

**An investigation into the factors that influence parental
involvement in the development of their children's literacy in
the secondary school level: A case study of a combined school
in the Eastern Cape**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Ndileka Primrose Adam, declare that this dissertation which I hereby submit for the degree of Master of Education in Faculty of Education at the University of Fort Hare, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary education institution.

I also declare that as far as I am aware, all references used in this dissertation have been cited and acknowledged.

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Date

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in the senior phase. The concept of parental involvement has been perceived as one of the cornerstones that contribute positively to the effectiveness of the education that children receive. In the South African case, it is embodied in the legislation and is expected to permeate the education process at all levels. Many scholars perceive parental involvement as enhancing the development of children's literacy.

As an interpretive orientated study, this research had an interest in understanding the subjective experiences and general factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in the secondary school level. In line with the protocols of the case study, this study used a combination of methods namely structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis in collecting data.

The findings of the study revealed different opinions on parental involvement. While some parents appreciate the importance of their involvement, there were, however, some parents who perceive it as a responsibility of educators. Despite these views, there were positive contributions that have been brought about by parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy.

The study has also revealed that there are factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in the senior phase such as parents' lack of understanding of their roles, absence of guiding documents, lack of unity among stakeholders, age and qualifications. The intent of this research was to investigate factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in the secondary school level and to give some recommendations on how these can best be addressed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter One: Background of the study	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1.1 Conceptualizing parental involvement	2
1.1.2 Benefits of parental involvement	3
1.1.3 Practices of parental involvement in the development of children's literacy	5
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE STUDY	7
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	8
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	8
1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	8
1.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY	9
1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	9
1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY	10
1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS	10
1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	12
1.11 CONCLUSION	13
Chapter Two: Literature Review	14
2.1 INTRODUCTION	14
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	14
2.2.1 Epistemological foundations of the study	17
2.3 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS:LITERACY	18
2.3.1 What is literacy?	18

2.3.2	Developing literacy	19
2.3.3	Literacy development in Foundation Phase	22
2.3.4	Literacy development in Senior Phase	24
2.4	DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S LITERACY	25
2.4.1	Approaches at primary school level	26
2.4.2	Approaches at Senior Phase level	28
2.4.3	Role players in the development of children's literacy	29
2.5	FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN'S LITERACY	42
2.5.1	Parents' level of education and their experiences	43
2.5.2	Home environment	44
2.5.3	Home-school relationship	46
2.5.4	Parents understanding of their roles	48
2.6	CONCLUSION	49

Chapter Three:

Research Methods and Methodology..... 50

3.1	INTRODUCTION	50
3.2	RESEARCH PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM	51
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE APPROACH	53
3.4	RESEARCH DESIGN	57
3.4.1	Case study	57
3.5	RESEARCH METHODS	59
3.5.1	Interviews	60
3.5.2	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	64
3.5.3	Document analysis	68
3.6	SAMPLING	69
3.6.1	Sampling of research site	71

3.6.2 Sampling of respondents	72
3.7 NEGOTIATING ENTRY INTO THE RESEARCH SITE	73
3.8 DATA COLLECTION	74
3.8.1 Pilot study	74
3.8.2 Structured interviews	77
3.8.3 Semi-structured interviews	78
3.8.4 Document analysis	80
3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	81
3.10 ETHICS	81
3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS	83
3.11.1 Truth value	83
3.11.2 Credibility	83
3.11.3 Applicability	84
3.11.4 Data completeness	84
3.12 DATA ANALYSIS	85
3.12.1 Familiarisation and immersion	85
3.12.2 Inducing themes	85
3.12.3 Coding	85
3.12.4 Elaboration	86
3.12.5 Interpretation and checking	86
3.13 CONCLUSION	86

Chapter Four: Data Presentation 87

4.1 INTRODUCTION	87
4.2 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS	88
4.2.1 Parents' profiles	89
4.2.2 Roles played by parents	91
4.2.3 Parents who support their children up to senior phase level	96
4.2.4 Parents who support their children up to senior phase	102
4.2.5 Factors influencing parental involvement	103
4.2.6 Expectations by educators/school	106
4.3 CONCLUSION	111

Chapter Five: Discussion of the findings 112

5.1 INTRODUCTION	112
5.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	112
5.2.1 Role theory	113
5.2.2 Literacy development	114
5.2.3 Developing children's literacy	115
5.2.4 Role players in the development of children's literacy	116
5.2.5 Activities in which parents are involved	117
5.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN'S LITERACY	119
5.3.1 Parents' level of education and their experiences	120
5.3.2 Home environment	120
5.3.3 Home- school relationship	121
5.3.4 Parents understanding of their roles	122

5.4 CONCLUSION 123

Chapter Six:

Conclusion and Recommendations 125

6.1 INTRODUCTION 125

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 127

6.2.1 Parents' lack of understanding of their roles 128

6.2.2 Absence of guiding document 129

6.2.3 Lack of unity between stakeholders 129

6.2.4 Age 130

6.2.5 Illiteracy 130

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS.....130

6.4 LIMITATIONS 131

6.5 CONCLUSION 132

7.1 REFERENCES 133

8.1 LIST OF APPENDICES 147

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Profile of parents who participated in the structured interviews	89
Table 4.2 Profile of parents who support their children up to intermediate phase	96
Table 4.3 Profile of parents who support their children up to senior phase	102

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pilot Study	147
Appendix B: Interview questions to educators	151
Appendix C: Interview questions to parents	152
Appendix D: Interview questions to learners	154
Appendix E: Letter to parents	155
Appendix F: Letter to the principal	156
Appendix G: Consent form on behalf of learners.....	157
Appendix H: Consent form for parents.....	158

ACRONYMS

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
HOD	Head of Department

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, parents have been given the mandate through the South African School's Act 84 of 1996 to be involved in their children's education (South African Act ,1996). Section 6.1 of the Act provides that parents should take an active role in their children's schoolwork and make it possible for the children to complete assigned homework. Parents should in terms of Section 6.2 attend meetings that the governing body convenes (ibid). It is at these meetings that parents have opportunities to understand their roles. Parents are also given opportunities to participate in various portfolios such as serving in school committees.

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) also legislates that parents and wider community have an important role to play in curriculum management. NCS further identifies the benefits of community and parental involvement to include improved school performance, reduced drop-out rates, a decrease in disciplinary problems and generally, a more positive attitude towards the school (Ibid). Parental participation can increase goodwill and communication and help develop a sense of community within the school (Epstein, 1995). Parents must supervise their children at home and outside the school (ibid). Epstein strongly supports that when parents pay more attention to their children's schooling, they

will become more motivated and students' achievement levels tend to increase. This study attempts to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in a combined school in the Eastern Cape.

1.1.1 Conceptualizing parental involvement

Many researchers support the contention that improving parental involvement increases the effectiveness of the education that children receive (Paratore, 2005; Chen, 2001; Rasinski, 1995; and Hornby ,2000). Hornby (2000:4) identifies the following benefits:

- More positive parental attitudes towards teachers and schools
- More positive student attitudes and behaviors
- Improved student performance
- Improved teacher morale
- Improved school climate

One way of involving parents in their children's education is to involve them in the development of their children's literacy. For example, Morrow (1997) argues that collaborative working relationship between educators and parents is one of the key factors that contribute positively towards the development of children's literacy. It is important for parents to be involved with, and supportive of, their children's education. Children feel encouraged when their parents are informed about their progress in school. Sometimes they also need their parents' support

and assistance (A report on Education in South African Rural Communities, 2005). The report also revealed that the Eastern Cape had 70% of literacy levels amongst the female household respondents while Limpopo was reported to have 69% and Kwa-Zulu Natal had 59%. Literacy development does not begin with formal instruction when children enter school; instead children bring to school many concepts about literacy and certain competences in oral language, phonemic awareness, writing and reading (Morrow, 1997; Rasinski, 1995). This is confirmed by Wade & Moore (2000) that early reading experiences with parents prepare children for the benefits of formal literacy instruction and an advantage over their peers throughout foundation phase.

1.1.2 Benefits of parental involvement

Benefits of parental involvement in children's literacy include children's later reading ability Moon and Wells as cited by Weinberger (1996). Furthermore, the involvement of parents in their children's literacy development is associated with higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioral problems at school (Melhuish et al., 2001; Gest et al., 2004; and Rowe, 1991). Parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years of children. Its importance to children's educational and literacy outcomes continues into the teenage and even adult years (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).

According to Gianzero (1999), an education-friendly home environment affects not only children's achievement levels but their interest in learning and future educational plans as well. Researchers point to a number of supportive home processes that range from strong family values and routines to active involvement by parents in schoolwork (Ibid). The most frequently cited processes include stable family routines, parental support and encouragement about schoolwork, discussion of ideas and events, high parental aspirations and standards for children's achievement, quiet places to study, emphasis on family literacy, monitoring of after-school activities, tapping of community resources as needed, communicating or modeling of positive behaviors, and knowledge of school experiences (Henderson & Berla, 1997). They further observed in their study that the availability of reading material in the home is directly associated with children's achievement in reading comprehension at the senior phase. It is what parents do at home with respect to homework and television monitoring that appear to have the greatest impact on student outcomes (Ibid).

According to Brown (2006), working with parents is a mutually beneficial activity. On the one hand parents receive information about the school functioning, they assist with their children's curriculum activities. On the other hand teachers get to know what help can parents provide and are capable of giving. He also states that the aims of involving parents in literacy include informing teachers about the child as learner outside school, fosters mutual respect, understanding and openness between parents and educators (Ibid).

Jackson & Hannon (1981) as cited by Brown (2006) also states that practice in reading given to children at home enhances their competence at reading and this demonstrates that the majority of parents are keen to participate in children's education and suggest that maintaining and developing parental involvement can be educationally beneficial. Pahl & Rowsell (2006) identified some benefits of parental involvement in children's literacy. They state that when a child arrives at school, the child begins school with a wealth of knowledge about the world to support his or her learning. At school teachers translate this knowledge into a focus of learning and particularly a focus on literacy. This study, therefore, seeks to establish whether parents continue with this role throughout the foundation phase or they stop immediately their children start school.

1.1.3 Practices of parental involvement in the development of children's literacy

There are various ways in which parents are involved in the development of their children's literacy. Robb (2003) and Browne (2004) suggest that the participation of parents in their children's literacy activities at home is carried out in the following ways:

- joining the public library and taking children to the library and letting them browse through picture books and choose several to check out and take home. This activity requires literate parents who are able to access the library facilities and choose books that are relevant. Illiterate parents

from rural areas have challenges in that they have no library facilities and are also not able to read and thus cannot perform this activity.

- reading to children every day then invites them to use illustrations to tell about book story after several rereading. The availability of resources such as books is a challenge in rural areas and even literate parents cannot assist in this regard.
- provide resources for learning at home, such as writing implements and books. The low socio-economic status of the parents affects this adversely as parents are not in a position to provide the resources necessary to undertake this activity.
- translate children's stories, published books, signs, labels, notices, letters and circulars and supply materials for use in school. The performance of this activity requires literate parents. Parents who are illiterate are facing a challenge in that they cannot translate the learning material.

Despite the above stated, some studies indicate that such benefits are enjoyed mostly by children from middle class families (Soudien, 2003; Duku, 2006). Furthermore, studies have indicated that this support is greater in foundation phase education level than in the senior phase of education (Littlefair, 1994; Driessen et al., 2004; and Hornby, 2000). The researcher has observed that at a combined school in the Eastern Cape some parents were involved in the development of their children's literacy beyond foundation phase while some withdraw once their children reach senior phase.

Parents are part of their children's literacy development and may thus have valuable insight into their children's reading development and abilities (Dickinson & Temple, 1998). It is the aim of this study to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in a combined school in the Eastern Cape.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

The South African School's Act 84 of 1996, has given parents the mandate to be involved in their children's education. NCS also legislated that parents and wider community have an important role to play in curriculum management of the school. Literature reveals that parents can make a significant contribution to the development of their children's literacy (Hornby, 2000; Driessen et al., 2005; and Littlefair, 2004). Literature also shows that parents tend to be aware of the benefits of their involvement in the literacy development of their children (ibid). However, parents tend to withdraw their participation once their children reach senior phase (Driessen, 2005). This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase school level.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Against this background, this study is set out to respond to the following research questions:

- What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase level?
- What factors influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?
- What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to investigate factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. After observing the trend of behaviour of parents at a combined in the Eastern Cape, the researcher felt it necessary to carry out this study.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To unearth the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase.
- To describe how parents attach meaning to their involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase.

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has the following assumptions:

- parents are aware that their involvement in their children's literacy development yield positive results.
- parents are not aware that their involvement in their children's literacy development yield positive results.
- parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy has no effect on the results.

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The researcher is an educator who observed that parents seem to withdraw their involvement once their children reach senior phase. Having observed this the researcher felt that it was necessary to investigate factors that influence the parent's withdrawal. The introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) created opportunities for greater parental involvement in public education at both the foundation phase and senior phase and further outlines its benefits (Department of Education Policy, 1997). Parental involvement particularly in literacy activities is also evoked by literature that indicates benefits when parents are involved in their children's literacy (Driessen, 2005; Hornby, 2000 and Littlefair, 1994). Literature further states that parental involvement is greater in foundation phase than in senior phase (Ibid). However, research falls short of identifying factors that influence this pattern of involvement. It is therefore against this background that this study seeks to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase.

1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is restricted to a Combined School within the Bolompi Education Circuit in the Eastern Cape province. The participants were educators, learners and parents of senior phase. The researcher was investigating factors that influence parental involvement in their children's literacy development at senior phase (grade 7-9).

1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The following frequently used terms are defined:

- **Parental involvement**

Parental involvement is a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of the parent to the school and to the student (LaBahn, 1995).

- **Parent**

For the purpose of this study, a parent is any adult whose role is to guide and accompany a child towards responsible adulthood. According to the South African School Act, 84 (RSA 1996: 4), the term parent refers to:

- (i) the natural parent of a learner
- (ii) the guardian of a learner
- (iii) a person legally entitled to custody (physical control) of a learner and
- (iv) a person who undertakes to act as a parent of a learner for the purposes of the learner's education at school.

- **Educator/Teacher**

The term educator means “enabling or causing other to do by instruction and training”(Cowie,1996). In the South African Schools Act the term 'teacher' is replaced by the term 'educator'.

- **Influence**

Is the ability to affect someone's beliefs or actions. The power to produce physical change (Kalehoff, 2007).

- **Investigate**

Is to search out and examine the particulars of an in attempt to learn the facts about something in hidden, unique or complex,especially in an attempt to find a motive/cause (Emish-emish, 2009).

- **Literacy**

Garton & Pratt, (1998) define literacy as entailing the mastery of spoken language and reading and writing. They state that it must include both spoken and written languages. According to Harris & Hodges (1995), literacy requires active, autonomous engagement with print and stresses the role of the individual in generating as well as receiving and assigning independent interpretations to messages. Verhoeven (1993) adds that literacy should be seen as a lifelong context-bound set of practices in which an individual's needs vary with time and context.

- **Literacy development**

Literacy is developed principally by learning to read and write (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2002). McGee & Richgels (2000) state educators are concerned with

supporting all children's literacy growth and with thoughtful instruction, most children succeed in becoming reflective, motivated readers.

1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The outline of the study is as follows:

Chapter 1 : Introduction

It gives background to the topic being investigated. It presents the status quo regarding the involvement of parents in their children's education as well as the roles parents should play in their children's school work. It also outlines the general overview of the study, research problem, questions, purpose, objectives, assumptions, significance, rationale, limitations and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 : Conceptual framework and literature review

This chapter discusses the conceptual framework and related literature with regards to factors influencing parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy. It further outlines the approaches and strategies when dealing with literacy development both at primary and secondary school levels.

Chapter 3 : Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research process, paradigm, design and methodology. It indicates why the researcher has chosen qualitative approach and gives advantages and disadvantages of the approach.

Chapter 4 : Data presentation and analysis

This chapter deals with themes and sub-themes that emerged from field research. Analysis and interpretation of findings are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 : Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter is a summary of the research findings. In this chapter recommendations on how to overcome the factors that negatively influence parents in the development of their children's literacy at the senior phase are submitted.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with background of parental involvement and the policies that the government has put in place for parents to be involved in their children's education. Chapter two will review literature on parental involvement and literacy development as well as approaches and strategies to be adhered to when dealing with literacy development.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parents are the primary educators of their children. They should view themselves as being in partnership with the school which is then a formalised extension of the family. The partnership has been emphasised by legislation such as the South African Schools Act (Act 90 of 1996). The aim of this chapter is to provide the conceptual framework and related literature with regards to factors influencing parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy.

The structure of this chapter is as follows:

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.3 Conceptual analysis: Literacy

2.4 Developing children's literacy

2.5 Factors affecting parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Biddle (1979) the role theory perspective emerged simultaneously across disciplines in the social sciences during the 1920s and 1930s. Biddle defines role theory as concerned with the study of behaviors that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with various processes that

presumably produce, explain or are affected by those behaviors. The role theory has been applied in the helping professions including counseling, social work, education and healthcare to cope with demands of individuals (Rheiner, 1982; Hardy & Conway 1988; and Payne, 1988).

Haward (1992) explains a role as an expected pattern or set of behaviors associated with a particular position or status. In the role theory the focus is primarily on roles in the family and work domains, considered to be the two most central institutions in people's lives. Haward (1992) further explains that roles become personalized for individuals. For example, not all parents are subject to identical expectations and they all do not enact the parental role in the same way. Biddle (1979) and Haward (1992) above explain that role theory affect behaviors of persons in context as well as that it focuses on family and work domains as central institutions respectively. As much as they cover the definition of the role theory, they however, do not cover the factors that influence such behaviors.

Theoretical work on roles suggests that they include expectations held by groups for the behavior of members, individual's beliefs and expectations regarding their own behavior as a group member, and behaviors that come to characterize various members' participation in the group. Roles include beliefs and expectations about one's own and other group members' responsibilities, rights and obligations. They also include social expectations and scripts that guide

group members' behavior in various situations (Hoover-Dempsey et. al, 2004). They also suggest that ideas about the roles they should assume in their children's development education. It also suggests that parental role beliefs and behaviors are influenced by personal ideas and those of important others about the goals of children's education. They are also influenced by personal observations of, and interactions of others who also hold responsibilities related to children's educational outcomes.

Hoover-Dempsey (2004) further explain that roles are also characterized by their focus on goals held by the group and its individual members. These goals include socialization of the child, instilling of appropriate behavior, learning specific subject matter, development of children's unique talents and interests. They further argue that roles are characterised by goals which include socialisation of a child and development of children's talents. Parents play a major role in the socialisation of children and they know these roles and play them effectively and efficiently (ibid).

The researcher align the study with the role theory because parents and educators have to develop a balanced coping strategy that is appropriate at developing the children's literacy. However, it is not possible for educators to come up with one best strategy because individual parents vary. The aim of the research is to help parents overcome some of the obstacles that influence them from being involved in the development of their children's literacy.

2.2.1 Epistemological foundations of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. This will be studied through the social constructionist theory and the interpretive approach.

Jorgensen & Phillips (as cited by Duku, 2006), described social constructionist as an umbrella term for a range of theories about culture and society. Social constructivism constructs truth, experiences and meaning in relation to how that one interacts with one's social world. Constructivism therefore, depends on subjects as they construct their meaning and how people perceive it. For constructivists, the child, other individuals (parents), social systems (family) and culture, play a role in the content, processing and organisation of new knowledge (Cook-Cottone, 2004). Sulzby (1986) describes the role of parents as mediators between the child and written language, as Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.

The Vygotskian perspective states that children learn skills through adult-child interactions and by observing others engaging in printed materials (Senechal & Cornell, 1993). In this study, constructivism will help the researcher understand how parents construct and understand their roles to be in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. The following section deals with conceptual analysis of literacy.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS:LITERACY

2.3.1 What is literacy?

According to Christie et al. (2003), the term literacy has several different meanings. It can refer to the ability to create meaning through different media (for example visual literacy), knowledge of key concepts and ideas (for example cultural literacy) and the ability to deal effectively with different subject areas and technology (for example mathematical literacy and computer literacy). Literacy enables individuals to use print or non-print, verbal or non-verbal means to think, communicate and act for a variety of purposes in school and in the world beyond school (ibid). This, therefore, means that it is through literacy that people can communicate and interact with written text.

Kazembe (2005) adds that literacy is essential to effective learning both in schools and in the society at large. Achieving high literacy levels in school is a task requiring the involvement of all educators across the curriculum (ibid). Kazembe further suggests that one must be literate in order to store, retrieve and make meaningful use of the available information, be it in making informed decisions or application to other aspects of human endeavour such as travel and purchase of goods and services (ibid).

Garton & Pratt (1998) state that literacy must include both spoken and written language. In terms of this definition literacy entails the mastery of spoken language and reading and writing. The development of written language is

therefore linked to the development of spoken language. These developments take place at both family and school levels.

The definition that suits this study is the one advanced by Morris and Tchudi (1996) which defines literacy as the ability to decode and encode, to pick up a book and not only call the words but also to say what they mean. It is therefore the ability to interpret text and use writing skills to analyse and explain facts.

There are several perspectives to literacy ranging from minimal literacy , that is the ability to read and write on the one hand and the complex skills used in information processing oriented scenarios, on the other (Kazembe, 2005).The following section deals with developing literacy.

2.3.2 Developing literacy

Developing literacy according to McGee & Richgels (2000) is concerned with supporting all children's growth, with thoughtful instruction to become reflective and motivated readers. Reading, writing, home and strategies applied by educators play significant roles in the development of literacy as briefly outlined hereunder:

(a) The role of reading in developing literacy

The fundamental skills in developing literacy are by learning to read and write. Whitehurst & Lonigan (2000) mentioned that learning to read is a key milestone for children living in a literate society. This means that the critical part of the

foundation for children's academic as well as after school success is provided by reading skills. It is through reading that individuals who acquire more knowledge in various domains actually read well and read more. For this to happen, Whitehurst & Lonigan (2000) suggest that one must be in an environment that is conducive to learning. This environment must also be presented with learning instructions and medium of communication that make sense to the learner.

Learners are helped by teachers to acquire the important abilities of synthesis and critical literacy that are crucial for comprehending any text. Luke (1995) explains that there are no universal skills for teaching reading. Luke presented a model of reading as a social practice that is suitable for making critical readers needed in the present world. Allington (2002) further explained that literacy is always a situated response to particular political economies of education. The way resources are selected and framed has consequences for learners' capacity to become active designers and agents in shaping their social futures and those of their communities and cultures (ibid).

(b) The role of writing in developing literacy

The skill of reading and writing develop together as children grow in literacy (Kazembe, 2005). Children who have been read good books over and over and who have been read aloud to again and again develop their writing skills. These children also need to be encouraged to write their bits and pieces of experiences thought and reflections down in their journals which can be turned into stories. To add on this Strickland & Strickland(2002) state that learners learn language and

literacy simultaneously in environments that permit them to read, write, listen and speak for a variety of authentic purposes.

Edwards (2003) further suggests that in kindergarten writing of short compositions such as a short sentence that describes a picture in a book should be included in. One of the areas in which writing is helpful in literacy development in the context of schooling is the type of writing that is done across the curriculum (Self, 1987). All educators are suppose to give learners frequent opportunities to use writing in ways that will help children to learn. Writing also enhances learners' under standing of subject matter (Stephen & Browne, 2004).

(c)The role of home in developing literacy

The term home literacy environment refers to participation in in literacy related activities in the home which can include the availability of print material and frequency of reading (Leseman & de Jong ,1998). They further suggested that there are three aspects of home literacy environment that are important for the development of literacy, namely: opportunities for practice, promotion of literacy activities by literate family members and motivation. What happens at home, therefore, has a substantial bearing on a learner's literacy development. Many educators try to create a classroom environment similar to that which the children are used to at home, a place where they can lie down or sit comfortably and enjoy reading favourite books (Saracho, 2002). This is mostly demonstrated in foundation phase classes where the classes have a reading area floored with rugs for children to lie or sit.

The home environment influences young children's literacy development as literate families provide their children with material to read. A number of studies report the fact that home environment plays an important role in the development of children's language and literacy skills during pre-school and early years of schooling (Anderson,2000; Goodman, 1986; Hawes & Plourde, 2005).

(d) The role of teaching strategies in developing literacy

According to Kazembe (2005) schooling is about educators helping learners mediate the knowledge they bring to school with what they find in school in order to negotiate meaning in the situated context of function. Educators are expected to help learners by engaging them in strategies that develop literacy. Some strategies have been found useful for improving children's reading comprehension when dealing with text (Duffy, 2003). These strategies included prior knowledge activation, question generation during reading, making mental images during reading, summarization and analysing story structure (Pearson & Dole,1987). These strategies emphasise the importance of educator explanation of why we read,how the reading system works including understanding of concepts and vocabulary. The following section deals with literacy at foundation phase.

2.3.3 Literacy development in Foundation Phase

The NCS for foundation phase level outlines that children from grade R to 4 acquire learning by mainly listening to stories, repeating words and using

gestures. As they grow in confidence they will begin to speak. NCS further states that grade R to 4 learners will:

- Use formulaic language (e.g. greetings)
- Repeat frequently-used words and phrases
- Respond to simple questions with one or two words
- Sing simple songs and
- Perform simple rhymes.

Children at foundation phase need constant praise and encouragement in order to become confident. In developing children's literacy, parents at foundation phase seemed to be involved in their children's literacy and therefore fulfill the obligations and responsibilities outlined in NCS. Parents help grade R to 4 learners by singing along with them, count with them and reading with them stories. Studies by Moore & Hart (2004) revealed that there had been a number of curriculum changes namely Curriculum 2005 (C2005), Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and NCS. In the introduction of these curricula changes, processes of early literacy were effectively ignored (ibid). At training workshops different approaches to these curricula changes were proposed. The impact of these curriculum changes on learners' literacy development is manifested in a number of ways. For instance, the outcome of these changes is widening inequality across school contexts (ibid). This means that privileged schools with resources are able to fill the gaps created by the changes while learners at underprivileged schools with little or no access to resources are unable to fill the gaps.

2.3.4 Literacy development in senior phase

At the late foundation phase and senior phase learners are required to learn by reading text, comprehend text and access range of information sources (Monru, 2004). At senior phase for example, learners are expected

to say in their own words a text they had read, deal with the high density of concepts, link the text with what they know, select key ideas in a text and organise it. Learners at this phase are given comprehension text to read and thereafter are required to answer questions relating to what they have read. Moore & Hart (2004) differ with Monru in that in their studies they found out that many South African learners cannot read independently and will continue to leave school with inadequate literacy levels and struggle at tertiary institutions and in the workplace. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for senior phase also outlines that learners will develop the study skills necessary for lifelong learning such as:-

- Read in different ways for different purposes
- Improve their reading speed
- Skim and scan text
- Summarise text
- Use reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias and internet
- Take a critical approach to texts and information.

The learning outcomes at senior phase are more complex and thus require adult assistance and guidance (NCS). The development of lifelong learning skills by learners require an effective partnership among role players that include parents, educators and learners. Parents are supposed to carry on supporting their children throughout their school years. The effectiveness of such partnership is critical and any factors that may influence the process be critically analysed. It is

at this phase that the researcher has observed the tendency of parents to withdraw their involvement in the development of their children's literacy.

2.4 DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S LITERACY

A review of literature on teaching literacy suggests that there is considerable variation in the way literacy is developed and taught (Carmen Simich-Dudgeon, 1989). The following discussion will explain the approaches currently used to develop literacy skills.

2.4.1 Approaches at primary school level

A study carried out by Carmen Simich-Dudgeon (1989) suggested the following strategies when dealing with literacy development of learners;

(a) Skills based approach

Teaching reading using the skills based approach is characterized by the assumption that learners learn how to read by mastering discrete elements of language at the onset of reading instruction. This approach explains that the student should master the phonemic letters of words that represent different sounds before comprehending meaning. The skills of reading and writing develop together as children grow in literacy (Harwyne, 2001). Children need parents that will read to them over and over again to become good readers and writers at a later stage.

(b) Whole language approach

This approach is based on the assumption that the introduction to reading must be meaningful and should be developed from real communicative situations in the life of the learners. This approach states that link between oral language and print is easier to make when awareness of it emerges naturally, rather than when that link is explicitly taught. It encourages the use of the learner's past experiences, expectations and language intuitions as the basis for their learning written symbols and developing reading comprehension. This means that the reader is an interactive relationship with the text. For the reader to gain meaning from the text, he must be able to predict and anticipate meaning. Children are assisted in their writing skills by the pictures, graphs and by reading a wide range of materials (Johnson, 1993).

(c) Language experience approach

In this approach the learner is allowed by the educator to share meaning events and stories which are then shaped into written form by teacher. The learner makes the initial transition from oral language to reading and writing. In this way the learner is allowed to read meaningful story units rather than isolated words, parts of words or sentences. When a child comes across any text, the child will be able to empathise and construct imaginary meaning of events in their minds. The absence of reading material at home presents challenges for learners.

(d) The eclectic approach

The eclectic approach in literacy development allows the teacher to select those materials and methods that best fit the needs of the learners (Carmen Simich-Dudgeon,1989). It incorporates the learning of whole linguistic units, from words to phrases while stressing comprehension. Once word meaning relationships have been mastered, the phrase may be broken down into words, then into syllables next into letters and finally appropriate sounds can be given to the component parts. For the school learners text is broken into phonics and this at a later stage help children to master spelling of words.

The whole language and language experience approaches emphasise a link between real communication situations and transition and from oral language to reading and writing. This takes place at home and school setting. The full commitment and involvement of parents and educators at this level cannot be overemphasised. These approaches support the literature that parents are involved at primary level. The above discussions support the literature that parents are involved at primary level and it is on this basis that the study focuses at secondary level where the researcher has observed withdrawal of involvement on the part of parents.

2.4.2 Approaches at secondary school level

At the senior phase educators need to be equipped with how literacy skills are to be handled in each subject. Monru (2004, p2) suggests the following related components and procedures:

- that literacy in their subject area is their responsibility. The allocation of subject teaching at school among as educators takes into cognisance the special training of educators as well as the workload for each educator. This is done to, among other things, create clear subject responsibility for every educator. The division of work places each educator in charge of his or her subject.
- precisely what aspects of student knowledge they need to improve. In the senior phase learners are being prepared for the outside world which include life skills and work environment. Learners should therefore after completion of this level demonstrate high levels of competence in listening , speaking, reading, writing and thinking (NCS, 2003).
- that student literacy skills in the subject could be monitored. Specific learning outcomes for each subject are tabulated in the subject policy documents and the educator are provided with curriculum aimed specifically at attaining these set outcomes.
- that subject teachers could learn the necessary knowledge in consistent ways. For each grade the policy documents explain the work programmes and work schedules relating to time frames during which pieces of work are to be completed. Educators are able to be consistent because themes

to be covered for each term already decided upon by the government together with the department of education.

As much as Monru (2004) outlines the above procedures, it however falls short of covering roles of other stake holders such as parents, educators and learners. The focus to the educators is limited to the classroom. The role of parents as guardians of children outside the school premises is not taken into account.

NCS and the South African Schools Act mandate parents to be involved in their children's education so as to monitor attainment level. On the basis that the researcher has observed that parents withdraw their involvement once their children reach senior phase it becomes necessary that the study be undertaken to unearth the factors that influence parental involvement. The following section deals with role players in literacy development.

2.4.3 Role players in the development of children's literacy

The development of children's literacy is a broad and complex task that involves many role players with overlapping responsibilities. Epstein (1996) states that the perspective of overlapping spheres of influence posits that the work of the most effective families and schools overlap. This means that for the schools to have influence on effectiveness of families they should give children tasks to do at home. The model of shared responsibilities necessitates unambiguous definition of roles and strategies that nurture the effectiveness of partnership. This model supports shared responsibilities of parents and educators for children's learning.

Against the background that the child is the reason for the connection between home and school, learners are the main actors in their education, development and success in school (Epstein,1996). The theory of overlapping responsibilities as advocated by Epstein (1996) suits this study which investigates factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level. The role players and their respective responsibilities are outlined below.

(a) Parents

For the purpose of this study, a parent is any adult whose role is to guide and accompany a child towards responsible adulthood (South African Schools Act,1996). According to Glazer and Burke (1994), field research that focused on homes, families and developing literacy confirmed the power of the home environment and the family group in building foundations for becoming literate. They further state that in the past parents were encouraged to only facilitate oral language. Reading instruction was to be left to the school, for example language development was considered a natural part of home life, but reading and writing were learned only with educators in formal school setting (Ibid).This assumption they say, controlled the way educators and parents dealt with literacy. They point out that parents had little to do with the process for example the teacher was the most valued influence on children's road toward literacy. While the above view attempts to separate educator's and parent's roles, it fails to see education as an

inclusive process. Its application would create grey areas and /or no man's land that when not attended to would frustrate the whole process.

The introduction of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (SASA) and National Curriculum Statement, 2003 (NCS) has, however, changed the above view as parents are now mandated to take an active role in their children's school work. In line with the provisions of the aforesaid act Lessing and Mahabeer (2007) state that parents of learners have an important role to play in the education of their children and in preparing them for school, as learning about literacy begins very early in life. This means that parents should expose their children to literacy related activities.

Success in learning to read is, to a large extent dependent upon the amount of reading children do both in and out of school. Research studies indicate strongly that comprehension is directly affected by a reader's background knowledge (Rasinski 1995). Learners who are exposed to reading both at home and at school are in a better position to comprehend the text given to them. Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills , but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991; Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2004).

Children need their parents' assistance to be able to understand the relationship between the printed word and oral language, because not all children grasp the link between print and words immediately (Ferreiro, 1996). Parents should realise that they stimulate their children's adult intelligence and lay the foundation for formal reading instruction during story-book reading with their children (Anderson, 2000). It is therefore important that the critical role that parents play in providing a natural reading environment for their children should not be underestimated.

Studies by Hughes, Schumm & Vaughn (1999) and Ferreiro (1996) state that parents who are aware of their role of encouraging their children to read and write outside, display this by structuring activities to allow their children to be actively involved in reading and writing. They further state that parents for whom reading is part of their everyday life make an effort to stimulate their children's reading development. DeBaryshe (1995) also agree with the above mentioned studies, that these parents ensure that they have enough books, magazine or other printed materials at home to read to their children or to motivate them to page through on their own or read independently.

According to Baker & Scher (2002), parents who view reading as a source of entertainment, are more likely to have children who also enjoy reading and become skilled readers. Research done by Aulls & Sollars (2003) state that in homes where reading materials are freely available, parents read aloud to their

children at least five or more times per week. On the other hand , in homes where reading materials are not as freely available , the the majority of parents tend to read to their children only once or twice per week. Anderson (2000) also points out that parents' expectations of their children's abilities influence their support of their children and the provision of positive home reading environments.

On the contrary, Baker & Scher (2002) believe that parents who perceive that their children are not interested in learning to read or who are not yet engaging with the printed word in their interactions with books, do not have the same expectations of their children. Research has also revealed that parents can make a significant contribution to the development of their children's literacy by providing a stimulating environment around language, reading and writing as well as supporting at home the school's literacy agenda, both during the early years as well as the foundation phase and senior phase years of schooling (Hornby, 2000 and Driessen, 2004).

(b) Caregivers

According to Glazer and Burke (1994) caregivers' behaviours provide the foundations for nurturing the children's growth toward literacy. For example talking and listening to children is one way that children can learn turn-taking required in communication. Caregivers nurture literacy development when they show delight when they sing, mime and move with children and such activities

lead to happy rote-learning and chanting by young children. When reading caregivers should model the book behaviour, for example eye movement, page turning and top-to-bottom of page. All of these are noted by the child (ibid). Garton & Pratt (1998) also share the same view that children's knowledge of nursery rhymes and their awareness of rhyme at age 3 has been positively linked to late reading ability.

Caregivers as providers of basic literacy assure that children have time, space, materials, encouragement and no-risk environment in which to work (Glazer & Burke,1994).They say that caregivers should demonstrate love for literacy themselves so that children perceive the value placed upon reading and writing language activities in their daily lives. They further recommend that caregivers should stay alert to changes in children's needs and behaviours and consider change in plans (ibid).

The roles of caregivers involve communication to facilitate literacy growth but the single most influential activity for the caregiver is reading to children (ibid). This develops print awareness and also fosters feelings of love. The sharing of print in a loving manner creates an emotional bond and facilitates successful formal and informal literacy experiences. The afore mentioned roles are played by caregivers in the absence of parents. In a family situation parents should also play and support these roles. This is paramount in that parents have a major role to play in literacy development of the child.

(c) Educators

Garton and Pratt (1998) state that one vital ingredient for facilitating literacy development is an interested adult who is prepared to help by interacting with the child. An interested adult can be parent, caregiver or an educator. The role of educators is to create environments and to guide children in ways similar to that of caregivers in earlier years (Glazer and Burke, 1994). In performing this role educators become observers of behaviour. These require educators to have knowledge of human growth and development and apply that knowledge to behaviours they observe in children. Educators can then plan appropriate activities and instruction to meet individual academic, emotional, social and physical needs. The Early Childhood and Literacy Development Committee of the International Reading Association (1986) suggested the following roles for teachers:

- build instruction on what the child already knows about oral language, reading and writing. Children first learn oral language at home. Their initial exposure to reading and writing does also, to an extent take place at their home situations. In order to avoid the confusing and conflicting environments in the mind of the child, it is desirable that the home and the school environments are not separated. The instruction of the educators should be built on what the child already knows. This makes the role of the educator easier as well as making the learning faster on the part of the child.

- respect the language the child brings to school and use it as a base for language and literacy activities. Children first learn oral language at home. Their initial exposure to reading and writing does also, to an extent take place at their home situations. In order to avoid the confusing and conflicting environments in the mind of the child, it is desirable that the home and the school environments are not separated. The instruction of the educators should be built on what the child already knows. This makes the role of the educator easier as well as making the learning faster on the part of the child.
- provide reading experiences as an integrated part of the broader communication process which includes speaking, listening and writing. Communication takes place in various forms such as speaking, listening, writing and reading. It is important that educators perceive reading as an integral part of the communication process. By providing reading experiences as an integrated part of the broader communication process, educators are developing the communication abilities of the child which is core to literacy development of children.
- use material for instruction that is familiar, such as well-known stories as these provide the child with a sense of control and confidence. The use of unfamiliar material and stories ignores the experience the children have from home situations. It also makes the school environment to the children more strange resulting to fears and uncertainties that affect the moral of children. On the other hand the use of familiar material and stories

eliminates possible fears thereby making learning an enjoyable experience. The educator also builds on available experience and this brings about closer working together. The familiarity of material and stories also boost the confidence and motivation of children as they feel in control of the situation.

- make parents aware of the reasons for a total language program at school and provide them with ideas for activities to carry out at home. Parents may not be able to assist when they are not aware of the reasons of the school program and the activities to be carried at home. This makes parents unaware of what roles to play in the development of their children's literacy. Parents are key stakeholders in the education process and should therefore be kept abreast of the total language program. In order for parents to assist in the development of their children's literacy, it is necessary that educators provide them with ideas for activities to carry out at home. This improves co-ordination between parents and educators and simultaneously makes parents aware of the educator's expectations and the children's performance.
- encourage children to be active participants in the process of learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge, by using activities that allow for experimentation with talking, listening writing and reading. Children have a role to play in their own development. This can be achieved if they are active participants in the process. Their involvement and full participation creates ownership of the process and resulting in full

commitment as they do not see this as the educators' or parents' responsibilities only. Use of knowledge and experimentation also help the children to apply and attach meaning to the information obtained.

The same views about the roles of educators are shared by Glazer and Burke (1994) who outline the following:-

- Educators must observe children in order to determine their strengths and needs in language learning settings. Disregarding the strengths and paying no attention to weaknesses and needs of children in language learning settings frustrates the entire learning process. It is therefore important that educators observe these so that they are able to build on the strengths as well as addressing the weaknesses and needs of children. This observation also assists the educators to know the areas of focus that require more attention. With the big numbers in classes this becomes a challenge to educators.
- Educators are expected to know how to create environments that stimulate language production. Disregarding the strengths and paying no attention to weaknesses and needs of children in language learning settings frustrates the entire learning process. It is therefore important that educators observe these so that they are able to build on the strengths as well as addressing the weaknesses and needs of children. This observation also assists the educators to know the areas of focus that require more attention.

- Educators, as professionals, are expected to guide parents in understanding the relationships between children's behaviours in and out of school. The development of children's literacy is expected to have a bearing on their behaviour as a whole. Because of what they learn at school, their behaviour at home may change and parents may not understand the causes behind such changes. Educators, as professionals are expected to guide parents so that they understand the relationship between the children's behaviour in and out of school. This understanding brings parents closer to their children as well as educators thus improving working together and clarity of roles.

(d) Learners

Hereunder are some of the roles suggested by Glazer and Burke (1994). They also state that time has come for the children to take responsibility of their own learning by:

- Becoming actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Learners are beneficiaries of teaching and learning process in that all endeavours made by other stakeholders are directed at learners benefit. The success of any program demands active involvement of its beneficiaries. It becomes difficult for educators and parents to assist when learners are passive recipients of knowledge. In such situations educators are not able to learners in the problem areas that learners experience. Monitoring and evaluation of progress becomes difficult. The active involvement of

learners brings about co-ordination and inclusive decision making that is critical in programs that involve groups of individuals.

- Making decisions about their learning. By being involved in decision making make learners feel part of the process. Collective decision making create opportunities for all members to participate fully and be more committed to the success of the program. In this way learners also learn at an early stage to take charge of their own lives and development. It also sharpens their leadership abilities as future leaders.
- Read and write with purpose. Reading and writing is a purposeful exercise. Learners are, ideally, involved in reading and writing to achieve a predetermined purpose. Where learners read and write without a purpose the exercise loses its direction thus defeating the main goal. In such instances there is, however, no yardstick against which progress can be measured. Reading and writing helps learners to understand their shortcomings. It also assists educators and parents in assessing progress and determining areas wherein learners encounter challenges and how these can best be addressed.
- Listen and respond. The development of children's literacy is a communication process that warrants listening and response on the part of the recipient of information. It through listening that learners can hear and decode the information imparted to them by educators and or parents. Responding t information received enables the sender to understand that the information is appropriately decoded by the recipient. The response of

learners puts educators on a better footing to assess and monitor literacy development accordingly.

- Continuously evaluate themselves in order to notice strengths and needs. The success of any program can be determined by continuous evaluation and monitoring of the progress made. It is therefore, incumbent upon learners to continuously evaluate themselves in order to notice strengths and needs. Monitoring and evaluation gives learners opportunities to detect their shortcomings so that they can work on them for their own success and achievement in development of their literacy. This can also enable them to determine the areas that need more attention and or assistance. If learners do not continuously evaluate themselves they may not be able to notice their strengths and needs thereby creating a frustrating situation for themselves, educators and parents.

(e) The Community

The development of children's literacy lies in the hands of the above role-players who have to maintain a solid foundation. Each participates in active purposeful ways creating and responding to language. This shows that the development of children's literacy is a community responsibility where families, teachers in schools and children must work together towards this goal. The following section deals with factors influencing parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy.

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN'S LITERACY

Parental involvement is a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of the parent to the school and to the student (LaBahn, 1995). Parental involvement should focus to both the school and the learner. Paying more attention to the needs of the learner while disregarding those of the school may not yield the required results. Vandergrift & Greene (1992) as cited by LaBahn (1995) state that there are two key elements that work together to make up the concept of parental involvement. One of these is the level of commitment to parental support which includes such things as encouraging the student, being sympathetic, reassuring and understanding. The other level needed is that of parental activity and participation, such as doing something that is observable (ibid). This study, in line with the above view, seeks to unearth the commitment and factors influencing parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy.

Bakker & Denessen (2007) state that parental involvement refers to parent behaviours related to the child's school or schooling that can be observed as manifestations of their commitment to the child's educational affairs. This means that a parent who shows these behaviours in a larger extent, can be regarded as higher involved than a parent who shows the behaviours in a lesser degree. The research process and the methodology to be applied will further reveal the

behaviors of parents in relation to their children's schooling thereby showing their level of commitment.

According to Lemmer (2007), parent involvement is a cost effective and feasible way to improve the culture of teaching and learning so needed in schools. In their involvement parents face a number of challenges that affect their involvement positively or negatively. It is against this background that this study attempt to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement so as to propose possible solutions that can improve the culture of learning and teaching needed.

The origins of the significance of parental involvement stems most certainly from the (language) compensation programs implemented in the 1960's and 1970's in the United States and Europe (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). These programs aimed, among other things, to encourage the active engagement of mainly low socio- economic status and so-called ethnic minority parents to prepare their children for a more successful school career and to prevent educational delays on the part of their so-called children at risk (Ibid). The following are some of the factors influencing parental involvement:

2.5.1 Parents' level of education and their experiences

A study conducted by the Scottish Government in 2008 identified the following challenges which are often encountered by parents:

- For many parents, lack of time may emerge from the hardships imposed by low income, poverty which limits their ability to make financial and mutual contributions. Most learners stay with their grand parents who depend on their pension grant to survive and as result little or no money is left to attend to other school demands such as frequent school visits.
- Cultural and socio-economic differences between parents and teachers coupled with limited educational attainment on the part of parents leave them feeling inadequately prepared to offer effective home-based activities. A report by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), revealed that most parents were illiterate because they never got any formal education and as result they can not assist their children adequately.
- Psychological barriers in their involvement include unpleasant personal school history, memories of poor achievement or poor treatment at school. Language communication barriers may be experienced by parents due to their level of education.
- Work schedule of some parents may limit their ability to attend meetings. Also parents who have had a negative experience at school are also less likely to be involved or play an active role in school activities.

2.5.2 Home environment

By home environment this study refers to the conditions in the households of learners. It also wishes to find out whether conducive learning atmosphere may have any influence on the literacy development of children. Hornby (2000)

identifies two major difficulties which parents experience in arranging to attend school events. These are transportation and child care. Providing assistance in each of these areas would improve attendance rates. Parents who have had a negative experience at school are also less likely to be involved or playing an active role in school activities (Scottish Government, 2008).

Here in South Africa, studies carried out in Pretoria by Johnson (2007) revealed that the nature of home reading environment influenced the reading ability of children with learning disabilities and that reading at home contributed to the development of children's language and literacy skills. Families acquire important information about their children's development through parent education programs (Gianzero, 1999). Such programs are guided by firm belief that parents are capable of learning new techniques for working with their children. Gianzero recommended that these programs focused on helping low-income parents to work with their children to improve children's behavior, language skills and test performance. These programs also helped parents' ability on how they would engage in helping their children with home activities.

According to Lessing & Mahabeer (2007), low socio-economic environments and literacy levels of parents tend to provide learners with minimal chances of exposure reading material thereby effectively reducing their literacy abilities. For example, the frequent lack of books, magazines and newspapers, radio and television at home tend to result in dissonance between home and school. This kind of dissonance diminishes the chances of school success. The low and

unstable incomes leave many homes without electricity and as a result learners lack restful and stimulating study environments and their exposure to experiential world is limited.

2.5.3 Home- school relationship

According to Paratore & McCormack (2005) some studies tell us that children who achieve high levels of reading achievement have the benefit of parental support and involvement(Taylor & Pearson, 2002; Jordan, Snow and Porche,2000 as well as the old ones like Durkin,1966; Clark,1976) . This view is further supported by Henderson (1988) who also found that learners learn more effectively and successfully when parents are involved in their children's education.

Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills (Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2004), but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991). The reading at home pre-supposes that parents have a great role to play in this regard. A clear role definition and its understanding on the part of parties is crucial for positive contribution to the child's reading activities.

Studies by (Allen & Daly, 2002; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003) show that children whose parents are involved show greater social and emotional

development. These include more resilience to stress, greater life satisfaction, greater self-direction and self-control, greater social adjustment, greater mental health, more supportive relationships, greater social competence, more positive peer relations, more tolerance, more successful marriages, and less delinquent behaviours because there is free interaction between learners and parents.

In partnership, educators, families and community member's work together to share information, guide learners, solve problems and celebrate successes (Paratore & McCormark, 2005). They emphasise that partnerships recognise shared responsibilities of home, school and community for children's learning and development. A common approach and understanding on the roles of all members in the partnership is paramount as it can only improve working together to the advantage of the children concerned.

2.5.4 Parents understanding of their roles

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) argue that parents' involvement and decisions are based on several constructs drawn from their own ideas and experiences as well as other constructs growing out of environmental demands and opportunities. They suggest that most parents' fundamental decision to become involved in their children's education is a function primarily of three constructs, namely:

- the parent's construction of his or her role in the child's life. The decision of a parent to take part in his/her child's educational life identifies the role he/she wants to play.
- the parent's sense of efficacy for helping her or his child succeed in school. It depends on the parent's ability to fulfil his/her roles effectively based on the skills he/she possesses.
- the general invitation, demands, and opportunities for parental involvement presented by both the child and the child's school. This refers to whether the school and the child co-operate and create opportunity for the parent to fulfil the identified roles.

Consideration of the recent research in each of these three areas suggests that these constructs are each composed of specific sets of beliefs, experiences and behaviours that serve to position the parent in terms of their own answer to the question whether he/she should or will become involved in his/ her child's education (ibid). Based on the above constructs that influence parental involvement, it becomes evident that parents become involved in their children's literacy development because they have developed a parental role. They have a positive sense of efficacy for helping children succeed and that they perceive general opportunities and invitations for involvement from their children and their children's school.

CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with theoretical framework and reviewed literature on parental involvement and literacy development. From the studies, various approaches and strategies on literacy development were discussed. Key role players that may constitute an effective partnership were also identified. The review of literacy also revealed some factors that influence the involvement of parents in the development of their children's literacy. The following chapter deals in detail with the methods that were applied to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. The support for learning in schoolwork is important, especially in the sense that children get motivated in learning and as such their performance improve. McCarthy (2000) agrees that parental involvement in their children's education can positively affect educational outcomes.

This chapter discusses the type of paradigm, research methodology and methods that were used in the study. Qualitative research method was used in this study to gather, record and analyse data. Data collecting strategies that are appropriate for a qualitative research are explained as well as research designs used. Case study design was used to unpack the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy. Document analysis was also conducted to explore parents' understanding of their role in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. This chapter is structured as follows:

3.2 Research paradigm

3.3 Research approach

3.4 Research design

- 3.5 Sampling
- 3.6 Negotiating access
- 3.7 Limitations of the study
- 3.8 Ethics
- 3.9 Trustworthiness
- 3.10 Data collection
- 3.11 Data analysis

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

In this study interpretive data is looked at in terms of human behavior based on the participants that construct and understand it (Gray, 2004). Richie & Lewis concur with Gray that the methods of the natural sciences are not governed by law-like regularities but is mediated through meaning of human agency. The researcher believes that interpretive paradigm is more appropriate and effective in this study because it seeks an actual reality in a specific situation. Carson et al. (2001) state that interpretive approach allows the focus of the researcher to be on understanding what is happening in a given context. As the above discussion suggests, the researcher will gain an in depth understanding of the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase.

Qualitative methods are therefore suitable for in study for addressing the main question of the study being :what factors influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?

This research falls under the interpretive paradigm which advocates that the world should be studied in its natural state, rather than in controlled laboratory-type experiments and with minimum intervention by a researcher (Cohen et al, 2000).This, according to Cohen et al, (2000), accorded a situation that was not controlled by the researcher. For instance, interpretive paradigm gives the interviewees freedom to express their views on the question without the intervention of the researcher (ibid). Neuman (2006) also shares the same view that an interpretive paradigm wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied and how individuals experience daily life.

This research paradigm was relevant to my study which investigated the experiences and perceptions of parents regarding their involvement or lack thereof in the development of their children's literacy. The interpretive paradigm enabled the researcher to share the feelings and the interpretations of the people she studied and to see things through their eyes. The next section explores the research approaches used in this study.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE APPROACH

On the basis of the paradigm given above the study follows a qualitative research approach. Locke et al. (2007) defines qualitative research as a systematic,

empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a particular social context. Given any person , group or locus for interaction it is a means for describing and attempting to understand the observed regularities in what people do, or what they report as their experience. For example a nurse in a hospitals' intensive care unit might be the focus for the study. It is the participants' experience in that context that the researcher seeks to capture and understand in this kind of qualitative investigation (ibid).

The term qualitative research, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured. A qualitative researcher stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry . They argue that qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right(ibid). It is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach(ibid). This means that qualitative researchers study themes in their natural settings attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (ibid). Qualitative research involves the studies, use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that include case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, observational methods, historical methods ,interaction methods and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings of individual lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Crowl 1993). The researcher will use case studies and interviews to collect data.

On the other hand Denscombe (2003) states that qualitative research is an umbrella term that covers a variety of styles of social research drawing on a variety of disciplines. Qualitative research is concerned with meanings and the way people understand things, a concern with patterns of behaviour. Characteristically, qualitative studies attempt to describe events or discern pattern of behaviour exhibited by an individual or group.

The objectives of qualitative design are to explore areas where limited or no prior information exists and/or to describe behaviours, themes, trends, attitudes, needs or relations that are applicable to the analysed units (Du Plooy, 2001). Methods and techniques that can be used to collect data in this design include participant's observation and surveys, using open ended questions in questionnaires or in interview schedule (Ibid).

A qualitative design is appropriate when researchers intend examining the properties, values, needs or characteristics that distinguish individuals, groups, communities, organizations, events, settings or messages (Du Plooy, 2001). Mwanje (2002) as cited by Makubalo (2007) explains that qualitative method is better suited to description, whether dealing with meanings or patterns of behaviour, as it intends to rely on a detailed and complex description of events or people. Such a thick description is necessary in order to convey complexity of events of the situation and to provide the reader with enough detail to conclude

for themselves whether the researcher's interpretations of the phenomenon are relevant and justifiable for the circumstances (Ibid).

The above view is also shared by Terre Blanche et al (2002). They concur that as qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language, researchers are able to dig the data. The researcher is a better position to probe respondents with questions to clarify views and opinions given during the interviews. They further explain that observations are recorded in the researcher's language and the data is analysed by identifying and categorizing themes. Qualitative methods assist to carry investigation where other methods such as quantitative methods fail. It also investigates situations where little is known about the subject of the investigation. Qualitative strategies of data collection include observations and interviews . Qualitative method is appropriate in this research as it is concerned with individual and group behavior patterns especially on how they do things.

The particular methods of qualitative research vary, depending on the disciplines within which the research occurs. Nevertheless, all qualitative studies share the common goal of presenting findings in the form of written, verbal descriptions rather than in terms of statistical analysis which is a characteristic of quantitative studies (Crowl, 1993). The following section deals with the advantages of the qualitative research.

Key (1997) identifies the following advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research:

(a) Advantages

- Produces more in-depth, comprehensive information. The study attempted to use a case study method to investigate the in depth the factors influencing the involvement of parents in their children's literacy development.
- Uses subjective information and participant observation to describe the context or natural setting, of the variables under consideration as well as the interactions of the different variables in the context. The researcher's method of gathering data was the use of focus group which required a setting where the group would be free to talk openly about their views on parental involvement in their literacy development.

(b) Disadvantages

One of the major disadvantages of qualitative research is that the very subjectivity of the inquiry leads to difficulties in establishing the reliability and validity of the approaches and information. The researcher at all times avoided a situation where leading suggestions for respondents were given.

In order to ensure validity and avoid subjectivity the researcher remained non-judgemental throughout the study process and reported what was found in a balanced way. McMillan & Schumacher (2001) state that qualitative method

follows no strict rules. However researchers are cautioned that the research is not allowed to be mindlessly inventive. Qualitative research should be done artfully, but it also demands a great amount of methodological knowledge and intellectual competence (Ibid).

The research designs used in the study are discussed in the following section.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Since the study is interpretive, the most appropriate research design needed to gather data is the case study.

3.4.1 Case study

As has been indicated earlier, this study is a case study. Gummesson, (2000) believes that a case study is an in-depth investigation into a specific and relatively small area of interest. Mwingi (2000) concurs with Gummesson that a case study is a method that allows the individuality of each case to come out as a persuasive voice.

In line with the above argument, Cohen et al. (2007) state that a case study is an approach that uses in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon. As a result of their robustness, case studies combine data collection methods such as archives, interviews, questionnaires and observation (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Cohen et al, (2007) states that a case can be an individual person, an event, or social activity, group or institution. Literature

reviewed in chapter two revealed that parental involvement in the primary education of children had been undertaken by various researchers. The case study design in this study therefore, gave an in -depth detail on factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. The researcher also believes that the findings of this study will play a role by persuading parents of senior phase learners to be more involved.

In this study the case study was a group of parents of grade 7 to 9 learners who tend to withdraw their involvement in the development of their children's literacy once their children reach senior phase. The researcher used the case study design to get in-depth information about the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase. This design revealed certain aspects of parent's behavior and ideas that influence their involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase.

The language issue seemed to be a problem. Both learners and parents expressed themselves in their home language which is isiXhosa. This meant that the researcher had a huge task of translating data into English. Another challenge was that the research site was not easily accessible. Sometimes the researcher would visit the site and only get few parents to interview despite our agreed upon time. It was during this stage that other parents would come voluntarily to be interviewed. The researcher could not turn them away and ended up with 31 parents being interviewed.

In line with the protocols of a case study design, the used a combination of methods as follows;

- (a) Structured interviews,
- (b) Semi-structured interviews
- (c) Focus group discussions, and
- (d) Document analysis.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

A number of data gathering methods were used in this study that appeared to be suitable. These methods are discussed hereunder:

3.5.1 Interviews

An interview is an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee; it is also referred to as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest for production of knowledge (Cohen et al, 2000). An interview is a research technique considered as one of a range of survey methods in social research (Ibid). What may be used as a means of evaluating or assessing a person in some respect, for selecting or promoting an employee, for testing or developing hypothesis, for gathering data, as in surveys or experimental situations, or for sampling respondents' opinions, as in doorstep interviews. Research interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant

information and focused by the researcher on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation (Ibid).

Interviews can be structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Structured interviews can be defined as a professional discussion between two persons or one person and a group of persons (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1993). The advantages of this method are that the interactions and behaviour of the interviewee can be observed and results can be noted. It can also be used to lessen tension between the individual and the researcher and even motivate the subject to participate in the research.

In the unstructured interview scope is allowed for the interviewer to introduce new material into the discussion which the researcher had not thought of before hand but only arose during the course of the interview (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1993). This type allows the interviewer greater scope in asking questions in their own ways. The aim is to provide for a greater and freer flow of information between researcher and the subject. This kind of interview incorporates everyday social interaction. Unstructured interviews are flexible; few restrictions are placed on respondents' answers. If planned questions are asked, the queries, vocabulary, and order are altered to suit the situation and subjects. Sometimes respondents are encouraged to talk freely and fully concerning a particular issue, incident or relationship. In an unstructured interview one can gain an insight into

the character and intensity of a respondent's attitudes, motives, feelings and beliefs and can detect underlying motivations and unacknowledged attitudes.

The researcher used semi-structured interview because of its flexibility (Patton, 2002). It allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand interviewee's responses. This atmosphere enabled the researcher to clarify points and raise fresh questions so as to gain a deeper meaning phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews do not offer a limited, pre-set range of answers for a respondent to choose, but rather listen to how each individual responds to the question (Cohen et al, 2000). The researcher was granted permission by the respondents to use a tape recorder

Through the semi-structured interviews the researcher addressed the following study questions:

- What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?
- What factors influence parental choice of roles in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?
- What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?

The researcher used interviews because they gave respondents chance to narrate their stories and there have the following advantages (Cohen et. al., 2007). The following advantages have been identified by Cohen (2007):

- People are more easily engaged in an interview than in completing a questionnaire. Thus there are fewer problems in failing to respond.
- The interviewer can clarify questions and probe the answers of the respondent providing more complete information than would be available in written form.
- Interviewing enables the interviewer to pick up non-verbal interviews, including facial expressions, tones of voice and cues from the surroundings and context.

The advantages of semi-structured interviews as identified by Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) are that:

- semi-structured interviews are very helpful in exploratory research, as well as when considering a pilot survey before the formulation of the final questionnaire.
- They help to clarify concepts and problem and they allow for the establishment of a list of possible answers or solutions which, in turn, facilitates the construction of multiple-choice questions, the elimination of superfluous questions and reformulation of ambiguous ones.
- They allow also for the discovery of new aspects of the problem by investigating in detail some explanations given by respondents. The

researcher used semi-structured and structured interviews to allow respondents to tell their stories as much as possible.

As much as interviews allow respondents narrate on issues ,they however, have some disadvantages.

- It is difficult to record responses, particularly if the interviewer is also responsible for writing them down. The quality of responses, that is, their reliability and validity is dependent on the interviewer (Cohen, 2000).
- The disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are that if the interviewers are not competent they may introduce many biases. Recording the comments of participants is a delicate matter because of the great variety of answers and their complexity.
- Moreover, interviews are time consuming and thus expensive (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995). The researcher was able to avoid the above disadvantages made use of tape recorder .

The next section will deal with focus groups as the second instrument of data collection.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A focus group discussion is an interview with a small group of people on specific topic (Patton, 2002). Focus groups can be useful to obtain certain types of information or circumstances would make it difficult to collect information using

other methods (Hancock, 2002). Members of each focus group should have something in common and characteristics which are important to the topic of investigation (ibid). Anderson (1993) also defines focus group as a comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussion on a given issue or topic.

Litoselliti (2003) further defines focus groups as small structured groups with selected participants normally led by a moderator. They are set up in order to explore specific topics and individuals views and experiences , through group interaction. Focus groups are special groups in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedures. It can be described as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a primitive, non- threatening environment, where participants share and respond to comments, ideas and perceptions. They are normally made up of people with certain common characteristics and similar levels of understanding of a topic rather than aiming for diversity (ibid).

In practice one would have to strike a balance between similarity and difference as regards potential participants, as often too homogeneous a group may result in a fewer diverse opinions and experiences. Homogeneous in terms of socio-economic status but incompatible in terms of gender. This is usually determined by research questions being investigated (Litoselliti, 2003).

The researcher conducted three focus group discussions. In this study they are referred to as FGDs. In this study focus groups were learners of grade 7, 8 and

9. The composition of these focus groups was:

FDG 1 - 4 grade 7 learners

FDG 2 – 4 grade 8 learners

FDG 3 - 4 grade 9 learners

The groups had commonality of being learners who were doing the grades under investigation. The use of FGDs in this study enabled the researcher to obtain quality data in a social context. Learners could therefore consider their own views in the context of the views of the others through participation in the group discussion. Learners could also get closer to understandings of and perspectives on issues under discussion.

Hoggart et al (2002) further highlight the following advantages of FGDs:

- They afford rich insight into the realities defined in a group context and in particular the dynamic effects of interaction on expressed beliefs, attitudes, opinions and feelings.
- They are communication events in which the interplay of the personal and the social can be systematically explored.
- Members become more aware of their perspective and when confronted with disagreement they are prompted to analyse their views more intensely than during the individual interview.

- Focus group discussion can replicate social relations and interactions because communication within the group becomes multidimensional, intra-personal, interpersonal and trans personal. As a result, group responses are more than the sum of individual responses.
- Focus groups provide a forum for people to share and test their views with others.
- The researcher hears not only what people say, and how they say it, but how participants interact, whether views are challenged and how people respond to challenges.
- While interviews reflect individual views, values and opinions focus group discussions offer conversation, argument and debate through interaction.
- Interaction among group members can draw new insight into respondents' beliefs and values.

In support of the above advantages Patton states that FGDs are conducted to get a variety of perspectives and increase confidence in whatever patterns emerge.

Despite the above advantages, Hoggart et al (2002) state that the centrality of the researcher in the focus group method is problematic in that the researcher is responsible for the whole process. This places the researcher in the position of interviewer and researcher at the same time. The researcher avoided this by facilitating and not controlling the process. This approach gave learners the

opportunity to discuss issues without the interference and domination by the researcher.

Other limitations of focus groups as stated by Sifunda (2001) are that the presence of the researcher as a facilitator in focus groups and the fact that the researcher's interests drive the focus groups can contaminate data. Morgan, 1998 highlights distraction as a problem when dealing with focus groups. This problem directly affected this study in that the learners who were not part of the discussions kept on knocking at the interview room making excuses for entering the room. The interviewer had to ask another educator to keep them away.

The questions the FGDs addressed were:

- What factors influence parental choice of roles in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?
- What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?

Questions for educators, parents and learners are attached as (annexes A, B and C) respectively. The next instrument that was used is a document analysis.

3.5.3 Document analysis

Leeds (2001) describes document analysis as a detailed and systematic examination of documents on a particular organization for a purpose of identifying pattern or themes. The primary documents analysed by the

researcher included junior senior phase minute book from 2006 up to 2008 and policies formulated during the said period regarding parental involvement at the school. The aim of collecting these documents was to find out whether the school had put in place any policies regarding parental involvement at the school. The junior secondary minute book which entailed communication during meetings , as well as agendas of meetings was looked at. This assisted the researcher to see whether any literacy issues were up for discussion in the meeting. The question to be addressed was:

- What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase?

Analysis of documents was undertaken on available documents that were given to the researcher. These entailed attendance register for meetings of School Governing Body (SGB) and parents, Foundation phase minute book for meetings between parents and educators, Senior Phase minute book for meetings between grade 12 educators and grade 12 learners and minute book for meetings between grade 12 educators and parents of grade 12 learners.

3.6 SAMPLING

Sampling must be done whenever one can gather information from only a fraction of the population of a group or a phenomenon which one wants to study. Ideally, one should try to select a sample which is free from bias (Greenfield,

2002). It allows the researcher to select a fraction of respondents from a population.

There are basically two types of sampling procedure, namely, random and non-random. Random sampling techniques give the most reliable representation of the whole population, while non-random techniques, relying on the judgement of the researcher or an accident, cannot generally be used to make generalizations about the whole population (Walliman, 2006).

Greenfield (2002) states that it is usually possible, at least in principle, to study all of the units that form the population of interest to the study. The reasons why this is rarely done are:

- Cost - there is often a real marginal cost associated with the inclusion of each unit of the study, the cost of the time of the researcher, experimenter, interviewer, fieldworker and the cost of equipment and materials. So the budgets may constrain the sample size.
- Feasibility - if results are needed by a particular deadline, there may be insufficient time to study all units.
- Quality - concentration of effort on sample can increase the quality of the research which may then lead to more accurate results (ibid).

Sampling is done whenever one gathers information from only a fraction of the population of a group or a phenomenon under study (Walliman, 2006). Ideally,

one should try to select a sample which is free from bias. This is necessary as the type of sample selected greatly affects the reliability of the subsequent generalizations (ibid).

Since the researcher could not interview the whole of this population a representative sample had to be obtained. The study used purposive sampling which is a form of selecting purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth (Patton, 2002). With purposive sampling the researcher recognises that there may be inherent variation in the population of interest (Greenfield, 2002). The researcher attempt to control this by using subjective judgement to select a sample that the researcher believe to be a representative of the population. Purposive sampling can lead to very good samples, but there is no guarantee that it will be successful (ibid). Its success depends on two assumptions:

- the research can identify in advance the characteristics that collectively capture all variation.
- the chosen sample will correctly reflect the distribution of these characteristics (Greenfield, 2002).

In purposive sampling, information-rich cases are those from which one can learn great about issues of central importance to the purpose of the study (Cohen et al., 2007). In purposive sampling which is often a feature of qualitative research, the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of

their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. As the name suggests, the sample has been chosen for a specific purpose (ibid). In selecting the site and the participants the study applied purposive sampling because they were seen as instances that were likely to produce valuable data.

3.6.1 Sampling of research site

The study was conducted at a combined school in the Eastern Cape. The researcher used this particular combined school because it starts from grade 1 to grade 12 and includes the grades under study. The researcher had chosen this site because she observed a trend of behaviours by parents where she works and would like to investigate if the same trend happened at the school where the study was undertaken.

3.6.2 Sampling of respondents

(a) Sampling for the structured interviews

The parent population of grade 7 to 9 learners is 81. About 38% of the parent population participated in the study. After giving the parents a brief explanation about the purpose of the research, parents willingly wanted to participate in the study, hence the 38%. About 31 parents of grade 7 to 9 parents were interviewed. The interviews enabled the researcher to gather information about

the parents' involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level.

It was from this information that the researcher was able to identify the activities done by parents, resources they used, roles they played and support they provided. The information was further arranged into themes relating to the study questions.

(b) Sampling for the semi-structured interviews

(i) Sampling for parents

For the semi-structured interviews the researcher used information obtained from the structured interviews done to the 31 parents. During the structured interviews about 19% of participants reported that they did not support their children beyond primary level. These parents the researcher referred to them as parents who do not support beyond foundation phase in the study. The total number of these parents was 6. Another type of parents that came up from the structured interviews was the parents that supported their children throughout the school years. These parents reported that they supported their children beyond foundation phase. The total number of these parents was 3. They made up 10% of the total number of population. At this stage 9 parents participated in the semi-structured interviews. Some parents were reluctant to participate advancing reasons that the interviews were time consuming.

(ii) Sampling for educators

Sampling for educators was also selected as follows: one Head of Division and two educators. All the educators offer learning areas in the grades under study.

(iii) Sampling for focus groups

Three focus groups composed of grades 7, 8 and 9 were formed. Each grade was represented by four learners made up of two males and two females. The grouping of learners was made to accommodate both genders. This was done to ensure that gender based differences of perceptions and opinions if any would have taken care of. The grouping of learners was based on grades to avoid possibility of dominance of discussions by senior learners and to limit the number of participants into manageable groups.

3.7 NEGOTIATING ENTRY INTO THE RESEARCH SITE

The researcher used a combined school at the Eastern Cape as a case study. The school was given a pseudo name to protect its identity. The researcher visited the school to seek permission to conduct the study. A letter from the supervisor, Dr Duku (Appendix F) containing information about the topic under investigation was also handed to the principal. As a sign of willingness to cooperate the principal and the educators left it to the researcher to decide the date for the first meeting with parents. Educators of the grades under study liaised with learners to tell their parents about the meeting. In the meeting the researcher was going to explain the aims and objectives of the study as well as the whole process of interviews. A meeting was arranged with parents at the identified school on 31 August 2009. On arrival at the school the researcher

introduced herself. She outlined the purpose of the study and ethical considerations that are to be adhered to during the study.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data for the study was conducted in four phases as follows:

(a) Phase 1 :Pilot study

This pilot study aimed at establishing whether the respondents are accessible, whether the sites are convenient, whether the techniques of data collection generate enough information, whether the plan was well adjusted and whether any changes or adjustments were needed. In a nutshell, the purpose of the pilot study was to discover possible weakness, inadequacies, ambiguities and problems in all aspects of the research so that they can be corrected before the actual data collection takes place.

Piloting study was undertaken to test the structured interview questions on a few respondents. It was aimed at discovering possible challenges on the instrument. On discovery of any challenge the researcher intended to make all necessary adjustments so that the aims of the main study were achieved. This was done to determine the feasibility of the planned study and the deficiencies in the instrument. It also gave the researcher orientation to the social environment where the investigation will take place. It is on this basis that the researcher feels that this report forms part of data collection in the main study.

The school was chosen because it is a combined school that has the similar characteristics with the school wherein the study was to be conducted. The

school was where the researcher is currently working and this reduced costs on the part of the researcher. The location of the school is within the circuit where the study was done and this ensured that the similarity of conditions is maintained.

The management (namely the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments) of the school where the pilot study was to be undertaken was made aware of the study to be undertaken. The researcher informed the management in a meeting situation that parents of learners from grade 7 to grade 9 were to be given invited to the school. This was done so that management understands that parents will be getting in and out of school premises looking for the researcher.

Challenges that emanated from the piloting were that:

Parents were sometimes not available despite prearranged meetings. To avoid this challenge in the main study the researcher will allocate more time for data collection thus giving enough time for those parent who may not honor visits. In order to increase commitment on the part of parents the researcher will allow parents to choose suitable dates for visits.

Questions in the pilot instrument are in a different language from the respondents' mother tongue. This was time consuming for the researcher in that the researcher had to translate all questions and responses to the language of the respondents. The questions to be used in the main study were translated into the respondents' home language.

Some parents appeared scared to come to school due to them not being familiar with the school environment. Some were also uncomfortable even when visited in their homes despite this being in their own request. explanation of the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of the process reduced the fear and the parents contributed freely. The same approach will be applied in the main study.

Questions in the instrument were formulated within the context of the questions of the main study. During piloting these were found to be in line with the study. in

(b) Phase 2 :Structured interviews

The researcher had earlier negotiated place and time to conduct the interviews with the participants. Some were comfortable at school while others had no problem in their residential places. The researcher also negotiated the use of the tape recorder in recording the interviews whilst at the same time taking the field notes. There interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis between the researcher and the participant. The researcher made sure that the atmosphere was pleasant and welcoming before starting the interview process. The researcher switched on the tape recorder immediately when starting the interview process. The researcher was also at the same time ready to take field notes.

The parent population of grade 7 to 9 learners is 81. About 38% of the parent population participated in the study. The researcher had planned to involve 20% in this study. After giving the parents a brief explanation about the purpose of the

research, parents willingly wanted to participate in the study, hence the 38%. About 31 parents of grade 7 to 9 parents were interviewed. The interviews enabled the researcher to gather information about the parents' involvement in the development of their children's literacy at senior phase.

It was from this phase of structured interviews that the researcher was able to identify the activities done by parents, resources they used, roles they played and support they provided. The researcher was able to select participants for the semi-structured interviews by information gathered from these structured interviews.

(c)Phase 3 :Semi-structured interviews

For the semi-structured interviews the researcher used information obtained from the structured interviews done to the 38% of participants. During the structured interviews about 19% of participants reported that they did not support their children beyond foundation phase. These parents the researcher referred to them as parents who do not support beyond foundation phase in the study. The total number of these parents was 6. Another type of parents that came up from the structured interviews was the parents that supported their children throughout the school years. These parents reported that they supported their children beyond foundation phase. The total number of these parents was 3. They made up 10% of the total number of population.

During the interview sessions, the researcher read the topic guide exactly as written. The questioning allowed room for the respondents to give out his/her thoughts and feelings about the topic in question. Where there was an incomplete or too brief response, the researcher would ask the respondent to explain a little more. The researcher was more attentive to the responses from the participants so that he could identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied, These new emerging lines of inquiry were then explored and probed. Generally, the respondents were keen to respond to the interview questions because the questioning required their own opinions.

The flow of the interview rather than the order in a guide, determined when and how a question was asked. Depending on the responses from the respondents which on many occasions required probing as the interview progresses, a question previously planned for late in the interview was sometimes asked earlier. The researcher noticed that respondents often answer a question before it was asked. This happened during questioning and / or probing. In such situations, the researcher skipped the already answered question. The scheduled time for the interviews didn't last according to the expected amount of time with single respondents. The variation of time taken depended on how the interviewees were able to express themselves and also probing from the researcher.

During the process of the semi-structured interviews the agreed upon venues by both interviewee and interviewer, had to be changed. The researcher had to sacrifice a vehicle as an alternative venue. In some instances the venue would be too noisy because of radios put on very loud by neighbours. When the interviewee sought another venue, the owner of the household would also expect to be interviewed. This the researcher did and kept such notes separate.

(d) Phase 4 :Document analysis

The fourth phase dealt with analysis of documents. This usage of documentary analysis was negotiated by the researcher through the school principal. The primary documents analysed by the researcher included **junior secondary level** minute book from 2006 up to 2008 and policies formulated during the said period regarding parental involvement at the school. The aim of collecting these documents was to find out whether the school had put in place any policies regarding parental involvement at the school. The **junior secondary** minute book which entailed communication during meetings , as well as agendas of meetings was looked at. This assisted the researcher to see whether any literacy issues were up for discussion in the meeting.

The minute book indicated that there were meetings held, however they were called by the SGB to discuss school governance issues. These issues included payment of school fees, discipline, school uniform and the school maintenance..

The researcher was unable to get any minutes for the grade under study.

The consent to analyze the documents from the schools was characterized by the strict monitoring. During the perusal of the minute book one of the managers of the school was with the educator in an office.

3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher was aware that the availability of parents in rural communities posed a problem. The researcher therefore set aside enough time for regular visits to the school until the required information was obtained. Another challenge was that the interviews were conducted in isiXhosa. This involved a lot of translation of data on the part of the researcher.

3.10 ETHICS

A basic guideline is that the researcher should make sure that no individual suffers any adverse consequences as a result of the study and will also be attentive to maximizing positive outcomes of the researcher process (Fowler, 2002). The researcher took cognisance of this guideline during the course of the study.

The principles on ethical issues suggested by Van Rensburg (2001) and Fowler, (2002) are:

- Protection and welfare of participants

The researcher has an obligation to protect the respondents from physical or mental harm. The study should not present risk that is higher than what the

person would encounter during the course of their normal lifestyle. All interviews were conducted at places where the respondents felt safe. For instance venues were identified by respondents as to where to conduct the interviews.

- Informed consent

Participants should be informed of all aspects of research that might be reasonably expected to influence their willingness to participate in the research. They should also be informed about what it is that they are volunteering for as well as a brief description of the purpose of the research. For instance the use of the tape recorder was first discussed with the respondent concerned.

- Debriefing of participants

After data collection participants must be given all information they need. The researcher should also discuss with them their experiences of the research process so that unintended or unanticipated effects can be monitored. The researcher replayed the tape recorder for respondent as a way of confirming what was written on the note book of the researcher was the same thing as the recorded piece of information.

- Rights to withdraw from investigation

The researcher should under no circumstances force participants to participate or continue unwillingly with the study. The researcher adhered to these principles throughout the study by avoiding risks, gaining consent of participants, debriefing and informing participants of their right to withdraw from the study. Each and every time the researcher was to interview a participant she checked if the participant is still willing to do the interview.

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Hancock (2002) proposes a model for assessing trustworthiness of qualitative data. The model includes the following: truth value, credibility, applicability and data completeness.

3.11.1 Truth value

This asks if the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects or informants and the context in which the study was undertaken. In qualitative research truth value is usually obtained from discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants. Researchers need to focus on testing their findings against various groups from which data was drawn. In this study the researcher selected participants who were directly involved in the school as parents of learners. The researcher asked few participants to help with the verification of collected data.

3.11.2 Credibility

A qualitative study is considered credible when it presents accurate description and interpretation of human experiences that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the description. To ensure credibility of this study audiotape were used to keep data and unclear questions re framed for respondents to understand.

3.11.3 Applicability

Applicability applies to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other context and settings or with other groupings. It refers to fittingness or transferability. A research meets this criterion when the findings fit into contexts outside the study situation that have a degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts. This study is not intending to apply its findings to other situations.

3.11.4 Data completeness

In order to ensure trustworthiness in the study the researcher interpreted the responses of the respondents properly and allowed respondents to critique the report. All records were maintained in the tape recorder and hard notes were kept. The researcher included all pieces of data in the report. The procedure followed in piloting was carried out also when collecting data for the main study.

In this study trustworthiness was ensured by piloting the instrument before undertaking the main study (see Pilot Report annexure A). According to De Vos (1998) pilot study is the pretesting of a measuring instrument consisting of trying it out on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents.

3.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Terre Blanche et al. (2002) maintain that data analysis involves reading through your data repeatedly and engaging in activities of breaking the data down and building it up again in novel ways. They identify steps to be followed in data analysis which the researcher adhered to as outlined hereunder:

3.12.1 Familiarisation and immersion

The researcher familiarized herself with the data so that she had a clear understanding of the meaning thereof and what interpretations could be sought out of it.

3.12.2 Inducing themes

The researcher arranged data according to themes and translated into English where necessary.

3.12.3 Coding

This means that the researcher broke down data into meaningful pieces.

3.12.4 Elaboration

The researcher compared sections of text that appeared to belong together more closely and grouped them into sub-issues.

3.12.5 Interpretation and checking

This involved putting together interpretation and fixing weak points for example bias and objectivity on the part of the researcher.

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the methodology of this study. Description of research design was presented. This chapter also gave background of the research site and participants This was followed by a description of procedures followed for collecting data. The following chapter deals with presentation and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses data generated through the structured interviews, semi- structured interviews, the focus group discussions and the document analysis. Respondents investigated included parents, educators and learners of one combined school as indicated in Chapter 3. The data collected aimed to answer the following study questions:

What factors influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?

- What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?
- What factors influence parental choice of roles in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?
- What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?

The following section deals with themes and sub-themes that came from the analysis of data collected. It is structured as follows:

4.2 Presentation of the findings

4.3.1 Parents' profiles

4.3.2 Role played by parents

4.3.3 Parents who do not support beyond primary

4.3.4 Factors influencing parental involvement

4.2. Presentation of the findings

As indicated in Chapter Three this study made use of structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis to collect data.

- The structured interviews were responding to question 1 namely : What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?. The structured interviews help the researcher to identify the parents who continue their involvement from primary to senior phase level, from those who support their children up to primary school level only. From the responses in interviews the findings are discussed into themes and sub-themes.
- Semi- structured individual interviews responded to questions 1 and 3 ,namely : What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level? and What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?.
- Focus group discussions responded to question 2 namely: What factors influence parental choice of roles in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?.
- Documents analysis responded to question 1 namely :What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level?

The following section deals with parents' profile for structured interviews.

4.2.1 Parents' profiles

Table 1: Parents profiles

Gender		Parental status		Age group				Qualifications			Employment
M	F	Biological	Caregiver	30-40	41-50	51-60	61- above	Never been	Primary	Secondary	Employed
5	26	28	3	8	12	7	4	7	9	15	3

Table 4.1 above shows the profiles of the parents of senior phase learners who participated in the study. The number of parents who participated during the structured interviews was 38% of the population. From the above table of information 84% of the respondents are females and 16% are males. The table also indicates that 90% were biological parents and 10% were caregivers. The ratio of males versus females confirms Duku's findings (2006) that in the Eastern Cape child minders mostly tend to be females who are single mothers, grand mothers, divorced females and widows. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,(1997) also confirm the view that mothers often experience stronger role expectation than fathers for day to day involvement in children's schooling. This view is also confirmed by Anderson (2000) that females tend to report more positive attitudes towards literacy than males do .

The table also indicates that 90% were biological parents and 10% were caregivers. The caregivers were reportedly the grandparents and aunts of children whose biological parents were either migrant workers in Johannesburg or Cape Town. The fact that 90% were biological parents influenced the researcher to assume that children were receiving full attention and assistance from their parents.

As can be seen from the table, most parents fall within the age group of 30-50. About 50% of parents have secondary education. These details gave the researcher an impression that they can do more in supporting their children's literacy development.

The table also indicated that most parents were unemployed. Slaughter-Defoe,(1995) as cited by Hoover-Dempsey,(1997) argue that employment related circumstances influence parental involvement. The findings that some parents had left their children under the guardianship of caregivers showed that employment limit the involvement of parents in the development of their children's literacy development. All of these parents were staying with the learners at their households as families. As shown in the table, 90% of the respondents were not working thus confirming the above view that the opportunity of being involved in the children's development is not limited by employment. Parent's choice of involvement is influenced by a mix of demands on total parental time and energy (Hoover-Dempsey,1997). The discussion now moves to findings that came up during interviews.

4.2.2 Roles played by parents

Parents' conceptualisation of literacy

In chapter two development of literacy has been defined as supporting all children's growth, with thoughtful instruction to become reflective and motivated reader(McGee & Richgels, 2000). Different interpretations that came up during

the structured interviews were that parents associated literacy development with civilisation. Respondents reportedly defined literacy development as promoting reading and writing, disciplining children, cooking for children who are at school, pay school fees and buy uniform, clean the household and provide assistance where necessary. All parents who participated reported that they assisted with the development of their children's literacy in the following ways:

- **Home work**

While the sub-themes explain in detail what parents do to support their children, it is important to note that 38% agreed that they have a responsibility to support their children in the development of literacy. Reading and writing to parents include helping children with their home work which is usually submitted the following day to school. The reading and writing activities given as home work included English and isiXhosa. These parents reportedly understand the school's role in promoting children's abilities to speak, write and read as giving children homework. About 38% of interviewed parents identified the after school activities that aimed at developing reading, writing and speaking abilities of their children as explaining of idioms and meaning of words in isiXhosa, identification of nouns and verbs in English and also drafting of essay topics. The parents who helped with the meaning of words in isiXhosa relied mostly on the fact that it is their home language. For example, parents gave various responses as to how they assisted their children with homework:

“when the child ask Xhosa words he/she cannot understand the meaning”

“I explain Xhosa idioms my child do not understand “

“I explain the way we elders used to do things and my child writes it down the way the school wants it”. This meant that for a parent to be involved does not necessarily have to be educated.

- **Projects**

Projects slightly differed from homework in that they are usually submitted in a couple days. About 10% female parents who reportedly assisted with English activities and projects. These parents were mostly between the ages of 30-40 who had secondary education and felt strongly about their roles. They reportedly used resources available to them like dictionaries and newspapers. For other activities such as projects and assignments these respondents reported that they kept magazines from which learners could cut pictures. They reported that they could afford to do these activities as they had resources at home ranging from old books, magazines, newspapers. The availability of resources at home reinforces the view of Aull & Sollars, (2003) that the quality of home environment could influence print awareness and book and code knowledge. With English and isiXhosa the parents helped with analysis of idioms, dictionary use and one parent even goes as far as to demonstrate arts and culture items in classes. The importance of this kind of involvement these parents provide is as confirmed by Melhuish et al.,(1999) that parents and caregivers should be aware of the contributions they could make to their children’s learning by providing a stimulating environment at home. This they claim could be made by supporting school literacy tasks given to children both during early years of primary and

secondary years of schooling. For example at home children can read to parents and caregivers and do spelling tests with siblings (Ibid).

The other 71% respondents revealed that they do assist with homework . They specified that they only assisted with home work tasks as it relates to their home language only. This is confirmed by the FDG 3 in which the grand parents would narrate a story and they would rearrange it accordingly. The other kind of assistance reportedly offered was for the adult to give meaning to difficult words and the learners would relate and formulate answers. Respondents such as the grandparents reported that they referred their children to other senior learners.

“I send my child to his/her brothers if I do not know the answer ”. This means that this particular parent is assisting and shares the responsibility with the other children only when there is a barrier.

FGD 1, 2 and 3 also reportedly participated by delegation as referred to above. They further reported that some were not well vested in these learning areas they sourced help from their siblings. All FGDs agreed that their parents referred them to neighbours for assistance and sometimes went to their educators to clarify what exactly is required in the homework. The groups report that they did this because at their households they would not get the necessary assistance.

Even though parents interviewed reported to support their children in their literacy development there were some Learning Areas that presented the with

challenges. These included technology, economic and management sciences and natural sciences. It was at this point that parents voiced out how their assistance goes. Parents felt that these learning areas demanded more than they could offer. This they said was influenced by the fact that they are new Learning Areas and some attributed this to their qualifications. These are some of the examples of what parents said :

“I am not educated I do not know these new subjects”

“My child sees and provides for him/herself what to do with task if I cannot help”

The parents who are supporting their children beyond primary level reported that they were also helped by their husbands when it comes to social sciences. For instance one respondent said;

“For the social science tasks I usually ask my husband for assistance, because it demands political minds and knowledge on current issues”.

All FGDs confirmed that educators give them homework daily in various learning areas. The interviews with the HOD and educators who offer learning areas in the grades under study concurred with the fact that homework is given daily. The FGD3 felt good about the idea of being given homework because they got the opportunity to practice the tasks. FGD3 also explained that if a learner was not happy with what was going on in class then the learner would have attitude towards homework. FGD2 felt different from the above group, they revealed that some of the grade 8 learners hated homework as it consumed their “chilling”

time. They felt that it was too much for a learner to be given homework in more than five learning areas. FGD1 pointed out that when they come from school they have to cook for themselves and this made them angry. This attitude was also confirmed by all two educators that everyday they have to punish learners who did not do their homework.

From the structured interviews patterns of parental involvement came up. This study revealed a pattern of role responsibility and role delegation among parents. This means that some parents accepted fully that they had responsibility to support their children's literacy. The other group of parents delegated such responsibility to either siblings, neighbours , educators and husbands.

The following discusses semi-structured interviews. There were two groups of parents :

- (i) Parents supporting from foundation phase level up to intermediate phase level only (grade R to grade 6)
- (ii) Parents supporting beyond intermediate phase level (grade 7 to Grade 9).

4.3.3 Parents who support their children up to senior phase level only

Table 2: Profile of parents who support up to intermediate phase only

Sex		Parental Status		Age group			Educational Qualifications	
F	M	Biological	Caregiver	41-50	51-60	61-above	Never	2
4	2	4	2	2	3	1	Primary	3
							Secondary	1

During the structured interviews about 19% of participants reported that they did not support their children beyond primary level. These parents the researcher referred to them as parents who do not support beyond primary school level in the study. The total number of these parents was 6. Another type of parents that came up from the structured interviews was the parents that supported their children throughout the school years. These parents reported that they supported their children beyond primary school level. The total number of these parents was 3. They made up 10% of the total number of population. At this stage 9 parents participated in the semi-structured interviews. Some parents were reluctant to participate advancing reasons that the interviews were time consuming.

The above table shows that the total number of respondents who support their children up to intermediate phase level only is 6. From table 2 above 4 of the respondents are females and 2 are males. As alluded in table 1 above, it can be noted that females are in majority in this category of parents. It can also be noted that 4 are biological parents and 2 are caregivers. The fact that 4 of these parents are biological parents and do not support their children throughout their education surprised the researcher. This is due to the fact that taking into account the ages of these children, it is expected of the parents to provide support. The age group of these respondents falls within the ages of 41-61. Most of them have educational qualifications up to primary level. Based on their

education level the researcher assumes that they encounter challenges relating to providing support in the new Learning Areas.

This category of respondents reported their involvement in terms of the following patterns :

- They believed that the only thing they can give their children was education by sending them to school.
- They delegate literacy development to educators and wait to be called and be informed of progress because they feel inferior.
- They let the kids work on their own because children are old enough now.
- School expectations on them should change.

These patterns are confirmed by responses obtained during the interviews. This category of parents claimed that the challenges they are faced with are books that are too much to be read and as such take a lot of time for children to assist with home chores. FGD3 also felt that the school demands are high and parents feel inferior. This group also reported that: “because our level of education get high so does the demands of each subject. Our parents get affected, because of their level of education they cannot help us”. To this effect one educator commented that, “parents must be told that these children are still their responsibility they must not stop supporting them.”

These respondents who reported that they offered support up to primary level only revealed that the only thing they could offer their children was to send them to school. They reported that the only thing they can offer there is to see that they get education, “the only thing we can give them is education”. The relationship they had with the educators they described as going there to listen to whatever was going to be said, do what they were asked to do. They also pointed out that those who were educated should decide on behalf of them. This was confirmed by the FGD2 during discussions that they had also noticed that their parents did not visit the school regularly when they are doing these grades. However, the FGD3 felt that parents were suppose to motivate and support them in their education. This group claimed that if parents could always be around at school discipline would improve and that parents should assist in the general maintenance of the school premises.

The above view of FGD3 is confirmed by studies done by Hoover-Dempsey et al,(2005) that parents' decisions about some kinds of involvement differ as their children progress from elementary through middle and high school. In their study they explain that the decline across the grades was linked to parents' perceptions that their knowledge base is not sufficient as their children move to complex school work. They further discovered that the higher needs of knowledge required at senior phase level are related to the children's needs for autonomy. The FGDs also agreed that parents only came to school when they have wronged someone at school. The reasons the FGDs bring up are that may be

parents think they are old enough to decide for themselves. The demands by the school are becoming higher, for instance when their children lack school uniform they are afraid to show up and also that as the standard of education gets higher parents withdraw their support.

The parents who do not support their children in literacy beyond primary school level, agreed that if there was any message that the school wanted them to know the school should liaise with their children. Although they do not visit the school unannounced they refer to the school people as being friendly. The interviews further revealed that the kind of help that they offer their children was to pay school fees which as one parent puts it, “the school likes it very much”. To pay this they use their children's grants from the government.

The 20% of the respondents who support up to primary only happened to be men. These respondents reported that they visited the school only when there was a problem with their children, to go there unannounced was their first time to hear. They therefore were not aware that parents can visit school whenever they see need. The fact that 20% of respondents are not aware of the opportunity to visit school uninvited showed that the school had not done enough to let parents know of the opportunity and/or obligation. All the FGDs indicated that in the absence of invitation from school parents think everything is going on well.

If the school wants parents to be involved in development of their children's literacy it should provide opportunities (Gianzero, 1999). It is the school's responsibility to generate effective parent involvement by designing strategies that seek to engage parents on a continuing basis (Ibid). The kind of roles that these parents believe they should play included making food available when children are from school so that children can also assist with house chores and sit down and tell them about the importance education. The only time that they visited the school was when invited by the school to come and solve their children's unbecoming behavior.

The respondents thought that challenges the school had was disciplining children and thus their role was to assist with discipline. According to this group literacy development was the sole responsibility of educators and parents can only help with the disciplining of children. The respondents also identified that what can be done to develop their children's literacy was to change their attitude towards educators and to accept that their children's misbehaviors are not becoming at school. They should not let educators discipline children alone. These views fit the description given by Hoover-Dempsey et al, (2005) that parents' roles are constructed by their beliefs that their involvement yields positive student outcomes although they attend to disciplinary cases. The interviews also revealed that parents are not involved enough in activities that relate to literacy development. They come to school when there are behavior problems with their children and usually offer minimum support because children

also misbehave at home. All the focus groups are in agreement with this in that parents only come to school when there is a problem relating to misbehavior of learners. If parents would work together with educators this would lead to better upbringing of the children. Parents with disciplined, well behaved and excellent performing children do visit the school unannounced. In relation to this view Gianzero, 1999 state that children of parents who are in regular contact with schools regarding issues of progress, homework and school events become higher achievers. The following section deals with parents who support their children beyond intermediate phase level.

4.3.4 Parents who support their children up to senior phase

Table 3: Profile of parents who support their children up to senior phase

Gender		Parental Status		Age group		Educational Qualifications	Employment status
F	M	Biological	Caregiver	30-40	41-50	Secondary	Unemployed
3		2	1	2	1	3	3

As can be seen from the above table all respondents were females who had secondary education. They were between the age group of 30-50. This group of parents were willing to participate in the study and showed a high level of commitment throughout the study. Their dedication can also be attributed to their

level of education as well as the findings of studies that the majority of child minders are females. Bandura (1989) as cited by Hoover Dempsey (1997) argues that the involvement of parents is influenced by the parents' efficacy. It can therefore be seen that more parents with secondary education did support their children beyond intermediate phase .

Learners voice

Much as parents' responses link with the discussions of the FGDs, however FGDs have the following views regarding literacy development and parental involvement:

- Learners agree that parents are scarce when they are doing these grades. Parents only come to school when they have done wrong or wronged someone.
- Parents think that parents are old enough to think for themselves.
- If parents could be around discipline would improve.
- Parents ,learners and educators should be called in a meeting situation and discuss their problems.
- Parents need to be educated on school issues and be orientated through workshops. Learners think that parents would understand the hard work they do at school and why they are tired when they come from school.
- Learners think that parents frequent visiting foundation phase unannounced but not at senior phase.

- Learner should refrain from being lazy and showing attitude towards educators and parents. Without these ,they say parents would be interested in their education.

4.3.4 Factors influencing parental involvement

The factors influencing parental involvement identified by semi-structured interviews emerged largely from the parents who reportedly did not offer support to their children beyond intermediate phase. The kind of involvement offered by these parents seemed to be influenced by the following factors: parents' lack of understanding of their roles, absence of guiding documents, lack of unity among stakeholders, age and illiteracy.

- **Parents' lack of understanding of their roles**

From the interviews and focus group discussions it became evident that parents do not understand their roles in terms of their involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level. This lack is further confirmed by the fact that some parents claimed that they were not aware that they have a responsibility to check on the progress of their children. While educators indicated that parents were not providing enough support, there was, however, no evidence that the school made any effort to inform parents of their roles in the development of their children's literacy. In their construct parents believed that they fulfilled their roles.

- **Absence of guiding document**

The South African Schools Act and National Curriculum Statement serve as enabling legislation and regulation that govern and direct how effective education can be managed. The application of these implies that schools need to develop policies and strategies to ensure the existence and full operation of the envisaged partnership. However, no policies could be give to the researcher. No record of meetings between the school and parents of grade 7 to 9 learners could be found.

- **Lack of unity between stakeholders**

There is a common understanding among the parties namely parents, educators and learners that they all have a role to play in the development of literacy. The interviews revealed that there is no working together between parties. This situation had led to parents not understanding their roles as there were no defined roles and responsibilities. The traditional three leg approach that was implemented to encourage working together between the three parties seemed to have been phased out in the school under study.

Parents were invited on individual basis to discuss individual learner problems. Parents felt that children are given a lot of homework which consumed a lot of time and therefore resulting in children not helping with house chores. On the other side learners felt that their play time is consumed by pile of home work they had to do everyday. Educators indicated that homework gave learners practice for revision purposes in preparing for any kind of assessment. These divergent views on homework reinforced lack of unity among.

- **Age**

Caregivers who happened to be 6% are grandparents. They reported that they have never been to school and therefore could not read or write. The result was that their children seek help on their own when they have difficulty with homework. They however do offer some explanation on how things were done in the past, what they ate and give meaning of isiXhosa idioms when asked. This is supported by FGD1 which indicated that parents feel that learners are old enough to decide for themselves and to know what educators expect of them.

- **Illiteracy**

The 20% male respondents revealed that they did offer assistance especially with mathematical tables when their children were in primary because their children struggled with tables. The interviews with the biological parents revealed that they had problem with all learning areas offered in English because they do not understand it. The 71% of parents who assist only in the areas that relate to their home language indicated that they have problems with the new learning areas. Learners indicated that most parents are illiterate with the result that they do not know what is happening in class, for them to support they need some kind of orientation on how things are done in class.

4.3.5 Expectations by educators/ school

One of the educators indicated that even if parents are not well vested in these new learning areas they should ask children to count, recite math tables, read something from the set work books and also do spelling tests. Quoting the words she said “even if a parent is illiterate they must ask children something for them”. This educator pointed out that grade 8 learners cannot count or write numbers in words. The educator strongly believes that it is the responsibility of the parents to give their children basic literacy skills. The educators’ views are also confirmed by Glazer and Burke, (1994) that in the past parents were encouraged to facilitate oral language, reading instruction was to be left to the school. They explain that the teacher was the most valued influence on children’s road towards literacy. These thoughts gave no consideration to the ideas that reading, writing and speaking can take place both in and out of school situations (Ibid).

Another parent expectation identified by the educators was that of report card collection. The interviews with educators revealed the irresponsible side of parents in that semester assessment report cards are not collected by most parents. These reports remain with educators for a long time with no one ever asking for them. Parents only collect reports at the end of the year and after that there would not be any follow up. It is only during report card collection that educators get the opportunity to discuss the learner’s progress with parents. FGDs reported that parents come to school to collect reports. Parents also get to notify educators of problematic children even at home. General relations

between parents and educators are good. Parents assist the school with the maintenance of the school garden, grass cutting and serving in school committees.

Lengthy debates and investigations had been carried out around the issue of parental involvement in their children's education generally. For example Gianzero (1999) states that secondary school dropout rates are higher for children whose parents and families are less involved in their education. Gianzero further points out that decline in parental involvement in children's education are evident in the middle and high school levels.

Educators feel therefore, that it is their sole responsibility to monitor the behavior of learners. This is also the view of parents who do not support as they believe that anything that has to do with literacy development is the role of educators. Educators however, think that parents should be called and be directly told that learners of grade 7 to 9 are still their children, they must continue supporting them even at secondary level. They otherwise do tell them that they must visit their children's educators frequently. Educators indicated that if a learner would see his/her parent visiting school time and again the behavior of a learner might change he/she will not be loose because his/her parent is easily available. The focus groups are also of the view that if parents visit the school regularly there would be a positive improvement in the behavior of learners. Educators stressed that they will not give up on parents. The advice given by Browne (1996) is that if

parents are to be invited to work with pupils in schools or after school, the school has to have a policy. The school and educators need to be clear about what the partnership is to achieve (Ibid).

The interview conducted with the Head of Division revealed that parents at primary level are easy to get hold of. However, once these learners reach secondary level parents seem to disappear. This, the HOD claims has noticed this because she once taught in a primary school. The HOD suspects that learners themselves when they reach secondary level do not relay school messages to parents, especially if that involves them. Hoover-Dempsey et al,(2005) suggest student invitations prompt parental involvement, parents become motivated to be part of their children's education. This the HOD has experienced in the previous primary school where she taught. The strategy she was using was to give a message to a neighbouring learner to summon another learner's parent. This strategy she abandoned because of the threats learners received from culprits. Driessen et al, (2004) supports these views by making an example of studies carried out by Vogel when trying to find out parental involvement turnover in Dutch. The studies ,revealed that primary level had the most number of parents who frequented the school than secondary level .Educators think that because they are in rural area most of the learners stay with grandparents their biological parents are away at work, learners are not assisted the way educators would like. The feeling is however 'parents are not doing enough'.

The HOD also reported that parents are reluctant to come to school because they think it is about outstanding monies due by them to the school and in the process miss out a lot on their children's developmental needs. It also came out from the interview with the HOD that they keep record of all the instances a parent was called so that they can refer back when parent denies ever being called by the educator.

The educators in their interviews concur with parents that quite a number of parents are not involved in the development of their children's literacy. As mentioned by learners their involvement is limited to assisting in maintenance of school and some serve in school committees, for example school governing bodies. Again educators views concur with learners that parents have no knowledge of new learning areas. The learners also revealed that when parents are called for misbehaviours not all of them come. From the above discussions sub-themes also emanated such as, relations between educators and parents and benefits as identified learners. These are discussed hereunder:

- **Relations with educators**

From the interviews with parents and educators it became clear that the relations between the supporting parents and educators is good, parents even visit the school unannounced to discuss problem areas and when they get a chance during their duty offs. One parent feels that she must not wait till a problem

occurs then act afterwards; if anything wrong starts she must tackle it immediately. 38% of parents agree that they should play a role in the development of their children's literacy activities. They saw no problem in going to their children's educators, sit down and go through the books of children. These parents agree with previous studies that parental involvement yield positive results. They claimed that the future of their children is in both the parent and the educator's hands. They said that they start doing small things for the school, for example cleaning the school premises, helping in the school garden and with fund raising donations.

- **Benefits as identified by learners parents**

Views from the focus groups on how parental involvement could help the school varied from controlling discipline, lessen class bunking, learners encouraged to study and the relationship between educator and parent would improve.

If parents can frequent their visits at school,they, the learners “we would not relax”, meaning that they would do no wrong things like bunking classes and would not be copying homework. They reported that they would feel cared for if parents would be regular visitors at school. Che, (2002) indicated that student performance is strongly influenced by parental attitudes and expectations and achievement levels tend to rise when parents are perceived as being interested in their children's schooling. Further more if a learner is unruly at home the parent do not bother coming to school for such a learner.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with data presentation and discussion of the findings of the study. The discussion of findings entailed the roles played by parents, and the assistance they offered. In line with the topic it covered the factors influencing the involvement of parents in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level. The following chapter deals with the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter. The researcher also discusses how the findings relate to the literature review with reference to the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in the senior phase level.

5.1 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework in this study has been explained in chapter 2. However, some findings had come out during the study that contradict and or confirm literature reviewed by the researcher. These are discussed below.

5.1.1 Role theory

Haward (1992) explains a role as an expected pattern or set of behaviors associated with a particular position or status. In the role theory the focus is primarily on roles in the family and work domains, considered to be the two most central institutions in people's lives. Haward (1992) further explains that roles become personalized for individuals. For example, not all parents are subject to identical expectations and they all do not enact the parental role in the same way. Hoover-Dempsey (2004) further explain that roles are also characterized by their focus on goals held by the group and its individual members. These goals include socialization of the child, instilling of appropriate behavior, learning specific subject matter, development of children's unique talents and interests.

They further argue that roles are characterised by goals which include socialisation of a child and development of children's talents. Parents play a major role in the socialisation of children and they know these roles and play them effectively and efficiently (ibid).

As explained above by Haward (1992) that a role is an expected pattern or set of behaviors associated with a particular position or status, this study revealed a pattern of role responsibility and role delegation among parents. This means that some parents accepted fully that they had responsibility to support their children's literacy. The other group of parents delegated such responsibility to either siblings, neighbours, educators and husbands. Hoover-Dempsey (2004) also argues that parents play a major role in the socialisation of children and that they know these roles and play them effectively and efficiently. The findings of the study contradicted this in that at the school under study not all parents played their roles effectively and efficiently. Some of the parents reported that they supported their children up to primary level only. This group of parents further believes that children at secondary level are old enough to decide for themselves. The statement by Hoover-Dempsey assumes that all parents have the ability to support their children's literacy development. This study found that the statement is not fully applicable at the school under study because it was not all parents had the ability to provide the required support. Some parents had challenges as outlined under factors influencing parental involvement in chapter 4 of this study.

5.1.2 Literacy development

Developing literacy according to McGee & Richgels (2000) is concerned with supporting all children's growth, with thoughtful instruction to become reflective and motivated readers. While literature reviewed gave the above definition of literacy development parents who were respondents to this study defined literacy development as promoting reading and writing, disciplining children, cook for children who are at school, pay school fees and buy uniform, clean the household and provide assistance where necessary. The fact that parents have a different conception of literacy development poses challenges in that their focus is confined only to what they understand literacy development to be. The lack of unity between parents and educators as picked up from document analysis, resulted in parents not being aware of what is expected of them. This created a gap between parents understanding of literacy development and the expectations educators have on parents roles. The document analysis revealed that at senior phase no meetings were held with parents during the period 2006 and 2008. The challenges this phase faced were not mentioned anywhere in the documents that were given to the researcher.

Literature reviewed indicated that there are roles that need to be played in order for children's literacy to develop. These roles are: role of reading, role of writing, role of home and the strategies applied by educators. Although literature states the above roles different approaches were applied by parents. These

approaches were revealed during the interviews with parents. For instance parents did not sit down with children to read and write with them. Parents reported that they explained meaning of difficult words to children and explained idioms when asked by children. As for the home environment parents claimed that they made sure that the house was clean and children were cooked for when they came from school.

5.1.3 Developing children's literacy

A review of literature on teaching literacy suggests that there is considerable variation in the way literacy is developed and taught (Carmen Simich-Dudgeon,1989). The South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 and National Curriculum Statement (NCS) mandate parents of learners at senior phase level to take active role in their children's school work. However, in this study some parents were not aware of the responsibility assigned to them in terms of SASA and NCS. The interviews held with educators revealed that parents were scarce during the course of the year and that they came to school to collect report cards at the end of the year. It is on this basis that some parents also saw the development of their children's literacy as the sole responsibility of educators.

5.1.4 Role players in the development of children's literacy

The development of children's literacy is a broad and complex task that involves many role players with overlapping responsibilities. Epstein (1996) states that the perspective of overlapping spheres of influence supports shared responsibilities of parents and educators for children's learning. This means that for the schools

to have influence on effectiveness of families they should give children tasks to do at home. The model of shared responsibilities necessitates unambiguous definition of roles and strategies that nurture the effectiveness of partnership. Against the background that the child is the reason for the connection between home and school, learners are the main actors in their education, development and success in school (Epstein). In partnership, educators, families and community member's work together to share information, guide learners, solve problems and celebrate successes (Paratore & McCormack, 2005). They emphasise that partnerships recognise shared responsibilities of home, school and community for children's learning and development. A common approach and understanding on the roles of all members in the partnership is paramount as it can only improve working together to the advantage of the children concerned.

The study revealed that there was no common understanding among the parties namely parents, educators and learners that they all have a role to play in the development of literacy. The interviews further revealed that there was no working together between parties. This situation had led to parents not understanding their roles as there were no defined roles and responsibilities. The findings of the study revealed that from the parents who supported literacy development of their children were females. The profiles of respondents in table 1 shows that 84% were females. This is confirmed by studies done by Duku (2006) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), that females or mothers often are much involved than males or fathers. The traditional three leg approach that

was implemented to encourage working together between the three parties seemed to have been phased out in the school under study.

5.1.5. Activities in which parents are involved

There are various ways in which parents are involved in the development of their children's literacy. Robb (2003) and Browne (2004) suggest that the participation of parents in their children's literacy activities at home is carried out in the following ways:

- joining the public library and taking children to the library and letting them browse through picture books and choose several to check out and take home.
- reading to children every day then invites them to use illustrations to tell about book story after several rereading. T
- provide resources for learning at home, such as writing implements and books.
- translate children's stories, published books, signs, labels, notices, letters and circulars and supply materials for use in school.

(NCS) for secondary level also outlines that learners will develop the study skills necessary for lifelong learning such as:-

- Read in different ways for different purposes
- Improve their reading speed
- Skim and scan text

- Summarise text
- Use reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias and internet
- Take a critical approach to texts and information.

The learning outcomes at secondary level are more complex and thus require adult assistance and guidance (NCS). The development of lifelong learning skills by learners require an effective partnership among role players that include parents, educators and learners.

Literature reviewed and NCS stipulated the activities that can be done to promote literacy development for children at senior phase level. Parents who were interviewed in this study had different interpretations. They associated literacy with civilisation. For instance, parents reported that they went to school to listen to what was going to be said. They also reported that they let those who were educated to discuss with the educators at school. In this study the activities that parents believed they should be doing to promote literacy development varied according to their role constructs. To some parents reading and writing was seeing to it that children took their books and did homework.

5.2 Factors influencing parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy

Parental involvement is a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of the parent to the school and to the student (LaBahn, 1995). Parental involvement should focus to both the school and the learner. Paying more attention to the needs of the learner while disregarding those of the school may not yield the required results. Vandergrift & Greene (1992) as cited by LaBahn

(1995) state that there are two key elements that work together to make up the concept of parental involvement. One of these is the level of commitment to parental support which includes such things as encouraging the student, being sympathetic, reassuring and understanding. The other level needed is that of parental activity and participation, such as doing something that is observable (ibid).

In their involvement parents face a number of challenges that affect their involvement positively or negatively.

The study identified the following factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy :

5.2.1 Parents' level of education and their experiences

Cultural and socio-economic differences between parents and teachers coupled with limited educational attainment on the part of parents leave them feeling inadequately prepared to offer effective home-based activities. A report by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), revealed that most parents were illiterate because they never got any formal education and as result they can not assist their children adequately. Language communication barriers may be experienced by parents due to their level of education. The findings of the study confirmed the parents' level of education as a factor that influences the involvement of parents in the development of their children's literacy.

5.2.2 Home environment

Here in South Africa, studies carried out in Pretoria by Johnson (2007) revealed that the nature of home reading environment influenced the reading ability of children with learning disabilities and that reading at home contributed to the development of children's language and literacy skills. Families acquire important information about their children's development through parent education programs (Gianzero, 1999). Such programs are guided by firm belief that parents are capable of learning new techniques for working with their children. Gianzero further recommended that these programs focused on helping low-income parents to work with their children to improve children's behavior, language skills and test performance. These programs also helped parents' ability on how they would engage in helping their children with home activities.

Lessing & Mahabeer (2007), also state that low socio-economic environments and literacy levels of parents tend to provide learners with minimal chances of exposure reading material thereby effectively reducing their literacy abilities. For example, the frequent lack of books, magazines and newspapers, radio and television at home tend to result in dissonance between home and school. This kind of dissonance diminishes the chances of school success. The low and unstable incomes leave many homes without electricity and as a result learners lack restful and stimulating study environments and their exposure to experiential world is limited. The profile of parents in this study shows that most parents are

unemployed and are therefore unable to have resources such as reading material. The parents made use of text books given to children by the school.

5.2.3 Home- school relationship

Studies by Paratore & McCormack (2005) tell us that children who achieve high levels of reading have the benefit of parental support and involvement. Studies by Taylor & Pearson, 2002; Jordan, Snow and Porche,2000 as well as the old ones like Durkin,1966; Clark,1976 also confirm the above view. This view is further supported by Henderson (1988) who also found that learners learn more effectively and successfully when parents are involved in their children's education. The reading at home pre-supposes that parents have a great role to play in this regard. A clear role definition and its understanding on the part of parties is crucial for positive contribution to the child's reading activities.

Studies by (Allen & Daly, 2002; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003) show that children whose parents are involved show greater social and emotional development. These include more resilience to stress, greater life satisfaction, greater self-direction and self-control, greater social adjustment, greater mental health, more supportive relationships, greater social competence, more positive peer relations, more tolerance, more successful marriages, and less delinquent behaviours because there is free interaction between learners and parents.

While the above studies explain that home-school relationship yield positive results, the study revealed that the home-school relationship at the school

under study was not that good. Because of this some parents reported that they were not aware that they can visit the school uninvited .

5.2.4. Parents understanding of their roles

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) argue that parents' involvement and decisions are based on several constructs drawn from their own ideas and experiences as well as other constructs growing out of environmental demands and opportunities. They suggest that most parents' fundamental decision to become involved in their children's education is a function primarily of three constructs, namely: the parent's construction of his or her role in the child's life , the parent's sense of efficacy for helping her or his child succeed in school and the general invitation, demands, and opportunities for parental involvement presented by both the child and the child's school.

Based on the above constructs that influence parental involvement, it becomes evident that parents become involved in their children's literacy development because they have developed a parental role. They have a positive sense of efficacy for helping children succeed and that they perceive general opportunities and invitations for involvement from their children and their children's school. The home- school relations that is not that good had constrained the understanding of roles on the part of parents. For instance the findings in this study revealed patterns of role responsibilities. Some parents acknowledged that they have a

role to play in the development of their children's literacy. There were, however those who delegated their roles to siblings, neighbours husbands and educators.

Conclusion

The concept of parental involvement was explored and it became evident that it has been covered in a number of research studies. There are, however a number of factors that hinder parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy. Parents, educators and learners have not yet fully embraced the concept due to a number of factors. The study suggests that literacy development is influenced by parents, availability of resources, home environment and home-school relationship. A more active and open interaction between all stakeholders is essential. All the stakeholders involved in the literacy development of children need to work together. This will ensure that the factors that adversely affect the development of children's literacy are addressed to the benefit of all concerned.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter and how they relate to the literature review with reference to the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy in the secondary level. As the factors have been identified, possible solutions to address such challenges and recommendations are also highlighted.

As indicated in chapter one of the study, South African School Act stated that the aim of partnership between the state, parents, learners, educators and other interested community members is for all to accept their responsibilities. These responsibilities are concerned with the organisation , governance and funding of schools. Members of the partnership in education must give whatever is necessary to ensure that schools provide good education and that they function properly. For the partnership to be effective it must share the following:

- mutual trust and respect
- shared decision making
- shared goals and values
- common vision
- open communication
- good team work
- respect for the roles of different partnership

- promotion of the interests of the partnership rather than those of the individual.

The National Curriculum Statement on the other hand promotes the idea that a balanced approach to teaching Literacy Learning Programme is needed. To ensure that learners develop an ability to understand and interpret texts, they have to be exposed to a variety of activities. These activities develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. However some of these activities are taken home for learners to do and thus require parental involvement.

Many studies in literacy development of young children suggest that both before school and out of school children construct understanding and knowledge about different ways that people use and produce writing in their lives (Bloch,2002). As these children are assisted by siblings and adults, they start to use written language and explore how it functions and incorporate it into their daily play and other activities.

Partnership that strive to boost student achievement may be supported with funds designated for curricular and instructional reform(Epstein,1992). Researchers have found out that parent-school involvement was the single factor most closely associated with the development of all literacy skills. Experts have also shown that the development of reading skills is more dependent on home learning activities than the development of math or science skills(Ibid).

The above information suggests therefore, that schools must have effective methods of assessing their partnership programmes so that goals and objectives can be refined, programs modified accordingly and the value of partnerships in achieving certain goals made apparent to all stakeholders (Gianzero,1999). They recommend employing a combination of techniques for evaluating family-school connections. These may include:

- informal observation of the way in which parent and educators interact.
- identification of existing data relevant to program goals that can serve as a baseline.
- focus groups with parents, learners and educators to determine how each group feels about the state of school-family connections.

6.1 Summary of findings

Hoover-Dempsey et al (1997) argue that parents' involvement and decisions are based on several constructs drawn from their own ideas and experiences as well as other constructs growing out of environmental demands and opportunities. They suggest that most parents' fundamental decision to become involved in their children's education is a function primarily of three constructs namely:

- (a) the parents' construction of his or her role in the child's life
- (b) the parents' sense of efficacy for helping his or her child succeed in school
- (c) the general invitation, demands and opportunities for parental involvement presented by both the child and the child's school.

This means that there things that parents believe they are suppose to do in relation to their children's education and educational progress. From the findings in this study it appeared that parent's role construction developed from a variety of activities which were construed as important by parents. For example many parents reported that they made sure that their children were cooked for when they came from school and that the household was tidy and clean.

Based on the findings as detailed in the previous chapter the factors that emerged as influencing parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy are summarised as shown hereunder :

6.1.1 Parents' lack of understanding of their roles

The findings of this study revealed that parents do not understand their roles in terms of their involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level. Some parents were not aware that they have a responsibility to check on the progress of their children. While educators indicated that parents were not providing enough support, there was, however, no evidence that the school made any effort to inform parents of their roles in the development of their children's literacy. In their construct parents believed that they fulfilled their roles.

6.1.2 Absence of guiding document

The South African Schools Act and National Curriculum Statement serve as enabling legislation and regulation that govern and direct how effective education can be managed. There were no policies in place at the school under study and the envisaged partnership between the stakeholders did not exist. No record of meetings between the school and parents of grade 7 to 9 learners could be found.

6.1.3 Lack of unity between stakeholders

There is a common understanding among the parties namely parents, educators and learners that they all have a role to play in the development of literacy. The research revealed that there is no working together between parties. This situation had led to parents not understanding their roles as there were no defined roles and responsibilities. The traditional three leg approach that was implemented to encourage working together between the three parties seemed to have been phased out in the school under study.

Parents were invited on individual basis to discuss individual learner problems. Parents felt that children are given a lot of homework which consumed a lot of time and therefore resulting in children not helping with house chores. On the other side learners felt that their play time is consumed by pile of home work they had to do everyday. Educators indicated that homework gave learners

practice for revision purposes in preparing for any kind of assessment. These divergent views on homework reinforced lack of unity among the stakeholders.

6.1.4 Age

Caregivers who happened to be grandparents assisted by offering explanations on how things were done in the past. They held a view that learners were old enough to decide for themselves and to know what educators expected of them.

6.1.5 Illiteracy

The findings of this study revealed that the male did offer assistance especially with mathematical tables when their children were in primary because their children struggled with tables. They revealed that they visited the school only when there was a problem with their children as they were not aware of the opportunity to visit the school uninvited. Parents who supported their children beyond primary level even visited the school unannounced to discuss problem areas and when they got the chance during their duty offs. There were, however, parents who thought the challenges the school had were disciplining children and thus their role was to assist with discipline. According to them literacy development was the sole responsibility of educators.

6.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the above shortcomings the following recommendations are proposed:

a. Parents lack of understanding of their roles

To improve communication between parents and educators the school should give an orientation on roles as provided by SASA and NCS to allow parents an opportunity to own the school. This orientation can be followed by workshops that may practical aspects that provide information in detail. Monitoring and evaluation of understanding through assessment of assistance in children's homework and the positive effect on educator and parent relations on roles.

b. Absence of guiding documents

The school should develop a policy on parental involvement. Such development should be inclusive of all stakeholders to ensure commitment and buy-in. Clear defined roles, responsibilities and strategies like frequency of meetings and establishment of committees should be in place.

c. Lack of unity between stakeholders

The school should hold strategic workshops to develop vision and mission statement of the school. Development of strategies that will enforce unity and interdependence among the parties. Team building that will strengthen working together among groups in terms of their areas of operation.

6.3 Limitations

Since this was a case case study the data collected and findings identified cannot be generalised as representing a fair population of the combined schools.

This study aimed at investigating factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's literacy at secondary school level in the Eastern Cape. The reluctance of parents to participate in the semi-structured interviews is not going to affect the findings and credibility of the study because the researcher used a number of methods to gather data.

Conclusion

The government has put in place some policies through SASA and NCS to grant parents the opportunity to be involved in their children's education. This is done by activities given to children by educators to take home which require parental assistance. A number of parents are not aware of these opportunities and this results in educators feeling that it is solely their burden to educate and discipline learners. There is evidence in studies conducted, the parents of the school under study also recognise this claim but the manner they practice and show needs some attention.

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APPENDIX A

REPORT ON PILOT STUDY

1. Background

According to De Vos (1998) pilot study is the pretesting of a measuring instrument consisting of trying it out on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents. New dictionary of social work (1995) defines pilot study as the process whereby the research design for a prospective study is tested

Piloting study was undertaken to test the questionnaire on five respondents who were parents of grade 7 to 9 learners. The school used for piloting was a combined school which shared same characteristics with the school under study. On discovery of any challenge the researcher intends to make all necessary adjustments so that the aims of the main study are achieved.

In line with the above definitions the study was undertaken to test the instrument on a few respondents. This was done to determine the feasibility of the planned study and the deficiencies in the instrument. It also gave the researcher orientation to the social environment where the investigation will take place. It is on this basis that the researcher feels that this report forms part of data collection in the main study.

2. Process followed

2.1 Choice of school

The school was chosen because it is a combined school that has the similar characteristics with the school wherein the study is to be conducted. The school is where the researcher is currently working and this reduced costs on the part of the researcher. The location of the school within the circuit where the study will be done has also ensured that the similarity of conditions is maintained.

2.2 Negotiating access for the pilot study

The management (namely the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments) of the school where the pilot study was to be undertaken was made aware of the study to be undertaken. The researcher informed the management in a meeting situation that parents of learners from grade 7 to grade 9 will be given questionnaires to respond to. This was done so that management understands visits of the researcher by parents. This made it easy for the

researcher to hand out letters of invitation to parents of learners of the relevant grades to participate in the pilot study (Appendix E).

2.3 Selection and conducting of study

The selection of parents was done randomly in that the researcher, without sequence, simply picked learners' names from class lists of learners in the relevant grades. Five parents of grade 7-9 learners were chosen. The five parents were made up of 1 parent from grade 7, 2 parents from grade 8 and 2 from grade 9. This was done by writing letters to parents requesting them to take take part in the study (Appendix E).

All five parents responded positively by completing the reply slip that was attached to the letter. Three parents visited the researcher at school; one parent completed the questionnaire on her own and submitted it to the researcher while one parent was visited by the researcher at her household. On their arrival at the site and on the visits at households of respondents, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of the process. The questionnaire questions were explained in isiXhosa to make it easy for the respondents to understand.

3. Findings

3.1 Respondents: Biographical data

Parent Status	Gender	Age group	Qualifications	Employment
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								Status	
Biological	Caregiver	Male	Female	41-50	51-60	Primary	Second ary	Emplo yed	Unempl oyed
3	2	0	5	2	3	2	3	2	3

The table shows that all participants were females who were between the ages of 41 to 50 and 3 of them were between the ages of 51 to 60. Among these parents two were caregivers. The caregivers happened to be grandmothers of the learners whose biological parents were either late or away in big cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg on employment purposes. Most parents were unemployed and claimed that they depended on government social grants. Their educational qualifications did not go beyond secondary level with the caregivers having primary level of education.

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 Relevance of the questionnaire to the study questions

Questions in the questionnaire were formulated within the context of the questions of the main study. During piloting these were found to be in line with the study. All the questions in the main study were addressed and responses to the theme of the study are as reflected below:

- Activities done by parents at home

Activities that parents are engaged in with their children after school were checking books, finding out if there is any homework, teaching discipline and health related issues. Three of the parents focused mainly on isiXhosa which is their home language while two parents assist in both isiXhosa and English activities. All parents assist in projects, assignments interpretation of phrases and idioms.

- Resources parents have at home

Resources used by two parents to assist their children's abilities to read, write and speak included isiXhosa set book from school, magazines, TV programmes and newspapers while three parents have no resources other than using their experiences in teaching discipline, home chores, meanings of words, spelling and correct pronunciation.

- Roles parents play at home

According to two parents the school promotes the children's abilities to speak, write and read by giving topics in other languages and encouraging children to read newspapers at home. One parent is of the view that children's abilities can be promoted by using computer programmes. The other two parents appeared not sure in that one indicates that the school educates the child while the other one indicates that the school encourages her to assist her child.

- Support provided by parents to the school

Four parents confirm that the school does ask them for support though not frequently. They give support only when invited to do so. One parent claimed that the school never asked for her support and had therefore never given support.

The support given by parents includes assisting children to study for test, doing homework, attend parents' meetings and instilling discipline to problematic learners. All four parents feel happy about being requested to assist in their children's literacy development.

- Support of parents to learners

Four parents indicated that their children ask for their support when they have difficulties with homework, projects and research. One parent who is never asked for support took it upon herself to ask the child for any school work to be done.

All parents feel that they have a role to play and that it is their right and responsibility to assist their children in their literacy development.

4. Challenges

While conducting the study the following transpired:

- Challenges in honoring appointment

Parents were sometimes not available despite prearranged meetings.

To avoid this challenge in the main study the researcher will allocate more time for data collection thus giving enough time for those parent who may not honor visits. In order to increase commitment on the part of parents the researcher will allow parents to choose suitable dates for visits.

- Language used in the instrument

Questions in the pilot instrument are in a different language from the respondents' mother tongue being isiXhosa. This was time consuming for the researcher in that the researcher had to translate all questions and responses to the language of the respondents.

The questionnaires to be used in the main study will be translated into the respondents' home language.

- Parent's attitude

Some parents who were invited to school appeared scared due to them not being familiar with the school environment. Some were also uncomfortable even when visited in their homes despite this being in their own request.

The explanation of the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of the process reduced the fear and the parents contributed freely. The same approach will be applied in the main study.

5. Suggested changes

The questionnaire addresses all the questions in the main study and will therefore remain unchanged. It will however be translated into isiXhosa which is the home language of respondents.

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO EDUCATORS

What do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary level?

1. How long have you been teaching at this school?
2. Can you tell me more about yourself?
3. Do you give children homework?
4. In which learning areas do you give homework?
5. Do you think that parents should be helping their children with homework?
6. Are they doing enough by helping with homework?
7. What do you think can be done by parents to be more involved in their children,s literacy?

8. What do you think make parents not to be involved?
9. What do you do to motivate parents to continue their involvement throughout secondary level?
10. Does your school have any parental involvement?
11. In your view what can be done to improve the current situation?

Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO PARENTS

What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy at secondary level?

1. How many of your children have attended this school?
 - have they passed matric already?
 - how many are currently studying?
2. Do your children bring any homework from school and what kind of support do you offer?
 - what kind of work?
 - how do you feel about that?

3. Which learning areas are you helping your children with?

- which areas are you comfortable with?

- what do you do if you are uncomfortable?

4. How is your relationship with your children's educators?

- do you visit your child's educators unannounced?

5. Do you think that parents have a role to play in the development of children's literacy?

6. What do you understand these roles to be?

- why is it important to play these roles?

- besides helping with literacy activities what else can you do as a parent to help your children

7. What challenges do you face as parents?

- which areas and why these areas?

8. What do you think can be done to improve the involvement of parents in the development of their children's literacy?

9. How do educators encourage you to play a role in the development of your children's literacy?

Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO LEARNERS

What factors influence parental choice of roles in the development of their children's literacy?

1. Do your educators give homework?
- (a) 2. In which learning areas do you get homework?
- (b) 3. How do you feel about this?
- (c) 4. Who helps you with your homework?
- (d) 5. In which learning areas does he/she help you?
- (e) 6. In their assistance what do they do?

- (f) 7. What about other learning areas? How do you manage without your parent,s assistance?
- (g) 8. Do you think parents should become involved? If yes how and why?
9. As a learner what do you think can be done to involve parents in the development of their children's literacy.

Appendix E

Kubusie Combined School

P.O. Box 5

Stutterheim

4930

18 May 2009

Mzali obekekileyo

Ndicela ukukubandakanya kwizifundo zam endizenza nesebe leDyunivesiti yase Fort Hare. Ezi zifundo zimalunga nabzali babantwana bebanga lesi 5 ukuya kwele 7 (grade 7-9).

Singadibana apha esikolweni okanye ndize kuwe ngexesha elihle kuwe.

Enkosi

Mrs Adam (Miss Zibi)

Impendulo

Ewe \Hayi.....

Ndakufika ngomhla.....\Okanye yiza ngomhla.....

Umfundi.....