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INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOME HIGH SCHOOLS

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Specialised Education , University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) .

Johannesburg 1999 .

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided work . It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand , Johannesburg . It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university .

.....

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B . Ed (Rem Educ.) (University of the Witwatersrand)

6 December 1999 .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following people for their contributions in making this project a success . I sincerely thank them for their help .

Professor Mervyn Skuy , Professor of Specialised Education and Head of the Division , University of the Witwatersrand , my research supervisor , for his patience , constant motivation and expertise .

Ms Elaine Harcombe , a lecturer in the Division of Specialised Education , University of the Witwatersrand for supervising the early stages of this project .

Mark Paiker for his advice and help with all the statistical work on this study .

The school principals who helped by ensuring that questionnaires were distributed to parents .

All the learners who delivered the questionnaires to their parents and returned them to the schools .

All the parents who participated by filling in the questionnaires .

My wife , Khuthele and children for their love and encouragement .

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC , South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged . Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development

ABSTRACT

Parental involvement in schools has been documented to have a positive influence on the education of children . There is also evidence which suggests that parents of secondary school learners are less involved in education than those of primary school learners . South African parents have recently been given a greater say in education . This study investigated the extent of parental involvement in some high schools , identified factors which have a positive and negative influence on parental involvement and investigated the possibility of improving the extent of parental involvement in order to facilitate the learning of high school learners . The sample consisted of 368 parents of learners who attended three public , co-educational Johannesburg high schools . The overall findings obtained through a specially devised *Parent Questionnaire* showed that attributes of sex and parents' home language were more closely associated with various aspects and degrees of parental involvement than were attributes of employment , educational level, and parents' marital status . In order to increase parental involvement in education , it was suggested that schools should convene meetings in a manner that would cater for most parents ; teachers should help parents with ways of supporting their children's academic work and more importantly , it was suggested that parents need education and advocacy which would make them more effective participants in education .

Keywords : Parental Involvement , Parent Advocacy , Education , Parent-teacher attitudes , Home-school relationships .

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CHAPTER 1

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 The nature and the need for parental involvement in education .

Schools alone cannot successfully educate children . They are dependent on the collective effort of parents , teachers and learners. Parents have a role to play in their children's learning experiences . However,there is evidence which suggests that some parents do not show any commitment to their children's education even when it is obvious that they have to do so (Wolfendale , 1993 and Mays , 1980) .

A parent in the broadest sense , according to Wolfendale (1993 , p.20) is " a person or persons who has or have care , custody and control over and for a child ". This conception includes both natural parents and guardians of children who may be in a particular school . The South African Schools Act (1996) defines a parent in similar terms.

Literature reviewed shows that parental involvement in education is complex . This is because it may be in the form of many activities causing researchers in this area to have divergent views . Pugh (*1989*) who is cited in Wolfendale (*1993*) says that parental involvement is partnership . According to Munn (1993) partnership arises from the common goals and interest a majority of teachers and parents have in the schooling of children . In this relationship , a parent and a teacher bring different but complementary skills and expertise . For instance , teachers have expertise in pedagogy whereas parents provide care , nurturance and more importantly,the learning environment in which much is transmitted to the children. Furthermore , Bastiani (1993) notes that partnership may mean many things to different people . He therefore suggests that we should look at partnership as a process or a target to aim for rather than a fixed state .

Parental involvement in the education of children is necessary for many reasons . For example , Macbeth (1984) cited in David (1993) says that parental attitudes influence children's attainments . Cooper , Lindsay , Nye and Greathouse (1998) observed that parents' positive attitudes about homework had positive effects on children's attitudes and their classroom achievements . Marttens and Vass (1990) also cited in David (1993) argue that parents know their children better and that they also know the ways in which they learn . When comparing the roles of the parents and teachers in the lives of children , Todd and Higgins (1998 , p.228) state that , " Parents have a much greater affective involvement in their love and aspirations for their children ." According to Bastiani (1989) parental involvement is important because , firstly , parents have rights and obligations about the education of their children and the way it is provided for . Secondly, parents provide materials and finances for the education of their children .

1.2 The scope of parental involvement in education .

Parents may be involved in many activities at schools . It seems as though at present many of the activities are mainly extracurricular . They do not directly contribute in the learning of individual children. Border and Marttens (1993) note that parents are positioned outside the actual control of the curriculum . This is particularly the case in secondary schools . Parents seem to get less involved as children move from primary schools to secondary schools.It may be partly because the curriculum becomes less familiar to parents and they are therefore willing to accept teachers' goals for their children .

The extracurricular activities in which parents are mostly involved include for example , situations in which parents assist during school outings , fund-raising activities and individual parent's involvement as volunteers in schools' practical projects . It appears , however , that these activities occur on a lesser scale in secondary schools . Todd and Higgins (1998) state that many parents will have direct contact with teachers only when

there is a 'problem' . Munn (1993) observes that when a child is dependent , for example in an infant school or has pronounced special education needs , parents and teachers usually collaborate for the interest of the child . This has to change.Parents ought to be involved all the time , especially if we consider the seriousness of problems that arise in schools these days .

Parents are also involved in Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (PTSAs) , lately in South Africa referred to as the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and other similar associations . The major difficulty which may arise with governing structures such as the PTSAs is that they may work in isolation and be unaccountable to most parents (Nene , Arnott , Clacherty , De Wee , Eales & Mgidlana ,1993) . In this way , a wider parent body is uninformed and so will remain uninvolved . Some parents may choose , of their own accord , not to be involved in these activities .

Research about parents in school management in some European countries suggests that parents are reluctant to challenge professional control and as such do not truly represent parental interests . The other problem is that certain groups of parents may not be represented in the school governing bodies . Tomlinson (1993) reports that , the Inner London Education Authority found that the ethnic minority parents were not well represented among school governors . Stoll and Fink (1996) suggest that ways of involving all socio-economic groups have to be found . However , according to Macbeth (1993) parental representation in school management is peripheral to the education of an individual child .

Parental involvement in schools should not be implemented on a trial and error basis. Jowett (1990) cited in David (1993 , p.149) warns that " Parental involvement should not be concerned simply with getting parents into school.It demands an approach to

learning that recognises and draws on the contribution of the home and sees contact with parents on a variety of matters as fundamental ".

Jowett and Baginsky (1991) mention studies in the United Kingdom which are about what can be perceived as a higher level and probably most important forms of parental involvement . These are ways which seek to link parents to teachers so that direct relationships are established . The focus in these studies is on the ways in which individual parents can be involved in their own children's schooling . Parents are involved in issues such as : teaching methods used , home-school reading projects , discussion with teachers about the choice of subjects that children make and other curricular activities . According to Morgan and Morgan (1992) cited in Stoll and Fink (1996) , partnerships are helpful if school personnel takes the lead and if the school itself has a collaborative culture . This makes parents feel valued as partners .

It is this latter type of parental involvement which is one of the key factors associated with effective schools . Brighouse and Tomlinson (1991) cited in Bastiani (1993) reported that in the UK , Australia and the USA research shows that schools in which pupils excel in terms of their achievements and good behaviour are all characterised by sound home-school relations . Futhermore,these schools are accessible to parents and are always striving to find ways in which parents can encourage and support their children .

1.3 Some factors which influence parental involvement in education .

Literature reviewed reveals that there are many factors that determine the extent of parental involvement in schools . We can categorise these factors as : teacher attitudes, nature of home-school relationships and the individual parent's attitudes and circumstances .

1.3.1 Teachers' attitudes .

On teacher attitudes , David (1993) says that not all teachers in schools are optimistic about either the process or the results of parental involvement . Some teachers exhibit what Macbeth (1989) cited in David (1993) refers to as professional uncertainty . This is a situation characterised by teachers' indefinite decisions about home-school co-operation . It would result , for example , in these teachers limiting consultation with parents and even blaming learners' low achievement on families . Teachers' resistance to home-school liaison and participation appears to be due to many reasons . Bastiani (1989) observes that teachers may be wary of consultations with parents . Some teachers fear parents who appear to be older and who may therefore be more experienced than they . Others believe that their professional knowledge and teaching methods would be challenged and disapproved of.Yet others fear that parents would blame them for the failure of children to learn . He further states that teachers who were trained to be subject specialists do not have an inclusive view of education . Munn (1993) calls for a " paradigm shift "among teachers . She argues that teachers have to realise that parents have legitimate interests in the goals set for their children .

There are instances where teachers wish to genuinely engage parents in school matters but unwittingly alienate them . Lareau (1989) cited in David (1993) says that teachers hold many assumptions about parental participation in schools . They assume that parents have the education to understand how the school functions . They also assume that parents have the time and energy to come to school and work with the teachers . Teachers have a tendency of treating all parents in the same way . They often do not realise that families do not have similar attributes and resources .

1.3.2 The nature of home-school relationships .

In South Africa and in countries such as Britain and the USA , schools are obligated to inform parents about the progress of their children . This means that the dialogue between parents and teachers has to be maintained at all times . Parents' needs suggest among other things that communication between themselves and teachers is necessary . There are issues which teachers take for granted but are puzzling to parents (Bastiani,1989) .

According to Bastiani (1989) , parents prefer interviews and written communication as the means of contact between themselves and the schools . However, parents sometimes view schools as not as open and forthcoming as they ought to be . Parents have also learned from experience that schools sometimes deal in more window dressing and do not really address parents' needs and anxieties (Sallis,1988) .

Nias (1981) notes that letters which schools send to parents are blunt and impersonal. Also , from the study she did with her colleagues on parent-teacher consultation , she reports that both parents and teachers found this experience disappointing and unproductive .These researchers also observed that , during consultations , teachers tended to control the way in which the allotted time was spent . This led to situations where parents' needs were never addressed because they were rushed through the consultation .

1.3.3 Parents' attitudes and circumstances .

On parental attitudes towards participation in school matters , Mortimer and Mortimer (1986) note that evidence suggests that parents do not participate because they lack self-confidence . This is contrary to the commonly held assumption that they lack interest . In

support of this evidence , Nias (1981) says that sometimes parents are afraid to ask questions in meetings for fear of making mistakes . Parents were unable to pose questions that would provide answers that they needed . At other times parents may be unfamiliar with the procedures which are followed in formal meetings . Stoll and Fink (1996 , p.134) say that " parents have often seen schools as places to be feared , especially by those who were unsuccessful in their own school experiences . Certainly the size , structure , and complexity of secondary schools is daunting for the most confident of parents , let alone a secondary school drop-out or a semi-literate parent ".

Secondary schools are bigger and more complex than the primary schools . When children move from primary school to secondary school , parents notice that home-school relations suddenly become impersonal. Most things are done through written communication and an appointment system. Secondary schools have more teachers who share the responsibility for more children . This limits contact with parents (Bastiani , 1989) . Munn (1993) insists that parents have to recognise that they have a role to play in the education of their children , no matter how expert and knowledgeable teachers are . Bastiani (1993) says that in the UK there has been a slow shift in the attitudes of parents from helplessness to a recognition that they have some rights in as far as the education of their children is concerned .

Dornbusch , Ritter , Leiderman , Roberts and Fraleigh (1987) studied the relation of parenting style to adolescent school performance among students in the San Francisco Bay area . They developed parenting style indices that conformed with those of Baumrind (1971 , 1973) namely; authoritarian, permissive and authoritative . These indices were based on the mean responses of students to questions that concerned the frequency of certain family behaviours . Behaviours that seem relevant in each category are as follows : authoritarian parenting style : poor communication between parents and children ; parents' response to poor grades by reducing the youth's allowance and to good grades by telling

the youth to do even better ; permissive parenting style : parents do not care about grades , they are not involved in education and they neither help with homework nor check it ; authoritative parenting style : sound parent-child communication , parents praise children for good grades , parents take away freedom if the child gets poor grades but they encourage hard work and offer help .These authors found that children who described their parents as being authoritative achieved better grades than those whose parents were either authoritarian or permissive . This was true for all ethnic groups . In a recent study , Wentzel (1998) found that family cohesion (as characterised by supportive family relationships) was an independent , positive indicator of children's academic motivation .

Bridges (1981) provides six reasons for which parents may not participate , as follows:

- Practical difficulties ; such as the lack of transport and exhaustion .
- Deference to teachers ; such as when parents feel incompetent to handle certain issues and choose to participate in peripheral ones .
- Alien social events ; some parents may opt out of an event which is not part of their culture .
- Parents dread of school ; for reasons such as their past unhappiness and failure at school as well as fear because their child is not doing well .
- Cynicism which is as a result of parents believing that they cannot change anything in a school .
- Dominant parents taking all the time of teachers and causing those who are less assertive to feel discriminated against .

Some literature imputes the above difficulties to lower socio-economic status (SES) parents . Roberts (1980) says that middle class parents are portrayed as being more involved , articulate and aware of the importance of education and the quality of life it

provides . This stereotype is dispelled by Roberts (1980) and other sources . The lower socio-economic status parents' ambition to see their children succeed is under-estimated . Also , the Swann Committee which is cited in David (1993) reported that under-achievement among the ethnic minorities in Britain was more to do with schools than with family circumstances . This committee observed that academic success depended on a good command of English language . The ethnic minorities lacked this . The committee was concerned because there was no sensitivity in the education of the ethnic minorities . Tomlinson (1993) reports that teachers in Britain still cling to negative , stereotyping and patronising views about ethnic minority parents . Furthermore , teachers expectations of ethnic minority children have been consistently low . Mortimer and Mortimer (1986) observed that social scales in Britain say very little about the type of home , the quality of relationships between parents and their children and about family interests . It appears that the quality of relationships , more than the SES of families is a more important determinant of children's attainment at schools .

1.4 Parental involvement in South Africa .

It emerges from the literature that most studies on parental involvement in education were done in other countries such as Britain and the USA . In South Africa , parents were for many years divided along racial , regional and ethnic lines which together with the socio-political deprivation experienced by most , impacted negatively on the extent of their involvement in education .

1.4.1 Education in South Africa before 1994 .

Education in South Africa before the political changes of 1994 was fragmented . The eighteen education departments that existed created different and even contradictory policies (National Education Policy Investigation , 1992) .The South African government

tried to unify education by establishing the Department of National Education (DNE) in 1984 . This, however, was not helpful because each department still had the latitude to formulate its own policies .

A major criticism of the South African system of education governance was that it had not facilitated the participation of parents , teachers and students in decision making (NEPI , 1992) . It must , however , be said that other departments legally made provision for some form of parental participation . Nene et al . (1993) mention two white parents' groups ; the Afrikaanse Ouervereniging vir Christelike Opvoeding en Onderwys in die Transvaal which represented interests of a section of Afrikaans-speaking parents . The English-speaking parents formed an organisation called The English Medium Parents Association (TEMPA) . These bodies were consulted when the Nationalist government formulated the *Education Renewal Strategy (ERS)* in 1991 . In the black communities there were no such representative organisations . During the turbulent 1980s , education in the black communities was entangled in the liberation struggle . The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was in essence a part of the anti-apartheid Mass Democratic Movement which consisted of political and community leaders , trade unions , parents and students (Wolpe , 1990 cited in Lemmer, 1998) .

After the DNE was formed, the departments still maintained a high level of control by retaining the right to make final decisions and to appoint members of the school committees . In the then Department of Education and Training (DET) schools , parents were confined to very insignificant roles such as the raising of additional funds .

The introduction of Model C schools in 1992 brought about the election of governing bodies in some white schools . These bodies had more responsibilities and decision making powers than the old management councils . The Model C initiative enabled parents to comment on the type of education their children received , and so making teachers more

accountable to them . In the DET schools, parents were given more say in the institutional level governance through the community based Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (PTSAs) (NEPI , 1992 and Nene et al. , 1993).

1.4.2 Education in South Africa after 1994 .

The South African Schools Act (1996) promotes democracy in education . It stipulates that there must be partnership among the State , parents , learners and educators . According to this act , all South African schools have to form governing bodies on which parents are in a majority .

It appears that parental involvement is still problematic in South Africa.In their study of what they referred to as resilient schools , Christie,Potterton , French , Cress , Lanzerotti and Butler (1997) found that parental involvement was limited . They report that the reasons which were mentioned by schools' authorities for this lack of involvement were that: parents had unsustained interest in education , other parents saw the schools as being responsible for their children and for running themselves and parents from poor communities thought that they had to get payment for their participation .

In the early 1990s the South African government had also allowed the racially segregated schools to admit students of all races (Baine and Mwamwenda, 1998) . Many black parents sent their children to formerly white schools. According to Paterson and Kruss (1998) , school age students seek admission in institutions that are perceived to be of better quality or that offer a wide range of curriculum choice .

Racial integration in education , both in South Africa and internationally has always been problematic . Goodey (1989) says that educational problems have been caused by racial

prejudice and stereotyping . Cross (1987) reports that when the Catholic church leaders decided to open white Catholic schools to black children in 1976 , both black and white people were apprehensive . Some white parents responded by withdrawing their children from schools that admitted black pupils . Skuy and Vice (1996) studied attitudes of white teachers towards integrated schooling . They found that, although the majority were positive about integration , most teachers anticipated socio-political problems and that teachers speaking Afrikaans had the most negative attitudes to integration .

The *Mail & Guardian* reported on 3 May 1996 about the racial conflict that had erupted at Vryburg High school and gave the following account : " But the bitter conflict had as much to do with misunderstandings and bungled agreements as it did with the naked racism of a few individuals". The *Sunday World* on 5 September 1999 reported that it had discovered at a school called Kuschke Hoer Landbou in the Northern Province that among other things black pupils : " are subjected to racial slurs by white pupils and teachers, especially Afrikaans speakers " and that they " often clash violently with white pupils ".

Tomlinson (1993 , p131) notes the difficulty of involving minority parents in British schools. She adds that, " racial and cultural differences have added an extra dimension to the problems of home-school relationships ". It seems obvious that these difficulties would impact negatively on the involvement of <u>all</u> parents in a school where integration has not been successful .

The other challenge facing the South African education system is to substitute the existing curriculum with the Outcomes Based one . This is an attempt by the new democratic government to address the crisis that was caused by the apartheid education (Steyn and Wilkinson , 1998). In simple terms , OBE is a model which is learner-centred rather than

teacher-centred . Its focus is on what learners can do at the end of the course of learning and teaching . This is a shift away from the academically oriented and content-based education (Lemmer , 1998) . Baron and Boschee (1996) argue that OBE requires parents to be more involved in their children's instruction . They further state that parents ought to help their children in making decisions about suitable learning outcomes and to demonstrate their achievement effectively . OBE strives to ensure that all learners are successful (Steyn and Wilkinson , 1998 ; Baron and Boschee , 1996) .

According to the *White Paper No 1* : Education and training (1995) quoted in Lemmer (1998 , p 233) , " Education of children is the primary responsibility of parents or guardians and they have the right to be consulted by the state with regards to the form of education ." Beresford (1992) , writing on the British situation notes that parents do not understand new child-centred education practices . For these reasons it means that parents need thorough explanation before educational changes are implemented .

Steyn and Wilkinson (1998) believe that OBE will be implemented meaningfully if all stake-holders have been honestly consulted on core issues . A South African study by Giessen-Hood (1999) reveals that teachers have negative attitudes towards OBE's assessment techniques and training programmes and that they do not understand the theoretical underpinnings of OBE. This implies that it will take some time before parents understand what OBE is , and what it entails for their children .

1.5 Summary .

Parental involvement is needed for the successful education of children . Research shows that children whose parents are interested in their education perform better at school than children whose parents are not involved (Dornbusch et al., 1987 ; Cooper *et al.*, 1998 and Wentzel , 1998) .

Schools can involve parents in many activities . It appears that parents are mainly involved in peripheral issues . There is a need for parents to be involved in activities which directly contribute to the learning of individual children .

Literature reviewed shows that parental involvement in education is limited by factors such as teachers'attitudes , nature of home-school relationships and the individual parent's attitudes .

For many years , South African parents were separated by apartheid laws and the education was fragmented . These difficulties and many other factors impacted negatively on parental involvement in education .

The political changes of 1994 have brought about the democratisation of education . The South African Schools Act (1996) is an attempt to get all stake-holders involved in education . However, parents have not yet taken their rightful position .

South African public schools have been desegregated since the early 1990s . Negative attitudes and racial intolerance seem to make racial integration difficult in some schools . Parental involvement in education is difficult under such circumstances .

The new government is attempting to address the crisis that was caused by apartheid education . The implementation of OBE seems difficult because teachers, parents and learners have not been sufficiently informed .

There is a dearth of South African studies on parental involvement in education . There is also a realisation among teachers that parents are not sufficiently involved , in spite of the recent innovative ideas that are intended to improve education in South Africa . For these reasons , a study that investigated the extent and type of parental involvement , as well as the possibility of improving the level of involvement , was conducted .

CHAPTER 2

2.THE STUDY

2.1 Rationale .

According to Macbeth (1993) , the family is the source of the child's protection , belonging and education . Wolfendale (1993) says that parents are the primary educators and experts on their children . For these reasons, the school cannot replace the family , but can only supplement and advise it . Parents cannot be left out of the education of their children . Furthermore , parents should be involved in their children's activities. Shriver , Kramer and Garnett (1993) believe that children's benefit in the services that are provided for them depends on the extent of the involvement of their parents . Evidence suggests that parental attitudes , expectations and beliefs in their children's abilities have an influence on children's attainments and achievement-oriented behaviours (David,1993 ; Gottfried , Fleming & Gottfried, 1994 ; Stoll and Fink ,1996) .

There appear to be differences among parents in terms of their involvement in the education of their children . More importantly , there is evidence which suggests that parents of secondary school learners are less involved than those of primary school learners (Bastiani , 1989) .Various factors within families and schools influence the extent of parental involvement in education .

Most studies on parental involvement were done in other countries , such as Britain . In South Africa , parents were for many years deprived of sufficient opportunities to participate in education . It is only recently that parents have been accorded a greater say in education through legislation such as the South African Schools Act (1996) and governance models such as the Model C.There is a general perception among teachers that in spite of these developments parents are still shying away from participation in

schools . Informal discussion with teachers in Soweto revealed that teachers believe the high failure rate and the breakdown in discipline at their schools can be attributed to the lack of parental involvement . Accordingly, this study investigated certain issues surrounding the involvement of parents in several Johannesburg high schools .

2.2 Aims .

This research aims at :

1. Investigating the extent of parental involvement in some high schools .
2. Identifying the factors which have a positive or negative influence on parental involvement .
3. Investigating the possibility of improving the extent of parental involvement in order to facilitate the learning of high school pupils .

2.3 Sample .

2.3.1 Schools.

Three high schools (A , B and C) participated in this study. The schools were all English medium public schools situated in the southern suburbs of Johannesburg . They are all co-educational. School A is academic-technical , schools B and C are both academic . These schools are racially integrated . The principals of the three schools mentioned that they do not calculate the racial compositions of their learner populations . However , in school B the principal estimated that each of the three racial groups , namely , white , black and Indian each constituted about a third of the total school population .

The schools represented varied levels of socio-economic status (SES) . The schools do not have the official records of their respective SES . However , personnel at each of these schools agreed that their schools could be graded as follows : School A "lower", School B

"middle" and School C "lower-middle" SES . The catchment areas for these schools are the southern suburbs and the nearby areas such as Soweto and Eldorado Park . In 1998 the total learner populations in these schools were as follows : School A = 1276 , School B = 1453 and School C = 1261 (Total = 3990) .

2.3.2 Subjects .

A total of 1000 questionnaires was sent (School A = 400 , School B = 400 and School C = 200) . Of these 368 (36,8%) parent questionnaires were completed and returned and 11 were returned unanswered .

The return rate of the questionnaires in each school was as follows : School A = 105 , School B = 202 and School C = 61. This amounted to 368 (36.8 %) .

Table 1 shows the percentages of the respondents in each of the biographical categories that were used .

Table 1. Biographical information on the respondents (parents) :

	Number	Percentages	Cumulative percentages
Sex:			
Male	123	34.8 %	34.8 %
Female	230	65.2 %	100.0 %
	N = 353		
Marital Status:			
Married	279	76.6 %	76.6 %
Single	23	6.3 %	83.0 %
Widowed	14	3.8 %	86.8 %
Divorced	40	11.0 %	97.8 %
Separated	8	2.2 %	100.0 %
	N = 364		
Home Language			
English	239	65.1 %	65.1 %
Afrikaans	2	0.5 %	65.7 %
African Language	108	29.4 %	95.1 %
Foreign Language	18	4.9 %	100.0 %
	N = 367		
Educational Level :			
Primary School	7	1.9 %	1.9 %
Secondary School	199	55.3 %	57.2 %
University	53	14.7 %	71.9 %
Technikon / College	101	28.1 %	100.0 %
	N = 360		
Type of Parent :			
Biological Parent	348	95.3 %	95.3 %
Guardian	15	4.1%	99.5%
Step-parent	2	0.5%	100.0%
	N = 365		
Employment status :			
Employed	311	87.4%	87.4%
Unemployed	45	12.6%	100%
	N = 356		

2.4 Measure - Parent Questionnaire.

The information for this study was obtained by the survey method . A parent questionnaire was devised (Appendix A) .

Initially a list of issues that pertain to parental involvement was compiled using selected literature (namely , Elliot et al., 1981; David , 1993; Bastiani, 1989) . Other items were either borrowed or adapted from other sources such as Shriver , Kramer and Garnett (1993) and Mowder , Harvey , Pedro , Rossen & Moy (1993) . These issues formed the basis for a tentative questionnaire constructed following the guidelines provided by Leedy (1997) and Kerlinger (1986) .

This questionnaire was discussed with two supervisors. Many changes were effected on the basis of their suggestions . New items were added and existing ones were improved . A pilot study comprising ten parents , five of whom were teachers , was undertaken . These parents found one of the items to be ambiguous . This item was modified in the subsequent questionnaire .

The parent questionnaire was structured as follows :

Section 1

The first seven questions asked for the parents' biographical information. The information gathered from these questions provided the biographical variables .

Section 2

The next section had thirteen fixed alternative questions (close-ended) . Four of these questions were arranged in a four point rating scale ranging from 1 (Frequently) to 4 (Hardly ever) . A tick on 1 would mean an acceptable level of involvement and a tick on 4 would indicate no involvement . Kerlinger (p. 442) warns that , " these items can force

responses "and that a respondent " may choose an alternative to conceal ignorance ". To counter these difficulties , three of the items were followed by probes which were intended for further explanations by the respondents . Each of the other nine items was followed by an open-ended section . This was necessary in cases where respondents found no suitable alternatives from among those provided .

Section 3

The third section had nineteen questions that sought to elicit attitudes , opinions and reasons for behaviour that influence parental involvement in education . These were close-ended questions . Respondents had to respond to statements on a scale scored from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) . A tick on 1 would indicate strong association with the statement and a tick on 5 would suggest that the statement is refuted . The last three of these questions were followed by probes in which respondents were required to give more information .

Section 4

Two open-ended questions were included at the end . One question required respondents to list three issues , in the order of importance , that would justify urgent parent-teacher consultation . The other question requested respondents to indicate a language that they considered suitable for use in parents' meetings and to justify their choices .

2.5 Procedure .

Letters were sent to the principals of the three schools, requesting their schools' participation in this research (Appendix B) . The District Director of District C 2 had to give permission first before we could proceed . He was then contacted telephonically by the researcher . After he had agreed, parent questionnaires were delivered to the principal . In schools A and C, the principals delegated the guidance teacher and the school's

secretary respectively to distribute questionnaires to the learners so that they could take them to their parents . In both these instances, questionnaires were sent to parents whose children were in Grades 8 to 11 . In school B , questionnaires were distributed by the principal to learners who were in Grades 9 and 11 . Grades 8 and 10 had been given a study break . These learners were no longer regular at school . In all three schools learners in Grade 12 were excluded because they had already started to write examinations .

Questionnaires were collected as they were returned over a period of two weeks .

2.6 Statistical design .

The following statistical techniques were used to quantify the information gathered through the parent questionnaire :

2.6.1 A categorical data analysis was performed.Categorical data consists of frequency counts of observations occurring in the response categories . Initially frequency counts and their associated percentages for each question were calculated independently. Thereafter , two-way table analyses were performed . Let X and Y represent two categorical variables , for example let X = Involvement (attending school meetings - involved or not involved) denote the column variable and Y = Marital status (from the questionnaire) denote the row variable . We display the $2 \times 2 = 4$ possible combinations of outcomes in a rectangular table having two rows for the categories of Involvement and two columns for the category of Marital status .

2.6.2 The Pearson chi-square test was used to assess the significance of the differences in the responses to thirty two items (8-39) of the parent questionnaire across each of the following biographical variables :

- Parent : Biological vs Guardian.
- Marital status : Married vs Divorced.
- Sex : Male vs Female.
- Education : Secondary vs Tertiary.
- Language : English vs African language.
- Employment : Employed vs Unemployed.

The chi - square was used to determine whether any significant association existed between the categorical variables . The chi-square test was used only for those cells (i.e categories) that contained frequencies of five and more . In instances where the cells contained fewer frequencies and the chi-square was invalid, the Fisher's Exact test was used .

2.6.3 The percentages of parents' attitudes, opinions and reasons for behaviour that influence their involvement in education were computed and reported in three columns as : Agree , Neither nor , Disagree (Appendix D) .

2.6.4 A content analysis of the open-ended questions was done.Similar responses to each question were grouped together (Appendix G) .

CHAPTER 3

3. RESULTS

Results are presented in accordance with the last three sections of the parent questionnaire (section 1 asks for the biographical information) . In section 2, the points of the rating scale were combined as 1 and 2 (involvement) and 3 and 4 (not involved) . The rating scale in section 3 was also rearranged as ; points 1 and 2 (Agree) , 3 (Neither nor) , 4 and 5 (Disagree) . In both these cases , two degrees were collapsed into one in order to make the analysis of results easier .

The results of the Chi-square test , the Fisher's Exact test (where this test applies) and the content analysis of the qualitative responses are presented together .

3.1 The extent of parental involvement .

3.1.1 Attendance of school meetings by parents .

Question 8 , " I attend school meetings whenever they are arranged." is a general question which sought to elicit parents' attitude towards school meetings of any kind . A majority of parents (72 percent) indicated that they attend school meetings and 28 percent does not attend (refer to Appendix C) . The Chi square analysis reveals that married parents were significantly more positive than divorced parents about attending meetings , Chi value = 7.48, $p < .05$ (refer to Appendix E) . The other biographical variables did not differentiate parents who attended school meetings from those who did not .

3.1.2 Parents' seeking for contact with teachers .

Responses to Question 9 shows that 61 percent of parents seek contact and 38 percent do not . Content analysis of the responses to the question where parents were expected to give reasons as to why they seek contact or do not seek contact with teachers, reveals that 53 percent of the respondents had reasons for not seeking contact and 28 percent had reasons for seeking contact . The results of the content analysis are presented in TABLE 2 below :

TABLE 2 : Parents' reasons for seeking / not seeking contact with teachers .

	Frequency	Percentage of responses	Percentage of sample
Reasons for : N = 102			
Checking on child's progress	76	26	21
Child's learning difficulty	20	7	5
Child's misbehaviour	6	2	2
Reasons against : N = 194			
No time due to work	57	19	16
Contact is unnecessary	41	14	11
Child has no problems	36	12	10
Lack of transport to school	20	7	5
Unspecified problems	31	10	8
Being a single parent	5	2	1
Teachers are unfriendly	4	1	1

Total number of parents' responses = 296

Unemployed parents were significantly more likely than employed parents to seek contact with teachers, Chi value = 4.45, $p < .05$. Results for the other biographical variables were not significant (refer to Appendix E) .

3.1.3 Do parents read schools' newsletters / circulars ?

Parents were positive about reading newsletters because 97 percent as against 3 percent indicated that they read them . There were no significant differences in the reading of the newsletters by parents across all the biographical categories .

Content analysis of the qualitative responses reveals that a significantly large number of parents , 220 (60 percent) said that they found newsletters informative . Ninety six parents (26 percent) said that newsletters were relevant and explicit . Twenty three (6 percent) said that they found newsletters motivating , reassuring and interesting and 14 (4 percent) said that newsletters are necessary for a school . Only 7 (2 percent) thought that circulars were irrelevant or useless and only six (2 percent) mentioned that they either get circulars late or they do not get them at all (Also see Appendix G) .

3.1.4 Parents voting for the schools' governing bodies .

Many parents (61 percent) indicated lack of involvement whenever the school governing body (SGB) is elected . Thirty eight percent indicated that they had voted . There were 224 (61 percent) parents who responded to the open-ended part of this question (Appendix G) . The reasons for either voting or not voting when the SGBs were elected are presented in TABLE 3 below :

Table 3 : Reasons for voting / not voting for the election of the school governing body .

	Frequency	Percentage of responses	Percentage of sample.
Reasons for voting : N = 70			
Voted to get representation	40	18	11
To be part of decision-making	30	13	8
Reasons for not voting : N = 154			
Often committed elsewhere	56	25	15
Do not know the nominees	27	12	7
Have not / cannot attend elections	17	8	5
Child is new at school	16	7	4
Was not notified about elections	11	5	3
Lack of transport to school	10	5	3
Unspecified reasons	9	4	2
Do not know the procedure	4	1.8	1
P.T.A does as it pleases	3	1.3	1
Monopoly by some parents	1	.5	.3

Total number of parents' responses = 224

3.1.5 Issues which are likely to stop parents from *participating* in parent-teacher general meetings .

Participation by parents means that they make an input such as contributing in discussions, either by asking questions or answering them when they are in a meeting . A slight majority of parents , 200 (54 percent) indicated issues which are likely to stop them from participating in a parent - teacher general meeting . Forty six percent (168) parents did not indicate any issues .

Issues which were indicated more often as being likely to cause non - participation of parents are : decision-making not being fairly shared between teachers and parents (19 percent) ; the venue being overcrowded (19 percent) and aims of the meeting not being well explained (17 percent) (refer to Appendix C) . Parents with a tertiary education were less likely than parents with a secondary school education to participate if the aims of the meeting were not well explained , Chi value = 6.59 , $p < .05$. Also , parents whose home language is English were significantly less likely than parents whose home language is African to participate, if the venue was overcrowded, Chi value = 25.58, $p < .001$. There were no other reasons that produced significant differences in the participation of English language speakers and African language speakers .

Responses to the open-ended part of Question 14 reveal that four parents (one percent) would not participate because of the language barrier and two parents mentioned that they are reluctant to discuss their children in public . Other responses to this question were irrelevant (see Appendix G) .

3.1.6 Issues which stop parents from *attending* general meetings with teachers .

Attendance by parents refers to the extent they avail themselves whenever meetings are held . A majority of parents , 286 (78 percent) indicated the issues that stop them from attending a general meeting of teachers and parents . Eighty two (22 percent) did not

indicate any reasons . The two main reasons that were mentioned for not attending were : lack of transport (20 percent) and work commitments (51 percent). Refer to Appendix C for the percentages of responses given reflecting other reasons .

Results of the Chi-square test reveal that females were significantly more likely than males to indicate that the lack of transport would prevent them from attending a general meeting, Chi value = 17.50, $p < .001$. Also , African language speakers were significantly more likely than English language speakers to indicate the lack of transport as the reason that would stop them from attending , Chi value = 23.60, $p < .001$.

Males were significantly more likely than females to indicate that work commitments would prevent them from attending , Chi value = 14.32, $p < .001$. Also, English speakers were significantly more likely than African language speakers to state work commitments as the reason that would prevent them from attending , Chi value = 11.16, $p < .001$.

The results of the Fisher's Exact test (Two-tail) indicate that females were significantly more likely than males not to attend due to the unavailability of a baby sitter , Fisher's < .0013 . Also , married parents were less likely than divorced parents to be affected by the unavailability of a baby sitter , Fisher's < .050 (Appendix F) .

3.1.7 Methods of communication which parents use to contact teachers .

Many parents (68 percent) indicated that they use face to face communication; 32 percent use written communication and 26 percent use the telephone . Ninety four parents (26 percent) use more than one means of communication . Of these, 22 (6 percent) indicated that they use both the telephone and face to face communication , 21 (6 percent) use the telephone and written communication, 34 (9 percent) use face to face and written communication and 17 (5 percent) use all three methods .

A Chi-square test reveals that English speakers were more likely than African language

speakers to use the telephone when communicating with teachers, Chi value = 5.68, $p < .05$.

Males were significantly more likely than females to use face to face communication , Chi value = 10.75, $p < .001$. Also, unemployed parents were more likely than employed parents to engage in a face to face communication with teachers, Chi value = 6.61, $p < .05$.

Females were more likely than males to use written communication, Chi value = 4.36, $p < .05$. Also, parents with a tertiary education were more likely than parents with a secondary education to use written communication , Chi value = 6.578, $p < .05$. Employed parents were more likely than unemployed parents to use written communication , Chi value = 7.850, $p < .05$.

Content analysis of the qualitative responses reveals that, of all the three methods of communication , a slight majority of parents , 188 (51 percent) prefer face to face communication . Twenty eight percent (104) of these parents thought that this method offers them a chance of addressing their children's problems at school. The other 48 (19 percent) mentioned that this method allows them to meet and know the teacher better . There seem to be no differences in parents' preference of either the telephone or the written communication (see Appendix G) .

3.1.8 Individual parents' contact with their children's class-teachers .

Sixty nine percent of respondents indicated that they have personally met their children's class-teachers and 31 percent has not . The Chi square test (Appendix E) and the Fisher's Exact test (Appendix F) did not yield any significant results across all the biographical variables .

Results of the open-ended part of Question 17 , where parents who had met their children's class teachers were asked to state the purpose of their meeting , these are listed in TABLE 4 below :

Table 4 : Parents' purposes for meeting their children's class-teachers .

	Frequency	Percentage of responses	Percentage sample.
Purpose for meeting, N = 238			
Discuss child's progress and behaviour	100	42	27
Collection of child's report	71	30	19
Parents' evening /open day / meeting	42	18	11
To meet and know the teacher	16	7	4
Show support / interest / appreciation	5	2	1
Choice of / difficulty of subjects	4	2	1

3.1.9 Activities in which parents are involved .

Thirty two percent responded to Question 18. This implies that the majority of parents (68 percent) are not involved in school activities . Twenty one percent indicated that they help in the fund-raising efforts of the school. Few parents indicated that they were involved in the other school activities (Appendix C). Females were more likely to help with fund raising at school compared to males, Chi value = 7.07, $p < .05$.

3.1.10 Events parents take part in at schools .

Parents who indicated that they take part in family fun days constituted 48 percent of the sample . Those taking part in cleaning campaigns included 0.8 percent and eight percent indicated that they take part in parent get-together parties (Appendix C) . Males were

more likely than females to participate in family fun days , Chi value = 5.74, $p < .05$. Also, married parents were more likely than divorced parents to participate in family fun days, Chi value = 5.91, $p < .05$ and parents with a tertiary education were more likely compared to parents with a secondary school education to take part in family fun days , Chi value = 5.74, $p < .05$.

3.2 Parents' attitudes, opinions and reasons for behaviour that influence their involvement in education .

Appendix D contains percentages of parents' attitudes, opinions and reasons for behaviour which influence their involvement in education .

Most parents were positive about the relationship they have with their children's schools . Eighty four percent agreed that the schools encourage them to be involved in their children's education , 6 percent disagreed with this statement and 11 percent was undecided (item 21) . Married parents were significantly more likely, compared to divorced parents' to agree with this statement , Chi value = 14.89, $p < .001$. Furthermore, 72 percent agreed that the new methods used in schools encourage parental participation , 11 percent disagreed and 17 percent was undecided (item 32) . Fifty seven percent felt that parents understand educational matters, 23 percent felt that parents do not understand educational matters and 20 percent was undecided (item 34) . Also, 49 percent felt that they were included in the school decision making, 14 percent felt excluded and 37 percent was undecided (item 33) .

Responses to items 24 and 26 show that parents realise that they have a role to play in the education of their children . Eighty five percent felt that high school teachers need parents to help with their children's education, 9 percent disagreed and 6 percent was undecided about this statement (item 26) . The Fisher's Exact test (Two-tail) result approached significance in favour of unemployed parents being more likely , compared to employed parents, to agree with this statement (item 26), Fisher's $< .056$. Forty nine percent

agreed with the statement that teachers often accept input from parents , 21 percent disagreed and 30 percent was undecided about this statement (item 24) . Eighty seven percent thought that children benefit from parent-teacher discussions , 5 percent disagreed and 9 percent was undecided (item 38) .

Results of the open-ended part of this item reveals that 90 (25 percent) thought that children would benefit because teachers will understand their background and that there would be an improved interaction between a child and a teacher . Sixty nine (19 percent) mentioned that children's problems would be detected and 66 (18 percent) believed that children would be motivated . Forty eight (14 percent) believed that children's attitude towards education would change . Only two parents thought that parent-teacher discussions were unhelpful.. (Appendix G) .

Forty four percent felt that teachers do not like to have their authority challenged , 27 percent disagreed and 29 percent was undecided (item 25) . Forty percent believed that it is difficult for parents to change the policy of the school , but an almost equally large proportion , 35 percent, was undecided on this matter and 26 percent disagreed with this statement (item 27). English speakers were more likely than African language speakers to agree with this statement, Chi value = 7.91, $p < .05$.

Ninety five percent and 97 percent agreed with the statements of items 35 and 36 respectively . Three percent disagreed and two percent was undecided about the statement in item 35 . One percent disagreed and two percent was undecided about the statement in item 36 . This means that the overwhelming majority of parents assume a joint responsibility with the school in both education and discipline of children . Further , many parents (87 percent) see the school as being responsible for informing them about their children , 8 percent disagreed and 5 percent was undecided about this statement (item 28). English speakers were significantly more likely than African language speakers to agree with the statement of item 28, Chi value = 25.92 $p < .001$.

Seventy seven percent believed that high school learners are able to talk to their parents about their scholastic progress and needs , 16 percent disagreed and 8 percent was undecided about this statement (item 22) . Parents with a secondary school education were significantly more likely than parents with a tertiary education to agree with this statement , Chi value = 14.341 , $p < .001$. Eighty six percent of parents disagreed with the statement : " High school learners do not need their parents to look after their needs and interests ", 8 percent agreed with this statement but 6 percent was undecided (item 23) . Ninety percent indicated that they participate fully in their children's education , 3 percent does not participate and 7 percent was undecided (item 39).Ways of participating mentioned by parents are listed in TABLE 5 below :

Table 5: Ways in which parents participate in education .

	Frequency	Percentage of responses	Percentage of sample
Ways of participating N = 638			
Help with homework / projects	123	19	7
Encourage /check that homework is done	120	19	7
Being supportive / motivating	104	16	6
Ensure adherence to school rules and the code of conduct	73	11	4
Supervise study / reading	70	11	4
Provide learning material and pay school fees	59	9	3
Attend meetings and consult teachers	50	8	3
Encourage participation in sports and extramural activities	28	4	2
Provide conducive home environment	11	2	0.6

Total possible responses = 368 × 5 = 1840 (Appendix A, item 39)

Eighty percent disagreed with the statement of item 30, " I am nervous meeting other parents.", 7 percent agreed with this statement and 13 percent was undecided. Also, 46 percent disagreed with the statement in item 31, " I feel that other children are doing

better than mine.", 32 percent was undecided about this statement and 22 percent agreed with it .

Content analysis of responses to Question 40 reveals that there are many issues which parents consider as important to justify urgent teacher-parent contact . The three issues which were mentioned more often, in their order of importance, were : Child misbehaviour and peer pressure (10 percent), lack of progress and drop in marks (9 percent) and child being victimised by the teacher (5 percent) . Other issues are contained in Appendix G .

Ninety four percent mentioned that English is the most suitable language to use at parents' meetings . Fifty seven percent believed that English is understood by most people, 20 percent did not give any reasons as to why they chose English , 12 percent mentioned that English had to be used because it was the medium of instruction , 3 percent chose English provided that an interpreter would be available and 2 percent stated that English is the main official language (Appendix G) . Twelve parents (3 percent) mention that other languages could be used, six parents (2 percent) indicated that ones home language could be used and one parent stated that all official languages could be used .

Parents were positive about participating in schools . Seventy percent indicated that parents should contact teachers of their children at least once a term . Furthermore, 58 percent indicated that they would like to consult teachers once a term with a view to discussing children's progress . A majority of parents (96 percent) approved of their children's school code of conduct and 4 percent disapproved (Appendix C) . Thirty one percent of parents provided explanations to why they approve or disapprove of the school's code of conduct . Those who approved thought that it fosters responsibility and order (20 percent) , it is reasonable , democratic and comprehensive (6 percent) and it is strict and sets limits (2 percent) . Those who disapproved stated that it is not working or it is lenient (3 percent) and two parents stated that they had not seen any code of conduct .

CHAPTER 4

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of the Results .

This section discusses the results obtained in relation to the two research aims : (i) Investigating the extent of parental involvement in some high schools and (ii) Identifying the factors which have positive and negative influence on parental involvement. The third aim of this study is addressed in the next section . This takes the form of a set of suggestions aimed at improving the extent of parental involvement in education with a view to facilitating the learning of high school pupils .

Generally, responses showed that parents were positively disposed towards home-school relationships (as characterised by communication and contact) between parents and teachers . At the same time , results suggested that only thirty two percent of parents were actually involved in schools' practical activities and slightly more than half indicated that they take part in schools' events .

Findings show that the attributes of sex and parents' home language were more closely associated with various aspects and degrees of parental involvement than were attributes of employment , educational level and parents' marital status .

This study produced findings reflecting those of Bridges (1981) and Jowett & Baginsky (1991) , namely , that parents do not attend school meetings due to practical problems such as the lack of transport , work commitments and exhaustion . An important finding was that parents of different language / cultural groups and sex may fail to attend school meetings for different reasons . This finding is discussed in the following paragraphs .

Linked to the above comment , it was found that mothers and African language speaking parents were more likely than fathers and English language speaking parents to mention that the lack of transport stops them from attending parent-teacher general meetings . Only a few parents were concerned that meetings are held at night . This concern is nevertheless noteworthy . Night meetings pose a safety problem for parents . According to these results , black , female parents who do not have transport are particularly at risk . It has to be noted that black parents in racially integrated schools have to travel longer distances than parents of other racial groups .

It also emerged that males and English language speakers were significantly more likely than females and African language speakers not to come to school meetings due to work commitments .

The non-attendance of school meetings by females and divorced parents was significantly associated with the non-availability of a baby-sitter . This implies that females and divorced parents who also have younger children are less likely to leave them without a baby-sitter and attend a school meeting . This confirms the view that single parenting impacts negatively on parental involvement in education (David, 1993) . The fac' that divorced parents were found to be less likely compared to married parents to attend school meetings is further evidence of this . This is because single parents may have no-one to share responsibilities with .

Nias (1981) reported that parents showed different attitudes towards parental involvement ; some were appreciative of , *inter alia* , the time allocation and the nature of seating during school meetings . Findings in this study are similar to what Nias reported . English language speakers compared to African language speakers were less likely to participate in a general meeting of parents and teachers if the venue was overcrowded .

The level of parents' education was also found to be significantly associated with their participation in school meetings . Parents with a tertiary education were less likely than

parents with a secondary education to participate if the aims of the meeting were not well explained . According to Nias (1981) , parents who are busy and have other claims on their time need to feel that meetings are worthwhile . It is obvious that parents with a higher level of education are more conversant with the procedures through which meetings are conducted . It is thus possible that they would not participate if the correct procedures are violated . Bastiani (1989) suggests that both parents and teachers must agree about the aims of a meeting .

According to Hegarty (1993) , any form of communication between parents and teachers is important as long as it gives teachers insight into the backgrounds of children and factors that affect their response to learning .

Males and unemployed parents were more likely than females and employed parents to use face-to-face communication . This kind of communication, unlike the use of the telephone and written communication indicates parents' willingness to be involved on a more direct level with teachers . It seems logical to expect that unemployed parents would prefer face-to-face communication because they may have opportunities of going to schools . Indeed , findings in this study show that unemployed parents were more likely to seek contact with teachers than employed parents . Employed parents were found to be more likely than unemployed parents to use written communication . This method appears convenient and less time-consuming than face-to-face communication .

It is desirable that contact be initiated by parents . The school-initiated contact may result in a one-way view of parental involvement where parents are placed by teachers in a position of powerlessness (Todd & Higgins, 1998) . Parents need education and advocacy so that they can be able to initiate contacts with teachers .

Lastly , the sex of parents and their participation in practical school activities and events were significantly associated . For example , females were more likely than males to be

involved in the raising of funds for the schools . Males, on the other hand were more likely than females to participate in family fun days.

4.2 Practical implications of the findings and suggestions for increasing parental involvement in education .

Meetings have to be organised in such a way that the majority of parents are able to attend without being inconvenienced . In this study , parents indicated that the lack of transport and work commitments are the two main reasons for the poor attendance in school meetings . Perhaps it is advisable to hold meetings on Saturday afternoons when most parents are not working and when public transport is available . Alternatively , such days can be determined with the help of parents . A majority of parents in this study asserted that they read newsletters . So , teachers can send newsletters that have tear-off sections where parents indicate days and time that suit them . Teachers can then draw up time tables for meetings on the basis of parents' responses .

Bastiani (1989) listed some suggestions aimed at improving parent-teacher consultations . He suggests , among other things that non-attending parents should be given special attention . For example , he says that individually addressed letters can be written and new dates be set for these parents . Hopefully , attendance will improve if parents realise that schools follow up on parents who stay away from meetings . He also notes that some parents attend meetings because they want to help their children with problems which they already have identified . These parents would be disappointed if they realise that teachers do not know anything about their children . For this reason , it is advisable that teachers should keep records of individual children during parent meetings .

Results of this study have also shown that parents are likely not to participate in meetings if they perceive teachers to be dominant . For successful parental involvement , it is necessary to include parents in meaningful school decision-making and to encourage them to assume leadership on important school issues (Bastiani, 1989 ; Epstein, 1995 cited in

Stoll & Fink , 1998) . In this study, parents had negative attitudes towards voting for the school governing bodies (SGBs) . According to the South African Schools' Act (1996) , all schools must form governing bodies and parents must be in the majority . It is possible that parents do not know the duties and the procedure of electing these bodies . The relevance of these governing structures in the education of children has yet to be demonstrated .

Teachers would be well advised not to be threatened by parental involvement because parents have different roles to theirs . Border and Merttens (1993) note that home-school relations look at ways parents can help teachers in the teacher's role only as perceived by teachers themselves . Bastiani (1989) observed that parents are an important educational resource . They know and can do many things which can be of value to the education of their children . Also, it is important to determine their perceptions , and get their commitment and co-operation . It is preferable if parents initiate contacts with schools rather than wait to be invited .

This study has also revealed that parents have limited ways of helping their children to learn . According to Epstein (1995) quoted in Stoll & Fink (1998) , teachers can help parents with ways of supporting their children's homework and other related activities .

Parents need education and advocacy which would enable them to be effective participants in their children's education . It seems as though parent advocacy programs comprise mostly of parents . Ammer & Littleton (1983) surveyed parents' perceptions of the concept of parent advocacy and found that , contrary to expectations , parents saw teachers and not other parents as the advocacy resource . This implies that parents realised that teachers have a role to play in this area .

The Right Questions Project (RQP) based in Massachusetts (USA) discussed by Santana (1996) is one parent advocacy initiative worth emulating . It trains teachers , parents and community activists to be facilitators of parents' workshops . These facilitators teach

parents to be skillful and critical thinkers . Parents are taught to ask questions so that they can : (1) gather information about what their children need to be learning , (2) monitor what teachers are teaching and what their children are learning and (3) take action to support teachers and their children .

Volenski (1995) found that parents of handicapped children showed less stress , developed enhanced parenting skills and greater self-awareness after they had participated in the Parent Education and Guidance Program . This program had three components , which were : Education - where parents were educated about their child's disorder and informed about available support programmes ; Child Management - which used sources such as the *Parent Effectiveness Training* (Gordon, 1970) and the *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)* (Dinkmeyer & Mckay , 1983) . The last component was Self-awareness - which covered topics such as assertiveness , effective communication and listening skills.

4.3 Limitations of the Study .

This study investigated factors which influence parental involvement in some high schools. The parent questionnaire which was used to obtain information had not been adequately tested . This resulted in the following difficulties : (i) some questions were prone to different interpretations by parents , (ii) the socio-economic status (SES) of each respondent could not be sufficiently established . This happened because there were no questions that could elicit reliable information which pertains to the SES of parents .

The second limitation arose from the way in which the questionnaires were distributed . The distribution was not controlled for , and should have been . There is a possibility that the questionnaires were unrepresentatively distributed among the different language groups . The sample , may therefore not have accurately reflected the South African demographics .

Race was excluded from the parent questionnaire in order not to alienate some sensitive parents . It can be inferred that African language speakers are black parents . It cannot , however , be established here as to whether coloured and Indian parents indicated English as their home language or not .

This study was confined to the parents of children who attend school in previously advantaged areas . Schools in these areas have been functioning relatively well compared for instance to the township schools . Secondly , schools work with and involve parents differently . The generalisability of the results of this study is thus suspect .

The fact that the questionnaires were sent to parents through the schools may have had a negative influence on the responses of some parents . Although it was indicated on the questionnaires that they were confidential , some were returned with the children's names written on them. Questionnaires are flawed in the sense that they may compel respondents to provide answers which they perceive to be socially acceptable .There is a possibility that some of the parents did not give objective or candid responses .

This study did not involve teachers and learners . Teachers views would have been useful , in that research shows that teachers' attitudes determine the extent of parental involvement in education . Further , the attitudes expressed by learners could have acted as checks against the information provided by their parents .

4.4 Conclusions and implications for further research .

The parent questionnaire or any other measure used to obtain information for this study must be further tested and validated so that it becomes more reliable and objective .

Research shows that there are conflicting reports about the effects of parents' socio-economic status (SES) on parental involvement . There are reports that state that lower SES parents are not involved in the education of their children . Others say that parents ,

irrespective of their SES , are interested in their children's education . Further research is needed in order to clarify this area , particularly in relation to South Africa .

This study was confined to parents whose children attend school in the southern suburbs of Johannesburg . It would be interesting to investigate the extent of parental involvement and the factors associated with it in areas that were previously disadvantaged . Also , this kind of study is needed in schools that are experiencing difficulties with racial integration .

Teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement in South Africa should be investigated and compared with the findings of such studies in other countries . Children's perceptions of their parents' involvement in education could also be studied . The extension of this study to the perceptions of teachers and children about parental involvement would provide more extensive and diverse evidence in relation to this issue .

The school governing bodies are better positioned to form links between schools and families . The role that can be played by these bodies towards ensuring increased parental involvement in schools and the way in which they can advocate for parents in education need to be investigated .

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Confidential **Date** ———

Parent Questionnaire
Number: ———

We would greatly appreciate if you would take some time to complete this questionnaire. To answer the questions, tick the appropriate box or give a written reply where applicable.

A. Would you please tick what apply to you.

1. Are you the ?	Biological parent	☐
	Guardian	☐
	Step parent	☐
2. What is your marital status?	Married	☐
	Single	☐
	Widowed	☐
	Divorced	☐
	Separated	☐
3. Sex	Male	☐
	Female	☐
4. What is your home language?	English	☐
	Afrikaans	☐
	African Language	☐
	Foreign Language	☐
5. What is your education?	Primary School	☐
	Secondary School	☐
	University	☐
	Technikon/College	☐

6. Would you indicate your age? _____

7. i. Are you employed ? _____

ii. What type of work do you do ? _____

iii. What is your income after tax and deductions?

Less than R1 000	☐
R2 000 - R3 000	☐
R3 000 - R4 000	☐
R4 000 - R5 000	☐
R5 000 - R6 000	☐
R6 000 - R7 000	☐
R7 000 - R8 000	☐
R8 000 - R9 000	☐
R9 000 - R10 000	☐
R10 000 and more	☐

B. Would you please rate the following statements on scale of 1 - 4 as:

1	2	3	4
Frequently	Sometimes	Not very often	Hardly ever

8. I attend school meetings whenever they are arranged.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

9. I seek contact with my child's teachers.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Please give reasons for your answer: _____

_____

_____

10. I read newsletters \circulars from my child's school whenever I receive them.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

What do you think of them (newsletters\circulars)? _____

_____

_____

11. I vote whenever the governing body of my child's school is elected.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Please give reasons for your answer: _____

_____

12. How often do you think parents should contact teachers of their children?
(Tick one box only)

Once a week ☐

Once a term ☐

At the beginning of the year ☐

At the beginning and the end of the year ☐

Other, specify _____

_____

13. How often would you like to consult your child's teacher with the view of discussing your child's progress ?

Once a term ☐

Twice a term ☐

Once a year ☐

Other, specify _____

14. Which of the following is/are likely to stop you from participating usefully in parent-teachers' general meeting ? (Tick what apply to you)

Aims of the meeting not well explained ☐

The venue is overcrowded ☐

Parents are too talkative ☐

There are gaps in the information teachers give ☐

Decision making is not shared fairly between teachers and parents ☐

Other, specify _____

15. Do any of the following issues stop you from attending a general meeting of teachers and parents ? (Tick what apply to you)

Not being a very sociable person ☐

Lack of transport ☐

Tiredness ☐

Work commitments ☐

Family problems ☐

No baby-sitter ☐

Other more urgent business ☐

Other, specify _____

16. Which of the following method (s) do you use to communicate with your child's teacher ? (Tick the method (s) you use. One or more)

Telephone ☐

Face to face ☐

Written ☐

Which of these do you prefer ? _____

because _____

17. Have you personally met your child's class teacher ? (Tick one box only)

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, what was the purpose of your meeting ? _____

_____

18. Tick the activities in which you are involved at your child's school.

I meet with associations and committees on behalf of my child's school. ☐

I serve in school's governing body ☐

I help on the sports and organise trips ☐

I help in the tuck shop. ☐

I help with fund-raising efforts ☐

Mention other activities: _____

_____

_____

19. Tick the event(s) you take part in at your child's school

Family fun days ☐

Cleaning campaigns ☐

Parents get-together parties ☐

Mention other activities ☐ _____

_____

_____

20. Do you approve of your child's school code of conduct ? (Tick one box only)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please explain _____

_____

_____

_____

Please rate the following statements on a scale 1 - 5 as :

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	tend to agree	neither agree nor disagree	tend to disagree	strongly disagree

21. My son/daughter's school encourages parents to be involved in their children's education.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

22. High school learners are old enough to be able to talk to their parents about their progress and needs that pertain to school work.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

23. High school learners do not need their parents to look after their needs and interests.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

24. Teachers often do not accept input from parents.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Please rate the following statements on a scale 1 - 5 as :

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	tend to agree	neither agree nor disagree	tend to disagree	strongly disagree

25. Teachers dislike having their authority challenged

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

26. High school teachers need parents to help with children's education

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

27. I feel that it is difficult for parents to change the policy of the school.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

28. I see the school as being responsible to inform me about my child.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

29. I feel it is my duty to do something with the information that the school gives me.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

30. I am nervous meeting other parents.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

31. I feel that other children are doing better than mine.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

32. The new methods used these days in schools encourage parents to have a say in education.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

33. I feel excluded from participating in school decision-making.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

34. Educational matters are often too complicated to be understood by parents.

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Please rate the following statements on a scale 1 - 5 as :

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	tend to agree	neither agree nor disagree	tend to disagree	strongly disagree

35. The school has an important role in both education and discipline.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

36. The parents have an important role in both education & discipline.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

37. My child has been helped to learn better by the promotion of rights and political power for parent, teachers and learners.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Please explain _____

_____

38. Discussions with teachers are really useful as my child's benefits.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Please suggest ways in which the child benefits:

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

39. I participate fully in my child's education.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Ways in which you participate:

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

If you do not participate, tick the reason(s) for this that apply to you

(a) My child does not let me ☐

(b) I am inadequately educated ☐

(c) I do not have the time ☐

Other reason(s) specify

(d) _____
(e) _____
(f) _____

40.Please list any three issues in order of importance which you think would justify urgent teacher-parent consultation. (e.g. If my child were being bullied)

(a) _____
(b) _____
(c) _____

41. Which language do you think is most suitable to use at parents' meeting?

Please give reasons: _____
_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PATIENCE IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B

Division of Specialised Education

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Private Bag 3, WITS 2050 South Africa • Telegrams Univits • Fax +27 11 716 8030 • Telephone +27 11 716 1111

22 October 1998

Dear Sir

I am a student at Wits. We are conducting a research study investigating factors which influence parental involvement in some high schools. My supervisor, Professor Skuy and I are requesting your school's participation in this research. Participation will consist of sending of questionnaires through your students to their parents and receiving them back. The questionnaires will be anonymous. All responses will be kept confidential but the results of the study will be revealed to the participating schools.

We are aware that you are busy this time of the year. We hope that your school programme will not be disrupted.

For more information, I have included an excerpt of my research proposal and a copy of the parent questionnaire. I will phone you as a follow-up to this letter.

We hope your school will participate. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Yours sincerely

WILFRED G. SITHOLE
BA (Unisa), B Ed (Rem Ed (Wits))
M Ed (Ed Psych) Intern

Endorsed by: **MERVYN SKUY**
Clinical and Educational Psychologist
Professor of Specialised Education and
Head of the Division

APPENDIX C

RESULTS OF PART B OF THE PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

8. I attend school meetings whenever they are arranged.	Involved Not involved	72% 28%
9. I seek contact with my child's teachers.	Involved Not involved	61% 39%
10. I read newsletters / circulars from my child's school whenever I receive them	Involved Not involved	97% 3%
11. I vote whenever the governing body of my child's school is elected.	Involved Not involved	39% 61%
12. How often do you think parents should contact teachers of their child children ? (Tick one box only)	Once a week Once a term At the beginning of the year At the beginning and the end of the year Other;specify	6% 70% .5% 4% 20%
13. How often would you like to consult your child's teacher with the view of discussing your child's progress (Tick one box only)	One a term Twice a term Once a year Other; specify	58% 28% 2% 12%
14. Which of the following is/are likely to stop you from participating usefully in parent-teacher general meeting (Tick what apply to you)	Aims of the meeting not well explained The venue is overcrowded The parents are too talkative There are gaps in the information teachers give Decision making is not shared fairly between teachers and parents Other; specify	17% 19% 9% 7% 19% 18%
15. Do any of the following issues stop you from attending a general meeting of teachers and parents (Tick what apply to you)	Not being a very sociable person Lack of transport Tiredness Work commitments Family problems No baby-sitter Other more urgent business Other; specify	4% 20% 7% 51% 2% 4% 7% 8%
16. Which of the following method(s) do you use to communicate with your child's teacher? (Tick the method you use one or more)	Telephone Face-to-face Written	26% 68% 32%

17. Have you personally met your child's class teacher (Tick one box only)	Yes	69%
	No	31%
18. Tick the activities you are involved in at your child's school		
	I meet with associations and committees on behalf of my child's school	5%
	I serve in the school's governing body	2%
	I help in sports and organise trips	4%
	I help in the tuck-shop	.3%
	I help with the fund raising efforts	21%
	Mention other activities	0%
19. Tick the event(s) you take part in at your child's school		
	Family fun days	48%
	Cleaning campaigns	.8%
	Parent get-together parties	8%
	Mention other activities	0%
20. Do you approve of your child's school code of conduct		
	Yes	96%
	No	4%

APPENDIX D

ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES THAT INFLUENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

	AGREE	NEITHER NOR	DISAGREE
21.My son/daughter's school encourages parents to be involved in in their children's education	83.6%	10.6%	5.9%
22.High school learners are old enough to be able to talk to their parents about their progress and needs that pertain to school work	76.6%	7.8%	15.6%
23.High school learners do not need their parents to look to look after their needs and interests	8.3%	6.0%	85.7%
24.Teachers often do not accept input from parents	20.9%	30.2%	48.8%
25.Teachers dislike having their authority challenged	43.9%	29.0%	27.1%
26.High school teachers need parents to help with children's education	85.1%	6.1%	8.9%
27.I feel that it is difficult for parents to change the policy of the school	39.8%	34.5%	25.8%
28.I see the school as being responsible to inform me about my child	86.7%	5.2%	8.0%
29.I feel it is my duty to do something with the information that the school gives me	95.2%	3.1%	1.6%
30.I am nervous meeting other parents	7.2%	12.6%	80.1%
31.I feel that other children are doing better than mine	22.3%	31.6%	46.1%
32.The new methods used these days in schools encourage parents to have a say in education	71.6%	17.3%	11.1%
33.I feel excluded in participating in school decision-making	14.0%	36.8%	49.1%
34.Educational matters are often too complicated to be understood by parents	23.0%	20.2%	56.9%
35.The school has an important role in both education and discipline	95.3%	1.9%	2.8%
36.The parents have an important role in both education and discipline	96.9%	1.7%	1.4%

37.My child has been helped to learn better by the promotion of rights and political power for parents,teachers and learners	51.3%	29.9%	17.9%
38.Discussions with teachers are really useful as my child benefits	86.6%	8.7%	4.5%
39.I participate fully in my child's education	90.0%	7.3%	2.7%

APPENDIX E

CHI-SQUARED ANALYSIS OF CROSS-CLASSIFIED VARIABLES ***(The effect marked with an * are significant at 5%)***

COMPARISON			df	CHI-SQUARE	PROBABILITY
Marital status			1	7.477	0.006 *
Sex			1	1.500	0.221 ns
Education	vs	**Question 8**	1	0.901	0.343 ns
Language			1	0.185	0.667 ns
Employment			1	0.353	0.552 ns
Parent			1	0.052	0.820 ns
Marital status			1	2.870	0.090 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 9**	1	0.691	0.406 ns
Education			1	1.337	0.247 ns
Language			1	1.202	0.273 ns
Employment			1	4.448	0.035 *
Parent			1	1.326	0.250 ns
Marital status			1	2.116	0.146 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 11**	1	0.995	0.318 ns
Education			1	0.444	0.505 ns
Language			1	0.757	0.383 ns
Employment			1	0.617	0.432 ns
Education	vs	**Question 12**	1	1.705	0.790 ns
Employment	vs	**Question 13**	3	0.591	0.899 ns
Marital status			1	0.307	0.580 ns
Sex			1	0.093	0.760 ns
Education	vs	**Question 14 A**	1	6.358	0.012 *
Language			1	0.669	0.413 ns
Employment			1	0.673	0.412 ns
Marital status			1	0.431	0.510 ns
Sex			1	0.742	0.389 ns
Education	vs	**Question 14 B**	1	1.741	0.187 ns
Language			1	25.584	0.001 **
Employment			1	0.629	0.428 ns
Sex			1	0.921	0.337 ns
Education			1	2.298	0.130 ns
Language	vs	**Question 14 C**	1	4.740	0.029 *
Employment			1	0.415	0.519 ns
Sex			1	0.993	0.319 ns
Education	vs	**Question 14 D**	1	2.265	0.132 ns
Language			1	0.773	0.379 ns
Sex			1	0.877	0.349 ns
Education			1	0.110	0.740 ns
Language	vs	**Question 14 E**	1	0.033	0.855 ns
Employment			1	0.058	0.809 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 15 A**	1	0.099	0.753 ns
Education			1	0.907	0.341 ns

Marital status			1	0.244	0.621 ns
Sex			1	17.495	0.001 **
Education	vs	**Question 15 B**	1	0.012	0.913 ns
Language			1	23.598	0.001 **
Employment			1	1.458	0.227 ns
Sex			1	2.227	0.136 ns
Education	vs	**Question 15 C**	1	1.192	0.275 ns
Language			1	2.514	0.113 ns
Parent			1	0.753	0.386 ns
Marital			1	0.036	0.850 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 15 D**	1	14.319	0.001 **
Education			1	1.680	0.195 ns
Language			1	11.159	0.001 **
Employment			1	16.550	0.001 **
Sex	vs	**Question 15 F**	1	8.378	0.004
Education			1	0.257	0.613 ns
Sex			1	0.315	0.575 ns
Education	vs	**Question 15 G**	1	1.195	0.275 ns
Language			1	0.489	0.484 ns
Sex			1	0.384	0.536 ns
Education	vs	**Question 15 H**	1	1.223	0.269 ns
Language			1	0.014	0.905 ns
Marital status			1	0.673	0.412 ns
Sex			1	0.473	0.492 ns
Education	vs	**Question 16 A**	1	2.116	0.146 ns
Language			1	5.683	0.017 *
Employment			1	0.173	0.678 ns
Sex			1	10.746	0.001 **
Education			1	1.233	0.269 ns
Language	vs	**Question 16 B**	1	0.898	0.343 ns
Employment			1	6.607	0.010 *
Sex			1	4.358	0.037 *
Education			1	6.578	0.010 *
Language	vs	**Question 16 C**	1	2.415	0.120 ns
Employment			1	7.850	0.005 *
Marital status			1	2.213	0.137 ns
Sex			1	2.777	0.096 ns
Education	vs	**Question 17**	1	2.717	0.099 ns
Language			1	0.033	0.855 ns
Employment			1	0.144	0.704 ns
Sex			1	0.095	0.759 ns
Education	vs	**Question 18 A**	1	0.017	0.891 ns
Language			1	0.702	0.402 ns
Sex			1	0.005	0.944 ns
Education	vs	**Question 18 C**	1	0.371	0.542 ns
Language			1	2.315	0.128 ns

Sex					
Education			1	7.070	0.008 *
Language	vs	**Question 18 E**	1	2.272	0.132 ns
Employment			1	1.985	0.159 ns
			1	0.294	0.588 ns
Parent					
Marital status			1	2.982	0.084 ns
Sex			1	5.908	0.015 *
Education	vs	**Question 19 A**	1	5.738	0.017 *
Language			1	5.108	0.024 *
Employment			1	2.344	0.126 ns
			1	0.913	0.339 ns
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 19 C**	1	1.913	0.167 ns
Language			1	0.646	0.422 ns
			1	0.002	0.968 ns
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 21**	2	1.415	0.493 ns
Language			2	1.107	0.575 ns
			2	5.101	0.078 ns
Parent					
Marital status			2	2.509	0.285 ns
Sex			2	0.377	0.825 ns
Education	vs	**Question 22**	2	0.660	0.719 ns
Language			2	14.341	0.001 **
Employment			2	1.991	0.367 ns
			2	4.780	0.092 ns
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 23**	2	0.843	0.656 ns
Language			2	0.853	0.653 ns
			2	0.332	0.847 ns
Marital status					
Sex			2	3.622	0.163 ns
Education	vs	**Question 24**	2	0.664	0.718 ns
Language			2	0.130	0.937 ns
Employment			2	1.628	0.443 ns
			2	1.633	0.442 ns
Sex					
Education			2	0.155	0.925 ns
Language	vs	**Question 25**	2	1.609	0.447 ns
Employment			2	37.841	0.001 **
			2	0.416	0.812 ns
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 26**	2	0.020	0.990 ns
Language			2	0.097	0.953 ns
			2	9.601	0.008 *
Parent					
Marital status			2	1.410	0.494 ns
Sex			2	0.883	0.643 ns
Education	vs	**Question 27**	2	1.119	0.572 ns
Language			2	2.349	0.309 ns
Employment			2	7.909	0.019 *
			2	2.043	0.360 ns
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 28**	2	1.422	0.491 ns
Language			2	1.604	0.448 ns
			2	25.921	0.001 **
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 30**	2	0.590	0.744 ns

Language			2	6.932	0.031 *
Employment			2	0.821	0.663 ns
			2	1.957	0.376 ns
Marital status					
Sex			2	5.310	0.070 ns
Education	vs	**Question 31**	2	1.103	0.576 ns
Language			2	0.992	0.607 ns
Employment			2	14.805	0.001 **
			2	0.514	0.773 ns
Marital status					
Sex			2	8.966	0.011 *
Education	vs	**Question 32**	2	1.066	0.587 ns
Language			2	2.612	0.271 ns
Employment			2	23.686	0.001 **
			2	0.750	0.687 ns
Marital status					
Sex			2	1.583	0.453 ns
Education	vs	**Question 33**	2	6.551	0.038 *
Language			2	0.342	0.843 ns
Employment			2	3.651	0.162 ns
			2	4.396	0,111 ns
Marital status					
Sex			2	1.101	0.577 ns
Education	vs	**Question 34**	2	4.447	0.108 ns
Language			2	2.482	0.287 ns
Employment			2	0.521	0.771 ns
			2	0.474	0.789 ns
Sex					
Education			2	0.195	0.462 ns
Language	vs	**Question 37**	2	2.011	0.366 ns
Employment			2	4.712	0.095 ns
			2	1.802	0.406 ns
Sex					
Education	vs	**Question 38**	2	0.266	0.875 ns
Language			2	1.054	0.570 ns
			2	2.932	0.231 ns
Language	vs	**Question 39**			
			2	0.788	0.674 ns

APPENDIX F

RESULTS OF THE FISHER'S EXACT TEST (TWO-TAIL) - ***on the categories where the chi-squared test was invalid (The effect marked with an * are significant at 5 %)***

COMPARISONS			PROBABILITY
Parent	vs	**Question 8**	0.573 ns
Parent			0.061 ns
Marital status			0.602 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 10**	0.325 ns
Education			1.000 ns
Language			0.077 ns
Employment			1.000 ns
Parent			0.492 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 12**	0.264 ns
Sex			0.232
Language			0.115 ns
Employment			0.732 ns
Parent			0.689 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 13**	0.728 ns
Sex			0.253 ns
Education			0.345 ns
Language			0.937 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 14 A**	0.084 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 14 B**	0.322 ns
Parent			0.379 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 14 C**	1.000 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 14 D**	0.746 ns
Employment			0.207 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 14 E**	1.000 ns
Marital status			0.666 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status			1.000 ns
Language	vs	**Question 15 A**	0.770 ns
Eployment			0.107 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 15 B**	0.510 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 15 C**	0.726 ns
Employment			0.757 ns
Parent			0.258 ns
Marital status			0.555 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 15 E**	1.000 ns
Education			0.475 ns
Language			0.442 ns
Employment			1.000 ns

Parent			0.498 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 15 F**	0.050 *
Language			0.164 ns
Employment			0.417 ns
Parent			0.613 ns
Marital status	vs	**Questiion 15 G**	1.000 ns
Employment			1.000 ns
Parent			0.356 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 15 H**	0.551 ns
Employment			0.781 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 16 A**	1.000 ns
Parent			0.577 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 16 B**	0.208 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 17**	0.255 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 18 A**	0.671 ns
Employment			0.719 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status			1.000 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 18 B**	1.000 ns
Education			0.410 ns
Language			0.183 ns
Employment			0.558 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 18 C**	0.691 ns
Employment			0.704 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status			0.125 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 18 D**	1.000 ns
Education			1.000 ns
Language			1.000 ns
Employment			1.000 ns
Parent			0.209 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 18 E**	1.000 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status			0.332 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 19 B**	1.000 ns
Education			0.583 ns
Language			1.000 ns
Employment			1.000 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 19 C**	0.756 ns
Employment			0.236 ns
Parent			0.379 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 20**	0.660 ns

Sex			0.761 ns
Education	vs	**Question 20**	0.605 ns
Language			1.000 ns
Employment			0.659 ns
Parent			0.143 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 21**	0.003 *
Employment			1.000 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 23**	0.736 ns
Employment			0.780 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 24**	0.401 ns
Parent			0.594 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 25**	0.952 ns
Parent			0.283 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 26**	0.822 ns
Employment			0.056 ns
Parent			0.583 ns
Marital	vs	**Question 28**	0.328 ns
Employment			0.719 ns
Parent			0.084 ns
Marital status			0.285 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 29**	1.000 ns
Education			0.623 ns
Language			0.833 ns
Employment			0.699 ns
Parent			0.507 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 30**	0.176 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 31**	0.743 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 32**	1.000 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 33**	0.391 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 34**	0.654 ns
Parent			0.090 ns
Marital status			0.581 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 35**	0.570 ns
Education			0.164 ns
Language			0.098 ns
Employment			0.833 ns
Parent			0.380 ns
Marital status			0.668 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 36**	0.191 ns
Education			0.357 ns
Language			0.884 ns
Employment			0.488 ns
Parent	vs	**Question 37**	0.105 ns

Marital status			0.626 ns
Parent			0.415 ns
Marital status	vs	**Question 38**	0.576 ns
Employment			0.471 ns
Parent			1.000 ns
Marital status			0.173 ns
Sex	vs	**Question 39**	0.897 ns
Education			0.558 ns
Employment			0.249 ns

APPENDIX G

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

QUESTIONS	NO	% OF RESPONDENTS	% OF SAMPLE
Give reasons why you seek/do not seek contact with your child's teacher N = 296			
No time work commitments	57	19	16
Child has problems with school work	20	7	5
Problematic child behaviour	6	2	2
To check child's progress	76	26	10
Child has no problems; no contact	36	12	10
Lack of transport	20	7	5
Contact is unnecessary	41	14	11
Unspecified problems	31	11	8
Single parent / contact is difficult	5	2	1
Teachers are unfriendly	4	1	1
What do you think of the circulars/newsletters from your child's school N = 366			
Informative about school events	220	60	60
Explicit / relevant / acceptable	96	26	26
Necessary for a school	14	4	4
Motivating / reassuring/ interesting	23	6	6
Useless/ Irrelevant	7	2	2
Do not get them / they are often late	6	2	2
Reasons for voting / not voting when the school governing body is elected N = 224			
To be part of decision-making	30	13	8
Not notified about elections	11	5	3
Have not / cannot attend elections	17	8	5
Do not know the nominees	27	12	7
Lack of transport to school	10	5	3
Child is new at school	16	7	4
Voted to get representation	40	18	11
Often committed elsewhere	56	25	15
Uninvolved for no reason	9	4	2
P.T.A does as it pleases	3	1.3	0.8
Do not know the procedure for voting	4	1.8	1.1
Monopoly by some parents	1	0.5	0.3
Specify other reasons which may stop you from participating usefully in a parent-teacher meeting N = 72			
Work commitments / not available	42	58	11
Long meeting / dislike for meetings	7	10	2
Transport problems	6	8	2
Meetings are at night / no security	5	7	1
Long queues to subject teachers	4	6	1
Language is a barrier	4	6	1
Health problems	2	3	0.8
Do not like to talk about my child in public	2	3	0.8
Which method of communication with your child's teacher do you prefer N = 252			
Face-to-face ; easy problem solving	104	41	28
Face-to-face ; personal ; get to know the teacher better	48	19	13
Face-to -face ; no reasons given	36	14	10
Telephone ; accessible / convenient	20	8	5

Telephone; more reliable	5	2	1
Telephone; no reasons given	8	3	2
Written; quick and convenient	14	6	4
Written ; better expression; can keep records	5	2	1
Written ; no reasons given	12	5	3
What was the purpose of meeting your child's class teacher N = 238			
Discuss and inquire about the child's progress and behaviour	88	37	24
Collection of child's progress report	71	30	19
Parents' evening/ open day/ parents' meeting	42	18	11
Meet and know the teacher / introduction	16	7	4
Child's low performance in subjects	7	3	2
Show support/ appreciation/ interest to the teacher	5	2	1
Child's misconduct/ late-coming/ poor attendance	5	2	1
Choice and/or difficulty of subjects	4	2	1
Suggest ways in which your child benefits from parent-teacher discussions N = 300			
Teacher will understand child's background; improves interaction; find common ground	90	30	25
Problems/ weaknesses are detected	69	23	19
Encourages/ motivates/ child to learn	66	22	18
Change in child's attitude and behaviour	48	16	13
Progress/ strengths are detected	25	8	7
Not at all helpful	2	0.7	0.5
Mention ways in which you participate in your child's education (Total=368×5=1840) N = 625			
Helping with homework/ projects	123	20	7
Encourage/ check that homework is done	120	19	7
Being supportive/ motivating	104	17	6
Supervise study / reading	70	11	4
Ensure adherence to school rules and the code of conduct	73	12	4
Provide learning material and pay school fees	59	9	3
Attend meetings and consult teachers	50	8	3
Encourage participation in sport and extramural activities	28	5	2
Provide conducive home environment	11	2	0.6
List three issues in the order of importance which you think would justify urgent parent-teacher consultation (Total = 368×3 = 1104) N = 476			
Child's misbehaviour / peer pressure	108	23	10
No progress / drop in marks	96	20	9
Child victimisation by the teacher	60	13	5
Conflict / bullying among pupils	46	10	4
Unsatisfactory teaching / learning	38	8	3
Truancy / poor attendance / late-coming	32	7	3
Presence of drugs, liquor and smoking	26	6	2
Presence of weapons/ fights,injury and accidents	26	6	2
Child's unhappiness about school	15	3	1
When teacher undermines the parent/child return late	10	2	0.9
Unspecified problems	10	2	0.9
Child's illness or tragedy at home	9	1.9	0.8
Explain why you approve/disapprove of your child's school code of conduct N = 113			
Fosters responsibility/ order at school	73	65	20
Reasonable/ democratic/ comprehensive	21	19	6
Not working / lenient	10	9	3
Very strict/ it sets limits	7	6	2
Have not seen any code of conduct	2	2	0.5
Which language do you think is most suitable to use at			

parents' meetings. Please give reasons for your answer N = 364			
English; understood by most people	211	58	57
English; *no reasons given*	73	20	20
English; the school is English-medium	43	12	12
Use other languages	12	3	3
English; it is the main official language	8	2	2
English; but have an interpreter	10	3	3
Use ones home language	6	2	2
Use all official languages	1	0.3	0.3

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Name of thesis Investigation Of Factors Which Influence Parental Involvement In Some High Schools Sithole W G 1999

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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