst parents with low literacy levels in order to determine the exact needs in these respective areas with regard to parental involvement in their children's education and academic achievement.

- A study could be conducted regarding the development and implementation of literacy programmes and / or parental involvement programmes for parents with low literacy levels.
- A model for the identification and training of volunteer teachers to assist the parents with low educational and literacy levels could be developed.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though efforts were taken for ensuring the scientific justification of the study, the researcher acknowledges specific limitations. Amongst others, the following limitations could be listed:

- **Sample size**

The findings of this study cannot be generalised to represent the literacy levels of the parents in the Qwa Qwa region due to the sample size of the participants. Furthermore, the findings regarding parental involvement may differ from area to area in the same region.

- **Interview barriers**

Although parents and learners were willing to participate in the interviews, both groups were struggling to give proper responses. This might be ascribed to language and literacy barriers experienced by especially the parent and learner participants. Furthermore, many interviews were conducted during the evenings to make provision for accommodating working parents. Due to interviewee fatigue, the lack of properly generated responses may not have yielded the complete accounts of participants.

- **Interview skills of the researcher**

The researcher acknowledges that her interview skills could be improved. One particular area for improvement is the ability to prompt interviewees to enable them to clarify or expand on their responses, which will consequently result in better data to work with.

- **The role of the researcher**

The researcher acknowledges that she may have played a conflicting dual role in the interview process; being an employee of the Department of Education and the interviewer.

5.8 FINAL CONCLUSION

Based on the findings emanating from the research, the following final conclusions can be drawn.

Parental involvement in the education of their children is imperative since it is aimed at strengthening and supporting the teachers in order to maximise children's potential and performance at school. Parental involvement also plays a crucial role in developing the child to become a responsible and contributing citizen who is able to take part in the decision making processes in communities at large. However, research has shown that when parents' literacy levels are low it may inhibit their involvement in their children's education. It is therefore important to realize that parental involvement should not be limited to assisting learners with their schoolwork, but is also valuable in terms of support and motivation. Being involved in the children's education is an indication that the parents care about their children. When the parents show interest in the children's school activities the learners realise that their parents are keen to be involved, even in indirect ways. When parents are involved, it motivates the children and the support of their parents encourages them to do better at school and value their education.

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Appendix A: Interview questions for the HODs, Parents and Learners

HODs	PARENTS	LEARNERS
1. Provide a brief profile of the community served by this school.	1. Does the school show awareness of the community it serves?	1. Is the school aware of your household's particular circumstances?
2. How does the school respond to the community's needs in order to ensure quality education?	2. How does the school respond to particular needs of your household in order to ensure quality education for your child?	2. How does the school respond to particular needs of your household in order to ensure that you receive quality education?
3. How are parents, considering the level of their own education, involved in the school and its activities and also in academic achievement of their children?	3. How are you involved in your child's school and its activities and also in academic achievement of your child?	3. How are your parents involved in the school and its activities and also in your academic achievement?
4. How does the school empower/encourage parents to be involved in the school and its activities and also the academic achievement of their children?	4. How does the school empower/encourage you to be involved in the school and its activities and also the academic achievement of your child?	4. How does the school empower/encourage your parents to be involved in the school and its activities and also your academic achievement?
5. Which one of the parents is usually more involved in their children's general education and academic achievement of their child? What do you think are possible reasons for this?	5. Which one of you is usually more involved in your child's general education and the academic achievement of your child? What do you think are possible reasons for this?	5. Which one of your parents is usually more involved in your general education and your academic achievement? What do you think are possible reasons for this?

6. Do parents, irrespective of their level of own education, approach the school out of free will and with confidence to make queries or ask about their children's academic performance?	6. Do you feel confident to approach the school out of free will to make queries or ask about your child's academic performance?	6. Are your parents confident to approach the school out of free will to make queries or ask about your academic performance?
7. Does the school treat all parents, irrespective of their level of education equally and with respect?	7. Does the school treat you, equally and with respect compared to other parents?	7. Does the school treat your parents equally and with respect compared to other parents?
8. How do parents, considering their level of education, value their children's education?	8. How do you value your child's education?	8. Do your parents value/ see the importance of your education?
9. How do parent's own levels of education affect their attitude towards school?	9. How would you describe your attitude towards your child's school?	9. How would you describe your parents' attitude towards your school?
10. How does the school usually communicate information to parents?	10. How does the school usually communicate information to parents?	10. How does the school usually communicate information to parents?
11. How would you rate the attendance of parents to the meetings organised by the school?	11. How often do you attend meetings at your child's school?	11. How often do your parents attend meetings at your school?

Appendix B: Translated interview questions for parents and learners into Sesotho

Parents
1. Na sekolo se a bontsha hore se tseba setjhaba seo se sebetsang ka sona?
2. Sekolo se arabela jwang ditlhoko tse ikgethang tsa lapa la lona ho etsa bonnete ba hore ngwana wa lona o fumana thuto ya boemo bo nepahetseng?
3. Le nka karolo jwang sekolong, le katlehong ya ngwana wa lona?
4. Sekolo se le kgothalletsa jwang ho nka karolo diketsahalang tsa sona, le katlehong ya ngwana wa lona?
5. Ke ofe ho lona ya nkang karolo haholo thutong ya ngwana wa lona ka kakaretso le katlehong ya hae, ebe mabaka ke afe?
6. Na le ye le ye sekolong ntle le ho mengwa ho lo botsa ka katleho ya ngwana wa lona ntle le letswalo?
7. Na le bona sekolo se le tshwara ka ho lekana le ho le hlompha ha le bapisa le batswadi ba bang?
8. Na le bona bohlokwa kappa molemo ka thuto ya ngwana ba lona?
9. Le ikutlwa jwang ka sekolo sa ngwana wa lona?
10. Sekolo se buisana le lona ka mokgwa ofe?
11. Na le ya kamehla dikopanong tsa sekolo?

Learners
1. Na sekolo se tseba maemo a bophelo a lapa leno?
2. Sekolo se arabela jwang ditlhoko tse ikgethang tsa lapa leno ho etsa bonnete ba hore o fumana thuto ya boemo bo nepahetseng?
3. Batswadi ba hao ba nka karolo jwang sekolong sa hao le katlehong ya hao dithutong tsa hao?
4. Sekolo kgothalletsa batswadi ha hao jwang ho nka karolo diketsahalang tsa sona, le katlehong ya hao?
5. Ke ofe batswading ba hao ya nkang karolo haholo thutong ya hao ka kakaretso le katlehong ya hao, ebe mabaka ke afe?
6. Na atswadi ba hao ba ye ba tle sekolong ntle le ho mengwa ho tlo botsa ka katleho ya hao ntle le letswalo?
7. Na o bona sekolo se tshwara batswadi ba hao ka ho lekana/ tshwana ha o bapisa le batswadi ba bang? Na se a ba hlompha?
8. Na batswadi ba hao bona bohlokwa kapa molemo thutong ya hao?
9. Batswadi ba hao ba ikutlwa jwang ka sekolo seo o kenang ho sona?
10. Sekolo se buisana le batswadi ba hao ka mokgwa ofe?
11. Na batswadi ba hao ba ya kamehla dikopanong tsa sekolo?

Appendix C: Application to conduct research (Cover letter)

P.O. Box 6385
Phuthaditjhaba
9866
03 August 2009

The Director: Quality Assurance

Room 401
Syfrets Building
Free State Department of Education
Private Bag X20565
Bloemfontein
9300

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

This letter serves to apply for the registration of a research project. Attached kindly receive the following documents:

- The application form
- A letter from my supervisor
- A letter to the principals
- A letter to the teachers
- A letter to the parents
- A letter to the learners
- The interview questions

Yours sincerely

NYAMA D.M. (Ms)

.....

Appendix D: Application to conduct research (Official form)

FREE STATE PROVINCE



Ref no: 16/4/1/.....

FS460C

APPLICATION FORM TO REGISTER RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- ❖ Please complete all the sections of this form that are applicable to you. If any section is not applicable please indicate this by writing N/A.
- ❖ If there are too few lines in any of the sections please attach the additional information as an addendum.
- ❖ Attach all the required documentation so that your application can be processed.

Send the application to:

Director: Quality Assurance
Room 401
Syfrets Building
Free State Department of Education
Private Bag X20565
Bloemfontein
9300.

Tel: 4048750/4048658

Fax: 447 7318

1 Title (e.g. Mr., Ms, Dr, Prof):

M	S		
---	---	--	--

2 Initials and surname:

D	M		N	Y	A	M	A								
---	---	--	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3 Telephone: Home:

N	/	A											
---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Work:

0	5	8				7	1	8	4	7	0	0	
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Cell:

0	8	2				4	7	3	0	2	7	1	
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Fax:

0	5	8		-	7	1	3	4	6	3	7	
---	---	---	--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

E-Mail

N	/	A		-								
---	---	---	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

4 Home Address:

1	0	5	9	5	M	A	N	D	E	L	A	P	A	R	K
P	H	U	T	H	A	D	I	T	J	H	A	B	A		
												9	8	6	6

5 Postal Address:

P	O	B	O	X		6	3	8	5						
P	H	U	T	H	A	D	I	T	J	H	A	B	A		
												9	8	6	6

6.1 Name of tertiary institution/research institute

North West University (Vaal Triangle Campus)

6.2 Occupation: Senior Education Specialist

6.3 Place of employment: Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District

7 Name of course:

M.Ed

8 Name of supervisor/promoter: Prof. B.J.J Lombard

Please attach a **letter from your supervisor** confirming that you have registered for the course you are following.

9 Title of research project:

The effect of literacy levels on parental involvement in selected primary schools in the Qwa Qwa region.

10 Concise explanation of the research topic:

This research intends to establish how parents' literacy levels affect their involvement in their academic achievement of the children.

11 Application value that the research may have for the Free State Education Department:

To identify the factors that contribute to poor parental involvement and to find out whether parents' literacy levels impact on their involvement and on their children's academic performance at school.

12.1 The full particulars of the group with whom the research is to be undertaken:

Four HODs,
Twenty-four parent (selected into groups of literate, semi-literate and illiterate) and
Twelve learners (children of the selected parents).

12.2 List of schools/Directorates in the Department/Officials:

- Tabola Primary School
- Lebohang primary School
- Letotolo Primary School
- Tharollo Primary School

12.3 Grades:

Six

12.4 Age and gender groups:

12 to 14 years of age (boys and girls)

12.4 Language groups:

Sesotho speaking

12.6 Numbers to be involved in the research project:

Four HODs, 24 Parents and 12 learners

- 13 Full particulars of how information will be obtained e.g. questionnaires, interviews, standardized tests. **Please include copies of questionnaires, questions that will be asked during interviews, tests that will be completed or any other relevant documents regarding the acquisition of information.**

The information will be gathered by means of interviews.

- 14 The **starting and completion dates** of the research project: (Please bear in mind that research is usually not allowed to be conducted in the schools during the fourth term.)

.....
.....

- 15 Will the research be conducted **during or after school hours?**

After school hours.

16 If it is necessary to use school hours for the research project, **how much time** will be needed?

N/A

17 **How much time will be spent on the research project** by individual educators and/or learners?

N/A

18 **Have you included:**

18.1 A letter from **your supervisor** confirming your registration for the course you are following?

Yes/No

18.2 A draft of the letter that will be sent **to the principals** requesting permission to conduct research in their schools?

Yes/No

18.3 A draft of the letter that will be sent **to parents** requesting permission for their children to participate in the research project?..(If applicable)

Yes/No

18.4 Copies of **questionnaires** that you wish to distribute?

Yes/No

18.5 A list of **questions** that will be asked during the interviews?

Yes/No

I confirm that all the information given on this form is correct.

.....
SIGNATURE

.....
DATE

Appendix E: Registration of research by Department



education
Department of
Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Enquiries: Mafimane IM
Reference: 16/4/10/1-2009

Tel: 051 404 6602
Fax: 051 447 7318
E-mail: mafimane@edu.fs.gov.za

2009 – 08 – 21

Ms. DM NYAMA
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH WEST, VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS
THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

Dear Ms. Nyama

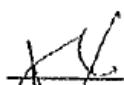
REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project
2. Research topic: **The effect of Literacy levels on parental involvement in selected primary schools in the Qwa Qwa Region.**
3. Your research project has been registered with the Free State Education Department.
4. Approval is granted under the following conditions:-
 - 4.1 Educators, learners and parents participate voluntarily in the project.
 - 4.2 The names of all schools and participants involved remain confidential.
 - 4.3 The questionnaires are completed and the interviews are conducted outside normal tuition time
 - 4.4 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
 - 4.5 A bound copy of the report and a summary on a computer disc on this study is donated to the Free State Department of Education.
 - 4.6 Findings and recommendations are presented to relevant officials in the Department
5. The costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility
6. You are requested to confirm acceptance of the above conditions in writing to:

The Head: Education, for attention: **DIRECTOR : QUALITY ASSURANCE**
Room 401, Syfrets Building, Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301

We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely


FR SELLO

DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Directorate: Quality Assurance, Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein: 9300
Syfrets Center, 65 Maitland Street, Bloemfontein
Tel: 051 404 8750 / Fax: 051 447 7318 E-mail: quality@edu.fs.gov.za

Appendix F: Permission to conduct research



education
Department of
Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Enquiries : IM Malimane
Reference no. : 16/4/1/31-2009

Tel: 0514046662
Fax: 051 4477318

2009-08-21

Director: Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District
Private Bag 817
Witsieshoek
9870

Dear Mr Chele

NOTIFICATION OF A RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR DISTRICT

Please find attached a copy of the letter giving **Ms. DM NYAMA** permission to conduct research in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. He will conduct this research in identified school with educators, learners and parents.

Yours sincerely



M. SELLO
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Directorate: Quality Assurance
Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300
Syfrets Center, 65 Maitland Street, Bloemfontein
Tel: 051 404 8750 / Fax: 051 447 7318
E-mail: quality@edu.fs.gov.za

Appendix G: Letter to School Principals



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa, 1900

Tel: (016) 910-3111
Fax: (016) 910-3116
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

The Principal

.....
.....
.....
.....

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am currently busy with my MEd studies in Education at the abovementioned institution and would like to use your school for doing my empirical research. The research aims at establishing to what extent parents' literacy levels impact on their involvement of their children's academic performance at school. Application has also been made for this research to be done with the Free State Department of Education.

Could you please confirm whether your school would be available for interviewing selected HODs, Grade six learners and their parents. Once your permission is given arrangements will be made with the concerned parties and interviews will take place after school hours.

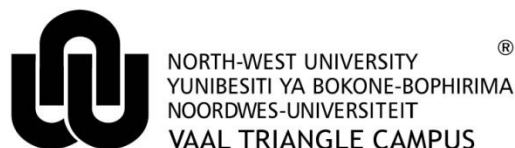
Feedback will be provided to the school after the research has been completed. For any further information or questions please feel free to contact me at the number or e-mail address stated below.

Kind regards

Dim Nyama
Student nr. 20478224

Cell phone: 082 473 0271

Appendix H: Consent: HODs



INFORMED CONSENT (HODs)

Dear HOD

I am busy with research for my MEd-degree. I need your assistance to provide me with information to complete the study. This document will provide you with information regarding the project and what your involvement will entail. If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation I will appreciate it if you could sign the section indicating your consent to take part in the study.

Kindly note the following before you give consent to participate in the project.

The aim of the research is to determine to which extend parents' literacy levels impact on their involvement of their children's academic performance at school.

With the assistance of your school principal you were identified to participate in the research, however, your permission is required to take part in the research.

Your participation is required for obtaining information by means of a one-to-one interview.

The interview will not take longer than 20 minutes. Participation in the research is not compulsory and you may withdraw at any time should you feel uncomfortable. Your inputs will be used for research purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

There are no direct benefits for taking part in the study. However, the findings of the research may in future assist the Department of Education in dealing with and assisting learners coming from backgrounds of poor literacy levels.

The research is conducted by a Masters student, DM Nyama under the supervision of Prof BJJ Lombard from the School of Educational Sciences, North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). If you have any questions or queries you can contact Prof Lombard at 016 910 3067 (work).

CONSENT:

I..... (Full name) have read and understand the nature of my participation in the project and agree to participate.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Appendix I: Consent: Parents



INFORMED CONSENT (PARENTS / GUARDIANS)

Dear Parent / Guardian

I am busy with research for my MEd-degree. I need your assistance to provide me with information to complete the study. This document will provide you with information regarding the project and what your involvement will entail. If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation I will appreciate it if you could sign the section indicating your consent to take part in the study.

Kindly note the following before you give consent to participate in the project.

The aim of the research is to determine to which extent parents' literacy levels impact on their involvement in of their children's academic performance at school.

With the assistance of your school's SGB you were identified to participate in the research, however, your permission is required to take part in the research.

Your participation is required for obtaining information by means of a focus group interview.

The interview will not take longer than 20 minutes. Participation in the research is not compulsory and you may withdraw at any time should you feel uncomfortable. Your inputs will be used for research purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

There are no direct benefits for taking part in the study. However, the findings of the research may in future assist the Department of Education in dealing with and assisting learners coming from backgrounds of poor literacy levels.

The research is conducted by a Masters student, DM Nyama under the supervision of Prof BJJ Lombard from the School of Educational Sciences, North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). If you have any questions or queries you can contact Prof Lombard at 016 910 3067 (work).

CONSENT:

I.....(full name) have read and understand the nature of my participation in the project and agree to participate.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Appendix J: Consent: Learners



INFORMED CONSENT (PARENTS / GUARDIANS for LEARNERS)

Dear Parent/Guardian of learner

I am busy with research for my MEd-degree. I need your permission to involve (Name of learner) as a participant in my research in order to complete the study. This document will provide you with information regarding the project and what the learner's involvement will entail. If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation I will appreciate it if you could sign the section indicating your consent that he/she may take part in the study.

Kindly note the following before you give consent to participate in the project.

With the assistance of your child's school your child was identified to participate in the research. However, your permission is also required for him/her to participate. Moreover, your participation in the research will also be required.

Your and your child's participation is required for obtaining information by means of a focus group interviews. The interviews will not take longer than 20 minutes. Participation in the research is not compulsory and your child or you may withdraw at any time should he/she/you feel uncomfortable. His/her/your inputs will be used for research purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

There are no direct benefits for taking part in the study. However, the findings of the research may in future assist the Department of Education in dealing with and assisting learners coming from backgrounds of low literacy levels.

The research is conducted by a Masters student, DM Nyama under the supervision of Prof BJJ Lombard from the School of Educational Sciences, North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). If you have any questions or queries you can contact Prof Lombard at 016 910 3067 (work).

CONSENT:

I..... (Full name of parent/guardian) have read and understand the nature of the participation in the project and agree that

..... (Name of learner) may participate.

I am also willing to personally participate in the said research.

Signature:.....

Date:.....