

**PARENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER SIX YEARS IN THE BUBI DISTRICT OF
ZIMBABWE**

BY

MHLANGA SIBONGINKOSI

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ZIMBABWE**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION, FACULTY OF
EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

SUPERVISOR

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Declaration

I, Mhlanga Sibonginkosi (Student: 201512177), declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or another institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is provided.

Signature.... 

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Mr Misheck Mabhena, Mrs Ozzie Mabhena, my brothers, Thokozani, Lewis and Bheki and my sister Angeline Ndlovu. Finally, it is also dedicated to my husband, Elliot, my two children, Ntando and Nkanyiso, who have been my pillar of strength throughout this study. May the Almighty God bless you abundantly.

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My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Professor C.I.O Okeke, for earnestly guiding me through constructive criticism during the course of study. Thank you, Prof, I real appreciate, may God bless you.

My gratefulness is also extended to my family who encouraged, motivated and supported me morally and financially as I pursued this study.

I would also extend my appreciation to the Education Department (Matabeleland North Provincial and Bubi District) personnel for granting me permission to conduct this research in their schools.

Finally, special thanks also go to all participants in this research.

Abstract

This study on parental involvement in Early Childhood Development in the Bubi district of Zimbabwe investigates parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years. Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe is a community based programme, hence the interest on parents in their involvement in the education and development. To investigate this phenomenon a thorough background of the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was employed. The theory is based on the principles of interconnectedness within settings and the linkages between settings that affect individual development. The study focused on the immediate, being the microsystems. The interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach were employed to explore the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years. Purposive sampling was used to select a small sample of two Heads of schools, four Early Childhood Development teachers and sixteen parents; these were from two schools in the Bubi district of Matabeleland, North Province of Zimbabwe. Obtained results reveal that all the stakeholders involved in the study seem to have limited knowledge of parental involvement. It also emerged that the involvement in the district is biased towards the physical needs of the school only. The results also revealed that there are so many factors that contribute to the non-involvement of parents in their children's education and development such as poverty, lack of knowledge, culture and attitude, just to mention a few. In view of the findings the study recommends that the Government should provide statutory instruments that clearly state the role of the parents, especially because of the fact that, currently, the programme in the country is community based. The colleges should also empower student teachers during their training on parental involvement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Context

Children develop in an environmental context of a shared responsibility by the family and society. The family and society's influence has a huge bearing on the child's education and development. Children learn from three contexts, which are the school, community and the family (Mathwasa and Okeke, 2016). Studies reveal that the family plays an important role in the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of children (Potter 2012; Okeke 2014; Wilson 2015). Zulu (2006) chronicles that one of the central components of traditional education is the social responsibility aspects which include moral and spiritual values, participation in ceremonies as well as imitation and recitation. He further indicates that other strategies for the acquisition of the body of knowledge and skills in the traditional educational are poetry, riddles, praises, songs, storytelling, folktales, games, music and tongue twisters to mention just a few. In this traditional setting, young children developed in a secure, loving, and purposeful manner. According to Chinyoka (2013), most children in African countries were regarded by their parents and community as universal. In fact, a Kenyan proverb refers to children as the foundation of humanity (Lanyasunya and Lesolayia, 2001). This meant that, prior to formal schooling, parents and other related elders such as uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters contributed immensely to the education of younger children. Similarly, in the Zimbabwean perspective, child rearing was largely the responsibility of the mother,

grandparents and siblings, with little direct participation by the fathers or men (Bundy, Chiswanda, Khani, and Matsungu, 2000). However, both parents have an obligation to positively contribute towards the education and development of children, be it at home, school or community settings (Kerman, 2012).

Experience has shown that parents' involvement in the education and development of children under six years in Bubi District is either minimal or absent. This deviation is due to the fact that the mothers who used to be always available for the traditional practices of child care and development of the children have become 'working mothers', taking up formal employment outside the home. They are losing direct involvement with immediate care, education and supervision of the younger children. Traditionally, the kitchen was the mother's place to prepare meals for the family, care for the young children, teach family values among other things (Bundy et al, 2000). The breakdown of such a system has had devastating effects on child development, hence this research seeks to develop intervening strategies on the adoption of shared parental involvement in the education and development of children under six years.

According to ZimStat (2012), Bubi District is characterized by a large number of child-bearing age groups, most of whom are job seekers, and have relegated the responsibility for their children to grandparents, relatives or hired child minders. However, the few that can afford it, have taken their young children to early childhood development centres for education and development.

UNICEF (1990) underscored the rationale for early childhood care and education (ECCE) as part of a comprehensive approach to achieving Education for All (EFA) by

declaring that learning begins at birth. Equally, the first target of the seventh commitment of UNESCO (2000) was expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the disadvantaged children. Studies like Parental involvement in early childhood care and education, Promoting children's sustainable access to early schooling through social-emotional and literacy development have shown that a range of low-income countries demonstrate significant advantages for children who have participated in ECCE programmes in terms of basic cognitive skills, social development, retention in school and pass rates in the early years (Lake 2011; Taiwo&Tyolo 2002; Aboud 2006; Sunar&Bekman 2001; UNICEF 2003). According to Chirozva (1998), in Sub Saharan Africa, less than one percent of children currently attend formal care and educational programmes. Given the benefits of traditionally shared approach and the current early childhood development parental involvement in the child's education becomes very critical.

The million-dollar question that arises is that, if the parent is not involved at home, how then does he get involved in the ECD centre to facilitate education and development of the child? In Zimbabwe, like any other country, for meaningful learning to take place, there is need for active parental involvement in the form of learning materials as well as infrastructure. Potter (2012); Okeke (2014); Wilson (2015) put forward that the family represents an important part in the development of the physical, emotional and social being of children. Therefore, it is necessary to establish and explore parents' experiences with involvement in the education and development of children under six years.

1.2 Background of study

The term Early Childhood Development (ECD) usually refers to the process of development during the early childhood period, however, the term is defined differently by International Development agencies and countries. For example, in Canada, according to McKenzie and Costa (2015), early childhood development refers to the growth of a person from pre-conception to the age of six years. These are the most critical years for brain development, as the most significant brain growth occurs in the first six years of life. In Britain, it is referred to as holistic and converging services in health, nutrition, family care, education and social protection for the children from conception to eight years old (UNICEF, 2005). In Australia, early childhood is generally defined as the period from birth (or prenatal) to eight years old (UNESCO 2013; WHO 2014). ECD relates to how well a child is tracking in their development over this period. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures this development across five domains; physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge.

According to New and Cochran (2007), in China, early childhood is defined as the period from birth to eight years old. It is a time of remarkable brain growth, these years lay the foundation for subsequent learning and development. In South Africa, early childhood development refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers (DoE, 2001). Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full intellectual, physical, social and emotional potential. Finally, in

Zimbabwe early childhood development refers to a programme that caters for children from conception to eight years of age (Nziramanga, 1999). Therefore, this study will refer to ECD as a critical period from conception to eight years of age. The main focus will be at holistic development that is cognitive, physical, social, and emotional and linguistic. This, therefore, means that the entire Early Childhood Development period requires that ECD intervention programmes and services are integrated across health, child protection and welfare and education, as well as that special attention is paid to the economic well-being of parents and caregivers (Wall, 2011)

Although increasing numbers of countries now mandate early childhood development education, government capacity to provide such services is limited. In general, levels of access to, and participation in, early childhood programmes in the developing world are low to very low. The overall rate of participation across the developing world is only about 33% of the relevant age group (World Bank, 2010), with Latin America and Caribbean generally at the higher end of the range and Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States at the lower end (UNESCO, 2007). Government oversight of programming is patchy and inconsistent (Kalyati, 2006). In some cases, states structures oversee, and provide programming, but in many others, the government's role is limited, at most, to licensing the operation of centres offering programmes for children. The Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe is usually the lead agency in this field, but Ministries of Health, Social Welfare and Women's Affairs are also often involved, resulting in scattershot provision and oversight (UNESCO, 2007).

The concept of Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe has been there since time immemorial. In the traditional context, young children, especially in the rural setting, play mahumbwe/amadlwane (house play or unsupervised dramatic play with the use of old home utensils) and listen to folk stories by their grandparents (Nyandiyi-Bandy, 2000). The Nziramasanga Commission (1999) asserts that Early Childhood Development programme dates back to the pre-colonial era and was mostly catering for the white children. Early Childhood Development programme is a post independent initiative that was designed to correct the imbalances from the past (Statutory Instrument 72 of 1973 and 1979). Dyanda, Makoni, Madukati and Kuyayama, (2005) pointed out that the instrument discriminated against children of African descent. The majority of the children of African descent were not provided for under the Education Act SI 72 OF 1973.

At the attainment of independence in 1980 the majority of children for the first time experienced some organized early childhood development programme. The programme emerged through the then Ministries of Community Development and Women's Affairs and Health and Child Welfare as part of community development and children's health monitoring programme, respectively. Women were central to the running of these centres because they were the core volunteer staff and also required safe places to leave their children while they participated in community development projects (Dyanda et al. 2005). Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs launched a strong campaign for the establishment of what was then called Early Childhood Education Care Programme (UNESCO Report, 2005). In 1988 the programme was transferred to

the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture where it is still housed. In 2005 all primary schools were directed to attach at least two ECD class (Secretary's Circular No14/2004). In terms of access and equity there has been great improvement due to the fact that all schools have managed to attach the two classes in their schools, in some schools an ECD infrastructure has been erected.

As a follow up, a Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training was set up and it came up with a number of recommendations. One of the recommendations was that parents and community demanded access to ECD. Responding to that in 2004, the Government of Zimbabwe developed a new policy which required the integration of children 3-5 years into the primary school. Under these circulars, primary schools are mandated to attach at least two ECD classes (ECD'A'-3-4 and ECD'B' 4-5 year old). The regulatory framework is SI106/ 2005 and Secretary's circulars No14/2004 and 12/2005. These legal frameworks significantly changed the way the ECD programmes were to run in Zimbabwe (Moyo, Wadesango, and Kerebwa, 2012).

While the primary school was the most appropriate to deliver ECD, there was a greater risk of the programme being a single issue, school readiness than a comprehensive child development programme. Ayasi (2003), however, observed that the main activities of the policy frameworks on ECD programme in Zimbabwe were centred on resource and service provision, not scholastic performance. Ayasi (2003) further notes that, subsequent evaluation study by the same ministry in 1997, also concentrated on the margin of provision and accessibility. ECD Sub sector analysis identified that the existing policies on ECD provision needed to be effectively implemented in both

Government and private nursery schools in order to improve children's access, equity and quality education as well as improve the growth and development of the ECD Sub-sector in Zimbabwe (Mugweni, 2011). Chinhara (2016) admits that all primary schools in Zimbabwe have attached ECD 'A' and 'B' classes however, he mentions that they do not accommodate children with special needs. He further indicates that parents play a major role in providing structures and supporting caregivers as well as learning materials for the young learners. Moyo et al. (2012) also chronicle the importance of parental involvement in their study on Factors that Affect the Implementation of Early Childhood Development Programmes in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean ECD is said to be community based, meaning that we cannot separate the ECD programme from the community (Nziramasanga, 1999). Parents are expected to construct infrastructure and provide learning material and work as volunteers in the centres (SI 106/2005 and Circular 14/2004 and 12/2005). They are expected to pay some levies. The levies paid by the parents are used to pay allowances for the paraprofessional, especially in the rural areas. The same levies paid also take care of the learning materials to be used by the children in their learning. Grants in aid for construction and the meagre allowances which used to be provided by the Government have since been terminated. Currently, only those who are graduating from teachers' colleges as ECD practitioners are getting proper salaries while the paraprofessionals are still the community's baby. Non-governmental organisations such as Save the Child UK, Plan International and CAMFED assist in the provisions, especially in rural schools.

Most ECD centres receive food provisions from NGOs for the feeding of the young children. The preparation of this food is done by the parents on rotational basis.

Informal education and school preparation at home play a crucial role in child development. There are many factors behind the status of African families, including socio economic conditions; war, poverty, overcrowding and inadequate food, just to mention a few (Charles, 2010). These factors hinder effective involvement of parents in the education development of children below six years. UNESCO (2008) confirms that in Sub-Saharan Africa overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, lack of appropriate learning materials, acute teacher shortages and inadequate contact time are endemic. Millions of young children around the world suffer from poverty, but those most affected live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia (Walker et al. 2007). Ngwaru (2012), in his study which was carried out in Zimbabwe rural settings, observed that the absence of parental participation and contextually relevant learning material was as a result of low resources. Parents are rarely involved in ECD programmes, the major reason being that teachers do not know how to involve the parents (Mawere, Thomas and Nyaruwata, 2015). However, the study further established that parents have no time to visit schools since most of them are working.

Several studies carried out on parental involvement have revealed that parents are willing and want to help their children in their school work. On average, children/pupils whose parents were more involved at school had higher educational expectations and substantial gains in reading and mathematics at the end of kindergarten (Galindo, 2012). Parents' involvement in early childhood education serves as a motivator that

bridges the gap between two contexts, the home and school (Nokali, Bachman, Votrba and Darzal, 2010). Mukuna and Indoshi (2012) brought to the fore another version of parental participation whereby it is organized into two, school-centred parent involvement and home-centred parent involvement. According to Peck (2012), parents are participating on the home front and neglecting at the ECD settings. Peck (2012) further notes that there seems to be a gap between rhetoric and reality, a gap between the vision and actual practice. According to Albino and Berry (2013), there is now a need to move from concepts to actions. This will facilitate effective learning.

Jennings and Bosch (2011) view parental involvement as enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning. This involvement represents a shared approach to the education of children. Families provide the financial, human and social capital (Halpern, 2005). Parental roles have been narrow and limited to enrolling their children at school and paying school fees in order to support the maintenance of teaching facilities (Oketch and Rollerston, 2007). Some parents mentioned that they needed some training if they are to help children in the classroom (Stephinah, 2014). In Kenya, Wolfendale (2009) highlights the fact that the concept of partnership is still far from a reality in most pre-school settings.

Revelations from these studies clearly indicate the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children; however, not many studies have specifically focused on parents in Zimbabwe. Mishra (2012) revealed that the systematic provision of early childhood care and education helps in the development of children in a variety of ways.

These include the inculcation of healthy habits; stimulation of creative learning processes, and enhanced scope for overall personality development. Thus ECD must be promoted as holistic input for fostering psycho-social, nutritional, health and educational development of young children (Krishna Devi 2000). In view of the traditional perspectives where the child was a shared responsibility, it is noted with concern that the shared responsibility has been ruined by urbanization, the working of mothers and migration, just to mention a few. The absence of the two parents in the education of their children prompted the researcher to explore the parents' experiences, understanding their roles as well as the challenges they face in the involvement of children under six years in their education. The study will generate intervention strategies that will, hopefully, produce a model for a working parent to be effectively involved in the child's education in spite of his/her tight schedules at work.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The rationale of parental involvement in early childhood development of children below six years has been highlighted in a number of studies (Charles 2010; Mishra 2012; Stephinah 2014; Jennings & Bosch 2011; Galindo 2012). In Zimbabwe SI106/2005 and administrative circulars 14/2004 and 12/2005 were introduced as legal framework to govern the running of the ECD programme. The legal framework gives directions on how the programme should function in order to improve quality, access and equity; the duties of the school head are clearly tabulated. However, when it comes to the parents (School Development Committee/ Associations), it just indicates that they play a crucial role in developing and promoting the ECD programme. Expectations are, that they

should contribute towards the construction and furnishing of ECD centres. The framework is silent on how the school or teachers engage the parents to discharge their duties in education development of their children. Reynolds, and Ou (2011) comment that schools do not always know what parent involvement really means and explain that aspect. In the same vein, Mawere, Thomas, and Nyaruwata, (2015) concluded that the major reason for lack of parental involvement is that teachers do not know how to involve the parents. Contrary to that, Okeke (2014) explains that teachers have the greatest influence on whether parents become welcomed or involved in schools. On the other hand, Modesaotsile (2012) highlights the fact that it is critical and important for parents to be involved in early education because it is at that stage where a child develops emotional intelligence, communication and social skills. Therefore, there is a need to explore their experiences, understanding their roles and challenges of parent involvement in ECD with a view to making recommendations for developing strategies to effectively involve parents. The problem the current study wants to investigate, therefore, is the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years in the rural areas of Bubi District of Zimbabwe.

1.4 Main research question

- What are the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years?

1.4.1 Sub-research questions

The following are the sub-research questions the study intends to address:

- a) How do parents understand their roles in the education development of children below six years?
- b) How do parents get involved in the education development of children below six years?
- c) What are the challenges confronting parents towards their involvement in the educational development of children below six years?
- d) What intervention strategies can be designed to augment parents' involvement in the early childhood development provisioning?

1.5 Research Objectives

Specifically, the objectives of the study emanating from the research questions are:

- To establish parents' understanding of their roles in the education development of children below six years;
- To understand parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years in the rural settings;
- To find out the challenges confronting parents in the discharge of their parental responsibilities in the educational development of children below six years; and
- To establish intervention strategies to augment parental engagement in early education and development of children below six years.

1.6 Assumptions

The study is based on the following assumptions:

- i. That, to a certain extent, parents are not involved in the education and development of their children;
- ii. That parents' roles or responsibilities are not clearly tabulated in the legal framework that governs the day to day running of the early childhood centres;
- iii. That the study will reveal the challenges experienced by parents in their involvement in the education and development of children below six years.

1.7 Delimitation of the study

The study was conducted in Matabeleland North Province in Bubi District. Matabeleland North is located in the northern part of Zimbabwe. The researcher has selected Bubi District because of its accessibility from Bulawayo where the researcher resides and works.

1.8 Significance of the study

This area of study on establishing parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children below six years will benefit various stakeholders, for example, parents, ECD practitioners, teachers, community, children as well as policy makers. For the Early Childhood learners, they will greatly benefit if parents are aware that it is their responsibility to be partners with the centre staff in the total development of their learning. Effective time management and balance between times spent with the children will immensely improve the development and performance of the children.

The study will serve as a source of reference to Zimbabwean teachers, my colleagues at Teachers' colleges (lecturers), University lecturers and other stakeholders interested in

the parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children less than six years. The study will further benefit the practitioners in terms of effective ways to monitor, evaluate as well as giving appropriate advice to parents and other stakeholders.

ECD officials will also develop from this study by having an understanding of parents' experiences, background, cultures, concerns, goals, needs and views of their children. The appreciation of learner diversity and awareness of own skills in information sharing on child development may also widen ECD policy formulation and implementation as well as practice will take into cognizance parents' experiences in the crafting of legal framework in the running of these centres. The findings of this study may generate new knowledge on strategies of how the parents may be effectively involved in the educational development of their children below six years, especially in the rural settings. It may also be used by other researchers as source of information or springboard to develop other studies in the area of parenting in early childhood.

1.9 Definition of terms

The following are the definitions of operational terms as they will be used in the study:

1.9.1 Parent

Children's Protection and Adoption Act, No9 of 1997 mentions that a parent is the lawful and natural father or mother of a person. The word does not mean grandparents or ancestor, but includes an adoptive parent. The concept of parent or families is in a continual state of change; thus the definition of parent or families varies as society

changes. Thus, a wide selection of parents should be noted. These include single parents, divorced parents, teenage parents and homeless parents. In this study, the term 'parent' is used broadly and refers to the person who has care, custody and control over and concern for the young child.

1.9.2 Parental Involvement

Sheldon (2002) loosely defines parent involvement as the investment of resources in children by parents; while Coleman and Churchill (1997) provide a more descriptive definition, stating that family involvement can include many different components including a programme providing emotional support, providing parents with skills and knowledge and communicating about the child with the provider. Therefore, parental involvement may be understood differently, hence it has different implications for different individuals and institutions. For the purposes of this study, the term, parent involvement will refer to the wide spectrum of activities that link the process of learning at home and at school.

1.9.3 Experience

Experience is one's interactions with the environment. In this context, experience refers to the interaction of parents in the ECD settings and home towards the learning and development of their children.

1.9.4 Education

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits (Parankimalil, 2012). In this study education is refers to the acquisition of skills, values as well as habits in the development and learning of the young children.

1.9.5 Development

It is a process of changing and becoming larger, stronger or advanced. In this context, the term is used to refer to the changes that the child undergoes as his/ her abilities advance in the various domains of development. Development results from changes that children undergo due to experience, growth and maturational factors. These factors include genetic as well as environmental factors that are all that surround the child.

1.9.6 Early childhood development

Early childhood development (ECD) is the development of health, learning, and behaviour from prenatal period through the transition phase to primary schooling (UNICEF, 2010; Britto et al., 2011). The period starts from conception of the mother to when the child has attained the age of eight. Britto et al. (2011) mention that early childhood development programmes refer to a broad range of support services for young children and their families which include health, early learning and education, family support and social protection. Therefore, early childhood development is an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to eight years of age grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially.

1.10 Outline of Literature Review

This section will comprise the theoretical framework and presentation of the structures of the review of related studies on the dynamics of parental involvement and, specifically, of their experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years. Focus will be mainly on the theoretical framework adopted, the related literature on parental involvement. Furthermore, emphasis will centre on the parents' experiences with involvement in the education and development of young children at ECD.

1.10.1 The Bio-ecosystems theory of Uriel Bronfenbrenner

The framework for this study is more rooted in the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) whose thinking forms the basis for parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years. The theory is based on the principles of interconnectedness within settings and the linkages between settings that affect individual development. However, for this study, the focus will be on the immediate, being the Microsystems. The Microsystems is the layer closest to the child and contains the structures with which the child has direct contact. The microsystem encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Structures in the microsystem include family, school, neighbourhood, or childcare environments. At this level, relationships have impact onto two directions, both away from the child and towards the child. For example,

a child's parents may affect his beliefs and behaviour, the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of parents

The theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his/her environment. This theory has recently been renamed 'bioecological systems theory' to emphasize that a child's biology is a primary environment fuelling her development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/ community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers development. The Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological perspectives theory was recently employed in carrying out a study on Catering for children with Special Education Needs in the Provision of Early Childhood Development Programme in Zimbabwe: Towards a Holistic and Inclusive Framework (2016). The theory was selected because it still remains at the core of educational research because of its account of development which is broad in scope and it incorporates a multitude of environmental and psychological components.

1.10.2 Global view of Early Childhood Development

Globally early childhood development is defined as the development stage of a person from conception to age six years (McKenzie & Costa, 2015); while in Britain it is referred as holistic and converging services in health, nutrition, family care, education, social protection for the children from conception to eight years (UNICEF, 2005). In Zimbabwe, Early childhood development is defined as a programme that caters for children from conception up to eight years of age (Nziramanga, 1999).

1.10.3 Participation of parents in childhood education in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe

In this section participation will be viewed from general perspective in the continent, at SADC level: participation at country level (Zimbabwe) and participation at Bubi District.

1.10.4 Developments around ECD in Zimbabwe: From policy to practice

An evaluation of the current early childhood development paradigm will be presented informed by the following legal framework governing the operations of the programme, Education Act 1979, Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005, Children's Protection and Adoption Act, Secretary's Circular No14/2004; director's Circular No 12/2005 just to mention a few.

1.10.5 Impact of parents' socioeconomic status on children's educational development

The significance of parents' involvement will be addressed. On the impact of parents' socioeconomic status, findings of Ngwaru (2012) amongst others will be used.

1.10.6 Challenges facing parents in the education of children

Exploring the challenges that hinder parents in the involvement of their children's learning from a continent view, Zimbabwe and finally at Bubi District

1.10.7 Influence of parents' involvement in the early education of children

Multiple strategies will be explored to give support to the parents

1.10.8 Strategies to support parents' involvement in their children's education

Various models will be consulted in an effort to create knowledge that will address the issue parents' involvement in the education of their children at ECD level.

1.10.9 Implications of the reviews on the current study

Possible solutions will be explored to address the challenges faced by parents in the Bubi District in their involvement in the learning of their children

1.10.10 Chapter summary

Summary of discussions in the above section will be presented as well.

1.11 Outline of the Research Methodology

In this section the research approach, paradigm and research design will be given. Also to be presented is the location, population, sample and sample procedure. The instruments to be used and procedures for data collection and data are also explained and elaborated here. Ethical considerations will also be highlighted in this section.

1.11.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm, according to Maree (2007), is a set of assumptions or beliefs about aspects of reality which give rise to a particular world view. According to Maree (2007), paradigms serve as the lens or organizing principles by which reality is interpreted. On the other hand, Jonker & Pennink (2010) say a paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Sharing the same sentiments, Babbie (2013) describes a paradigm as an interpretative

framework which is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. The interpretative paradigm will be adopted for this study as it allows the researcher to be in a position to understand the thinking and feelings of the respondents and how they interact and communicate verbally and non-verbally. Shirish (2013) postulates that qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. It is against this background that the writer chose the interpretative paradigm because of its unique and distinct approach in examining the subject matter. In this study, the writer will go to the field; in this case, it is the selected schools in the Bubi District in Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe.

1.11.2 Research approach

This study will follow a qualitative research approach. Creswell (2014) argues that a qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field, at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. The information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of

qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research methodology is chosen because it uses an emic perspective, in other words, it derives meaning from the research participants' perspective (Schurink in De Vos, 1998:242, McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 32,323).

1.11.3 Design of the study

This study will adopt a case study design. Case studies are designs in which the researcher attempts to develop an in-depth analysis of a case, event, activity or a programme (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2011) further points out that the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. This description brings in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). This study will investigate parent's experiences with involvement in the educational development of children below six years, hence, its rationale for a case study designs. Such an understanding informs the current researcher's rationale for a case study design.

1.11.4 Location of the Study

This study will take place in the rural community of Bubi District in Matabeleland North Region in Zimbabwe. Once the proposal was approved a comprehensive discourse on the dynamics of the study site and its impacts on parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years and its implications for childhood education provisioning was undertaken.

1.11.5 Sample size and sampling procedures

Sampling in research could mean taking any portion of a population as a representative of that population. It is difficult for the researcher to investigate the whole population because it will need time and a lot of resources. It will also make it difficult for the researcher to interpret colossal volume of data, so a small and manageable group called a sample is preferred. A sample is selected from the group of people from which information is being collected. Tansley (2010) agrees by saying that a sample is a small group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. Purposive sampling has been used to come up with a sample because it enables people or respondents who have particular specific characteristics which are relevant to the topic of the research to be selected on the basis of these characteristics (Zink, 2012). Babbie (2013) mentions that in purposive sampling the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones are most useful or representative. Two schools have been used for this study, a total of twenty-two people were part of the study, that is, two heads, four teachers, two from each school, and sixteen parents, that is, eight from each school.

1.11.6 Instruments for data collection

Researchers are guided by the nature of the research problem and type of questions to be addressed in selecting the appropriate instruments. Briggs and Coleman (2007) say that a tool is used in research to obtain information which serves as evidence to support findings. As no one method is adequate on its own, triangulation assures one of gaining

valid and reliable information, hence the researcher opted for the employment of varied methods. This study was conducted through the use of focus group discussion for parents, semi-structured interviews for ECD teachers, and the Head of the schools and document analysis. The researcher opted to use the focus group discussion as one method for this study because it is useful to obtain detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions, they can save time and money compared to individual interviews and they can also provide a broader range of information. A focus group offers unique insights into the possibilities of or for critical inquiry as a deliberate, dialogic, and democratic practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

1.11.7 Instruments' trustworthiness

In this study, issues of qualitative validity and reliability will be addressed through instrument credibility and dependability (Bartlett & Burton, 2007). Qualitative validity speaks to the demonstration of objectivity on the part of the researcher. Credibility, means the relationship between the findings and collected data; dependability is the assurance to the people about the findings from the raw social context. In qualitative research, issues of trustworthiness suggest that the research is credible when those familiar with the topic of the study recognize the findings to be true. Also to be considered is transferability, as well as conformability, ensuring the public that actions were appropriate and without biases (Lee and Lings, 2008). Transferability, which means whether findings can justifiably be transferred to other contexts. It is critical to address trustworthiness measures in this research and this was ensured through member checking.

1.11.8 Data collection procedures

Face to face interviews were planned, organized and conducted by the researcher to gather information from the participants. With the interviews, the researcher sought to establish and understand parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children below six years of age. An interview guide was prepared and used to keep the interview focused. These interviews involved open ended questions which were intended to elicit stakeholders' views on their experiences in the involvement in the education and development of children. Interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes and were recorded with participants' consent.

1.11.9 Data analysis procedures

The following steps, as recommended by Creswell (2014), were followed:

The data will be organized and prepared which will involve transcribing the information;

The researcher will scrutinize the data in an effort to get general sense of the information and opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning such as the impression of the overall depth, credibility and use of the information.

The researcher will start to code the information into categories and labelling it with a term using Tesch (1990) eight steps.

The researcher will use the coding process to generate a description of the people as well as themes for analysis.

A general overview of the results of the coding process for all the individual cases will then be presented. Selected cases will be repeatedly read and interpreted precisely with reference to a particular question asked and answered by the participants during the interview. The result of the interpretation will then be reported descriptively.

1.11.10 Ethical considerations and requirements

Ethical considerations are also known as codes of conduct which regulate the researchers' behaviour. In laymen's terms it means doing what is right, treating other people fairly and not hurting anyone. Ethics define what is or what is not legitimate to do or what "moral" research procedure involves (May, 2011). He emphasizes that the researcher should never cause unnecessary or irreversible harm to participants, secure prior voluntary consent when possible and never unnecessarily humiliate, degrade or release harmful information about specific individuals that is collected for research purposes. Ethical considerations in this study focused on the following principles: confidentiality, informed consent and gaining entry, respecting the right to privacy, voluntary participation, avoiding harm to participants, and anonymity. The researcher received ethical clearance from the University of Fort Hare, and asked for permission from Matabeleland North Provincial Department of Education to conduct the research.

1.12 Chapter Outline

Chapter One-Introduction

Chapter Two- Literature Review

Chapter Three- Research Methodology

Chapter Four- Presentation and Analysis of Data

Chapter Five- Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

By and large, it has been observed that education for young children is a joint effort among parents and teachers. Research has shown that parental involvement in children's education has a positive impact on children's performance and development. Early Childhood Development has the influence in shaping the ensuing development of the child, cognitively, physically, socially, emotionally and otherwise (Farquhur, 2007, Riley, 2003, Berger, et al., 196). Therefore, the success or failure of any education system can be attributed to the quality of its ECD programmes in collaboration with the involvement of the parents. Parental involvement plays an important role in learners' education, and the advantages of it are numerous (Jeynes, 2003, 2007). This section reviews the literature related to the investigation of parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children below six years, the concept of early childhood, influences of parental participation in the early education of children, factors affecting parents' participation as well as strategies to support parent's participation in their children's education, drawing evidence from both international and local studies on the phenomenon. It focuses on the theoretical framework adopted, the related literature on the parents' experiences with involvement in the education and development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: The Bio-ecosystems theory of Uriel Bronfenbrenner

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is the Bio-ecosystems theory of Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is based on the premise that throughout life one encounters different environments which affect their existence. These, according to Bronfenbrenner, are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macro system and chronosystem. The microsystem is the environment that one interacts with at the most basic level, such as family, friends, teachers and neighbours.

As one interacts within this environment, one co-constructs the experiences with the other players, the person shapes and is equally shaped by the others (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). Families play a pivotal role in their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth through adolescence and their involvement is "one of the strongest predictors of children's school success" (Weiss et al, 2009, p34). Partnership between family and school in enhancing learners' learning and overall educational experience is of critical importance.

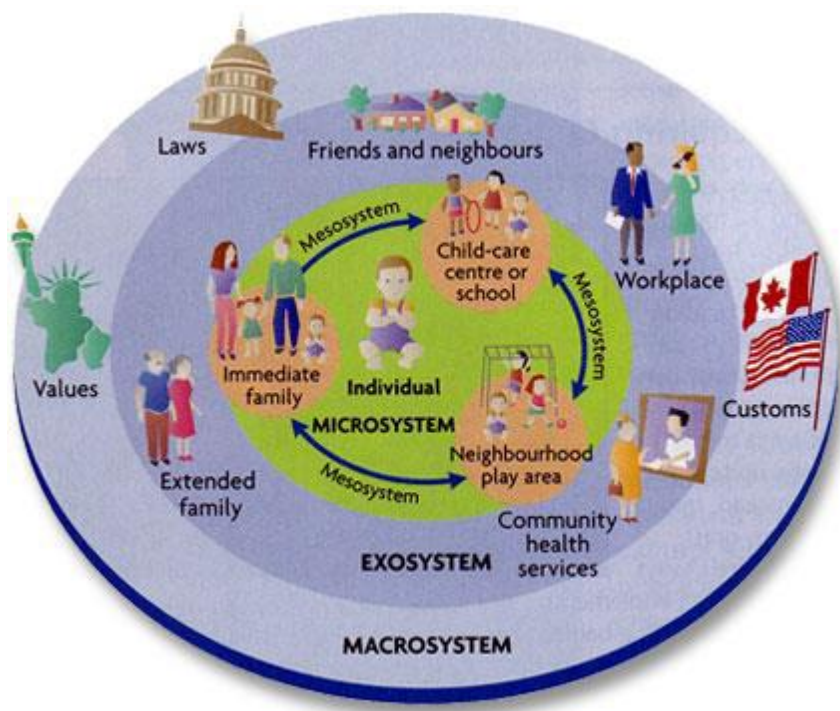


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (in Berk & Roberts, 2009, p.28)

Bronfenbrenner, (2004) mentions that it is what happens within the child's settings such as family, peers, playground and the larger community that influences his/her development as well as learning, as illustrated the above diagram. The ecological systems framework acknowledges that a child is affected by his beliefs and behaviour in as much as the ecological layers also affect his/her development (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The theory is used by the researcher to understand the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years enrolled in pre-school. Thus, the study employed Bronfenbrenner's model to investigate barriers

and opportunities provided to support the development and learning for children below six years.

Therefore, the ecological systems theory, what is experienced in the microsystem, where he/she spends most of the time influences the child's development and learning is quite crucial in this regard. The children below the age of six years require maximum support and encouragement from the proximal systems. This kind of support assists towards supporting children's growth, development and early stimulation experiences. If the support is very negative, the chances are very high that it would diminish the child's chances of growth and development. If the support from the ecological layers is very positive, it also enhances the child's development.

If parents assist children with provisions that promote growth at school, it will enhance their early stimulation through pre-school education. The realization and intervention programme for the children below six year-olds at masses level, targeting the family or school benefits the children (Herman et al, 2004). According to Hook, Watts and Cockcroft (2002), Bronfenbrenner's theory accounts for how the individual perceives and experiences in the environment. In this context, teachers' skills, behaviour as well as attitudes and the individual learners' feeling about the teacher may influence the outcome of the child's early education. Furthermore, the theory attaches teachers' attitudes to their work more than the quality of teachers' training in managing the learners.

The ecological systems theory framework also stresses the importance of caring and precautionary processes in environments for young children below six years. According

Bronfenbrenner (1998), caring and precautionary processes are those things that keep the child away from physical and psychological harm. In the case of children below six years, they need caring and protection from all sorts of environmental harm. The ecological theory stresses that the child should access support to achieve holistic development for the child all the time, regardless of whether the child is in the home or in the ECD centre. The theory emphasizes that the child should get effective support on the skills she/he has to build up. The ECD teacher's role is critical in developing the skills of the learners, the teacher or the caregiver should be qualified enough to develop the needed skills.

As provided by the theory, contact between families of children and ECD teachers or caregivers or children's peers aim at improving the understanding of the child's development and his/her ability to master skills. In the ECD environment, this means the improvement of learning opportunities with to total development. For positive development of the child, the ECD staff and the parents should share common expectations about the transitional phase that happens when the children below six years leave the home to join other settings, such as the playground, the ECD centre or church. These institutions pose threats or opportunities to children, depending on the degree of involvement of the stakeholders on the child.

The ecological systems theory is about relationships as much as about distinct programmes and factors, such as that of the early childhood development programme. The teacher's task is to aim at developing connections between these kinds of influences to create a true environmental system that is responsive to the needs of the

young learners. The ecological model invites stakeholders to ensure that children have needed experiences (lwrmarylou, 2005). This translates to the fact that all interested stakeholders in early childhood development programmes need to identify whether the ECD centres are of high quality to allow every child to develop to his/her full potential in order to meet the need of development (lwrmarylou, 2005). Conversely, the ecological systems theory encourages stakeholders to go beyond the ECD learning centres, especially when working with children below six years, as other children might in their homes and not at learning centres. According to lwrmaylou (2000), the ecological theory calls for ECD programmes to uphold quality, responding to the needs of all young children, thinking about all children's experiences throughout the day.

The ecological systems model is child-centred because it begins with a focus on the proximal development experiences of his or her environment. The ecological systems model observes the child's environment as the "the engines of development". It emphasizes that the quality of relationships between different settings are critical because they influence the child's development (Chan Lee & Choy, 2009). Bronfenbrenner comments that in the child's environment, there are cultural values and beliefs that may have a negative impact on growth, development, and early stimulation opportunities (Chan Lee & Choy, 2009; Winter, 2010). Stakeholders should aim at these environments so that they become compassionate to the needs of ECD children, allowing them to fit in, and become engaging citizens of their society.

2.3 Concept of early childhood development in context

According to Heckman et al. (2010), early childhood development is a term used for care and education of children before formal schooling. The term Early Childhood Development is increasingly being used to reflect evidence that young children's survival, health, care and learning involve interconnected and dynamic growth processes from well before the infant is born through into their early school years (Health & Education Advice & Resource Team, 2014). Heckman et al. (2010) state that Early Childhood Development is the term used for children's development before formal schooling commences. It is an exceedingly cost effective way of consolidating the society, thereby assuring the success of children in achieving generational success (Gertler et al, 2014; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Research has recognized that there are quality ECD programmes that have long-term and short term progressive sound effects on the development of the children's intellectual and social aspects. According to Sherr et al. (2009), neuroscience overwhelmingly proves the serious impression that early childhood experiences makes on the brain structural design and how negative circumstances and experiences in these early years can permanently affect every facet of an individual's life, social and economic growth and human capital development of a nation.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate that early childhood represents the opportunity for breaking the inter-generational cycle of multiple disadvantages, chronic under-nutrition, poor health, gender discrimination and low socio-economic status UNICEF,

2009). Family and community based holistic interventions in early childhood promote and protect good health, nutrition, intellectual and psycho-social development and have multiplicative benefits throughout the life cycle.

ECD is thus a broad and complex field, covering multiple policy sectors, and diverse research traditions, but with the aspirations of constructing more inter-sectoral, and more integrated models of services delivery (UNICEF, 2008). ECD refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. We also define early childhood development as an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least eight years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially. This approach conveys the importance of an integrated approach to child development and signifies an appreciation of the importance of considering a child's health, nutrition, education, psycho-social and additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community. It is consistent with an understanding of the developmental process of children. Community- based services that meet the needs of infants and young children are vital to ECD and they should include attention to health, nutrition, physical development, curriculum and water and environmental sanitation in homes and communities. This approach promotes and protects the rights of the young to survival, growth and development.

In Zimbabwe, ECD is a term that refers to a programme that caters for children from conception to eight years of age (Nziramanga, 1999) in which ECD is regarded as a very important programme. This service provides programmes and services that are meant to develop a group of young children holistically and academically. Thus, children are developed cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally and linguistically. The cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of young children has a direct effect on their overall development and on the adults they will become. It is believed that brain development is most quick in the early years of life and forms the basis of intelligence and personality and the capacity to learn and nurture oneself as an adult. Therefore, a good foundation which is child friendly is critical.

2.4 Developments around ECD in Zimbabwe: From policy to practice

The history and origins of the Zimbabwe National early childhood development programme (NECD) covers a wide range of issues, specifically, its origin, types of programmes and the regulatory framework. The NECD is a post independent initiative that was designed to correct the colonial imbalances from (SI) 72 of 1973 and 1979 that discriminated against children of African descent. The critical characteristics of the post-independence programme were its reliance on and support from the very communities it served. Important to note also is that these rural communities were/ are poor, but continued to sustain the programme to the status it is today.

The early childhood development policy problem in Zimbabwe emerged from a long history of weak provision of ECD services to poor and rural communities. It was also

instituted to solve issues of access and equity that have weighed down the programme since inception (Dyanda et al, 2005). According to Dyanda (2005), the instrument discriminated against children of African descent. During the pre-independence period, only children under school going age, which were described as non-African in the Education Act of 1973 and Nursery School Regulations of 1973 were covered by the Private ECD programme. The majority of the children of African descent were not provided for under the Education Act. The teachers were white and black people were employed as cleaners and caretakers, among others. The Children regulations of 1972 regulated the registration of crèches which catered for 0-3-year-old children. Personnel from the health sector, like nurses, were preferred as staff.

Soon after our independence the ZANU PF manifesto outlined some principles which were to guide education in an independent Zimbabwe. Among the principles there was that education is a basic right of every citizen and, therefore, pre-schooling became an area of apprehension. This led to the establishment of community-based pre-school education in rural, urban, peri-urban, farms, mine areas and resettlement. In spite of the concerns about the quality of the programme, for the first time, children in the rural communities experienced some organized ECD programme.

The critical characteristics of post-independence programme were its reliance on the support from the very communities it served. Because the programmes relied on poor communities, the majority of them were run by Para-professional and the concern about their quality has been a perennial predicament (Dyanda et al, 2005). The programme emerged through the then Ministries of Community Development and Women's Affairs

and Health and Child Welfare as part of community development and children's health monitoring programme, respectively.

Children grouped as specified points in their villages to receive supplementary feeding. These were called Child Supplementary feeding points (CSFP). Organisation and implementation was solely the responsibility of the communities. Furthermore, communities were expected to appoint the caregivers who served the children and took turns to support the running of the centre. Women were central to the running of these centres because they were the core volunteer staff and also required safe places to leave their children while they participated in other community development projects (Dyanda et al., 2005). In the late 1980s, the feeding points evolved into play-groups where children did not only receive supplementary feeding, but were also there for safe keeping (custodial services).

In 1988 the play groups further transformed into educational centres and sought to provide broader child development services. With this transformation, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MOESC) developed a statutory instrument (SI) 72 of 1999 to distinguish between feeding points, play and care groups and broad-based child development centres. The instrument also replaced the pre-independence Statutory Instrument (SI) 72 of 1973 which excluded children of African descent. The (SI) 72 OF 1999 was drawn from the Education Act Revised Edition of 1996, Section 27, which prohibits the teaching in nursery school of any subject commonly, taught in any school. Section 27 (a) of this education act required that every nursery school be registered. To

this effect, the (SI) 72 of 1999 required that all centres that had gone beyond feeding programmes could be recognized as child development programmes.

In 1999, the Presidential Inquiry into Education and training was set up and it came up with a number of recommendations. One of its recommendations was that communities demanded access into Early Childhood Development. In 2004 the Government of Zimbabwe developed a new policy which required the integration of children between 3-5 years into the primary school. The regulatory framework is the Statutory Instrument (SI) 106 of 2006 and administrative circulars 14 of 2004 and 12 of 2005. These instruments changed significantly the way the ECD programme were to run in Zimbabwe. That meant that the programme's context would shift from being a non-formal community to a formal school-based programme in its status and implementation. It also sought to incorporate ECD into the education system, in general, and primary schools, in particular (Dyanda et al, 2005). The 3-5 year olds became part of the primary school system.

The Secretary's circular number 14 of 2004 has guidelines on the implementation of the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (Nziramasanga, 1999). One of the recommendations calls for increased access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for all children (Nziramasanga, 1999). Pursuant to the attainment of this goal, a two-phased approach was adopted and all primary schools, with effect from 2005, were required to attach at least one ECEC class of 4-5 year olds. This group was then expected to proceed to grade one in 2006. During the second phase in year 2006, another ECD class of 3-4 year olds would be enrolled.

This then entails that the ECD levels will be fully incorporated into the formal primary school system with effect from year 2006. These classes were to be manned properly by qualified teachers.

While the primary school was the most appropriate to deliver ECD, there was a greater risk of the programme being a single issue school readiness than a comprehensive child development programme. A comprehensive child development is consistent with current trends for serving children and families from poor communities. It can be safely said that through the Statutory Instrument (SI) 106 of 2005 and administrative tools, Secretary's circular 14 of 2004 and Director's circular 12 of 2005, the role of the Government of Zimbabwe shifted from a facilitative to a direct participatory role.

Close examinations of the policy and history programme indicate that the rationale for the policy was to solve problems of access and equity. This rationale emerged from mandates in the Policy, the Education Act and its Administrative tools, Zimbabwe's history for quest to address issues of access and equity and historical imbalances that had marginalized its people, particularly disadvantaged communities was crucial in this regard.

Most parents and SDC/As welcomed the policy and believed it would fulfil their expectations of equity and access for the 3-5 year olds. According to Dyanda et al. (2005), rural parents were of the view that, finally, the government had heard their request to provide ECD programmes for their children to match those in urban areas who had access to ECD for a long time. Urban parents/SDCs believed that although ECD programmes were available in urban areas, most children below the school going

age had no access to ECD due to the high costs required by the private ECD programme.

One of the key principles at independence was to revamp the education system with effort to offer meaningful education opportunities to all children including the below six years especially those in the disadvantaged rural settings. Organised provisions for early childhood development were put in place especially in the rural areas where most children were deprived of this provision. According to the Education Act 1987 which was amended in 2002 (Zimbabwe Education Act, 2002) aimed at:

- Recuperating children's potential to learn through the provision of quality nutrition, sanitation, clean water supplies, and health facilities at school and in the community
- Increasing access to early childhood development facilities for children in disadvantaged communities such as in rural areas
- integration of ECD classes to the formal schools

The Statutory Instrument emphasised a holistic approach on provision of Early Childhood Development programmes, namely, child protection, social protection, health and nutrition, and education.

Over the last few years, there has been a steady increase in the early childhood development enrolment. ECD enrolment has 61.8% as at 2014 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report, 2014). There is joint work with Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), ECD district trainers, schools and communities on

raising the awareness on benefits of ECD for children, building capacity of School Development Committees (SDCs) and schools to construct ECD play centres, making learning materials and in some instances providing assistance in the construction of standard ECD classrooms using the Ministry standard plan.* According to Makokoro Banda, Chiguvare & Kangai (2012) in 2002 the Education system was reviewed following the recommendations from the 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training that proposed institutionalisation of the programme for the three to six years olds. These recommendations became the blue print for the new National ECD Policy (Government of Zimbabwe National Report, 2004). The policy proclaimed access to quality ECD to all three-to six year old children including those who are exceptional especially from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The policy further put emphasis on modification of content, teaching approaches and strategies with common vision which covers all children aged three to six years old (Government of Zimbabwe, 2007).

Furthermore, the national ECD policy directed all primary school to create two types of ECD classes for children aged between three and six years old. The private preschools were also required to affiliate themselves to primary schools, to register, and to necessitate management and supervision of the learning processes in centres by school heads (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004; Dyanda, et al., 2005; Mugweni and Dakwa, 2013).

The Government through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education communicated the execution plan to other government departments in December 2004, after a national review of the education system that had taken place in 1999. According

to Makokoro et al (2012) it clearly confirmed the position researched that primary schools should integrate ECD “A” and “B” classes. By that time, the ECD programme in Zimbabwe was expected to accommodate about 958094 children aged three to six years that also included children with some exceptionality learning needs or with special needs (Dyanda, et al., 2005). At that time the programme was estimated to require about 12500 trained ECD teachers for its full implementation, yet there were only 5 500 para-professional teachers managing the existing ECD centres (Dyanda, 2005).

The para-professional teachers lacked the necessary skills to handle these classes (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005; UNESCO, 2005; UNICEF, 2002). Consequently, training of ECD teachers was imperative in the wake of the new policy initiative (Dyanda&Dozva, 2010). The newly trained teachers needed knowledge and skills to be able to deliver in ECD “A” and “B” programmes. Also needed were skills to converse with parents for the benefit of the learners and the entire programme. In addition, teachers needed to be equipped with innovative skills to construct play materials and design play equipment and to manage health and nutrition as well as learning programmes. Murundu, Okwara, &Odongo (2014) acknowledges that, skills in organising teaching activities are very crucial as they enable practitioners to establish and manage ECD “A” and “B” programmes in cognisance of the integration of the relevant ECD sector programmes.

In an effort to achieve provision of ECD as stipulated in UNESCO (1990), a multi-sectorial approach was very necessary to meet the children’s basic needs. A number of partners were to collaborate with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

(MoPSE). These included Ministry of Higher Tertiary Education to train teachers, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) to protect children's rights, Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Ministry of Local Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (Mugweni and Dakwa, 2013). According to Zvobgo (2004) from Head office right through to provincial offices, the district offices and down to schools the major player was Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture to facilitate the implementation of the policy programme as well as coordinating most of the ECD activities. At school level Heads, Deputies, and Teacher in Charge was expected to supervise and manage the ECD programmes at school and community level, hence age appropriate curriculum was to be realised.

Close monitoring and overseeing of the programme was in the hands of the District Early Childhood Development Trainer who was responsible in assisting school administrators on young children's learning processes. Monthly, they would collect enrolment figures and furnish the province with information on needs and challenges in the ECD settings through the District Education Officer. To augment the whole process the parents were responsible of paying allowances for para-professional teachers and to provide appropriate nutrition to all children at centres (Wadesango and Kurebwa, 2012; Government of Zimbabwe, 2007).

From these activities it has been noted that they are helping in the increased ECD enrolment and participation in the education of their children from early ages. In some cases Save Children is noting that increased community participation on ensuring the ECD children get nutritious meal. This community initiative is leading to increased

enrolment in some areas. Currently Save the Children is now working with partners to gather evidence on the benefits of providing ECD education for the children and impact in the early years of the child's development.

A holistic approach to ECD ensures that young children learn intellectual and social skills and are given access to health and nutritious services so that they grow and develop well. Alongside the ECD trainers, Save the Children is active in the continuous capacity building of the ECD teachers and helpers on use of appropriate learning materials, use of active learning methodologies as well as detecting child abuse cases and preventing it. As a country great strides have been made to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No 2. To achieve Universal Primary Education school enrolment as at 2014 was 93.3% (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014). This figure shows a sustained high enrolment over the years as more and more marginalised children get access to basic education. The government programmes for instance Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) has helped to reach this high percentage. It has been noted that Save the Children programme seeks to make a difference in two ways. One of these is to reach to children who are not in school because they live in remote places which are very far from schools and children with disabilities. The other way is that they seek to make a difference to the education of children by improving outcomes. This they do in collaboration with strategic partners to improve learning outcomes. This work makes Save the Children to be involved in a holistic approach called Quality Learning Environments (QLE). In this approach they are working with MoPSE, teachers,

communities and other stakeholders to improve the quality of the learning environment to impact on the learning outcomes.

2.5 Participation of parents in ECD in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe

Most children have two main types of educators in their lives, that is, the parent and their teachers. It is generally said that parents are the primary caregivers and educators until the child attends ECD or starts formal learning. It is widely recognized that if pupils are to maximize their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents (Childs Trends Data Bank, 2004). It is anticipated that parents should play a role, not only in the promotion of their own child's achievements, but more broadly in school improvement and school governance. Furthermore, learners with parents who are involved in their school tend to have fewer behavioural problems and better academic performance. They are also more likely to complete secondary school than learners whose parents are not involved in their school.

According to Zvobgo (1994), the provisions of the Rhodes Education Act (1955) indicated in circular No. 21(1970:2), specified that Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) had no particular powers in professional matters. This reduced parents to observers rather than participants in the Education System that would mould their children. Although they were ignorant of professional matters, parents provided financial support and labour force in the building of schools. Hence, parents have nevertheless always been actively involved in enhancing their children's educational progress.

Parental involvement, although present since prehistoric times, has been, is and will continue to be a contentious issue in education. Parental involvement has to be managed and regulated, as indicated by Fitzgerald (2004:6), who argues that parental involvement is “empowerment which brings about its complications as it brings in non-professionals to the school set up.” In some extreme cases, parents go to the extent of dictating concepts and the type of curricular to be taught to their children, even if they are not academically, socially, physically and emotionally ready to do so (Fitzgerald, 2004). The involvement of parents in the education of their children has long been considered by many researchers in the continent and globally. Referring to some research in the United States of America, Holloway et al (2008:1) confirm that parental involvement has a positive or absent. It further says that low-income parents do not see beyond their economic state of affairs. The study also revealed that in a community in southern Zimbabwe parents are preoccupied with poverty, socioeconomic insecurity, morbidity arising from the scourge of HIV/AIDS and lack of educational awareness.

Parents in this study indicated that their active participation in the education of their children would only be possible after families’ physiological needs of hunger, thirst and bodily discomforts have been met (Ngwaru, 2010). In this Zimbabwean community, as in so many others throughout Africa, disease and poverty are everyday realities. To confirm this one of the quoted participant in this study expressed this- our fields are now sandy and require fertilisers or organic manure, but we have none because our government cannot give us agricultural inputs and our cattle are depleted. There does not seem to be an easy way out of this quandary because we have no means to pull ourselves out of this on our own....(quoted in Ngwaru 2010:88). Parents are engrossed in these concerns as noted by Barton and Hamilton (1988) who called these ruling

passions, many parents appeared not to place a high value on the educational and intellectual achievement of their children, almost as if they believed that education was not for them. Yet these same parents did everything in their power to help their children do well at school.

The same project (EAQEL) was conducted in Kenya and Uganda where a similar situation was encountered whereby parents were not aware of how they can contribute towards their children's literacy development (Ngwaru&Njoroge 2011). In low-resourced communities Ngwaru (2011) suggested that literacy-rich environments do not necessarily have to be based on Western situations with abundance of books or parents reading to children, but can have the following characteristics:

- Children can be surrounded by oral language based on family experiences and the resources and artefacts available throughout the home for children and adults;
- Adults can share their ideas and feelings with children and encourage them to express themselves, ask questions and feel confident;
- Children can see adults using materials for practical and specific purposes, such as paying bills, merchandising or learning about the news;
- Where book and print materials are available, families should consider children's emergent reading and writing to be real, valuable experiences. They should accept children's efforts without correcting mistakes or providing direct instruction and;

- Families can talk with children about the print they see around them and explain how it provides information (eg signs on buses, labels on food and writing on commodity packaging).

From experience this will expose children from a tender age to reading material, hence interest for literature will also be developed. In view of the above mentioned characteristics parents should not have any reason not to engage children in literacy development except for lack of awareness. This will further develop the children's social and emotional skills prior to formal schooling.

Practically every observed study on parental involvement finds that parents' engagement in their children's education varies by socio-demographic and economic circumstances, such as marital status, educational level and the child's gender (Georgiou, 2007; Schimpl-Neimanns, 2000; Schmitt &Kleine, 2010). A baseline data experiment conducted in Ghana revealed the following findings on differences in parental involvement on marital status, education level, gender and child's gender.

It was noted from the study that married parents are more likely to be involved in their children's education than single parents. Responses in the study revealed that married parents reported that they check whether their children have done their homework more frequently compared to the single parents. Also noted was that married parents provide more direct assistance with homework.

On educational level the study noted that parents' educational level and involvement in their children's education shows that parents are more engaged when their own

educational level exceeds their children's current level of education. However, it was also noted that parents less educated than their children are more engaged within their children's school environment than parents who have a level of education equivalent to or greater than their children's. Less educated parents are more involved perhaps because many would like to see their children attain higher education than they did. The study further noted that in the same way, parents more educated than their children are more engaged at home than those whose education is equivalent to or lower than that of their children.

On gender it was noted that overall, parents' involvement is fairly consistent for male and female children. However, parents are more involved at home than at school for female children, and more involved at school than at home for the boy child. This gender difference may be an outcome of social norms that long favoured active participation in school for boys and home schooling for girls. This inequality is changing as Ghana attempts to eradicate the gender gap in education (ICF Macro, 2010). The study also revealed that there is a slightly higher involvement of mothers at home than the fathers. It is said fathers mostly talk about their expectations than actual assistance given to the children.

Parental occupational class in turn is the main determinant of parental income and thereby an indirect indicator for the material resources available in the childhood family. But it may also be a signal of social status or prestige that may be helpful for the children. Parental income, on the other hand, may have a direct effect on children as well, but in most cases it is dependent on the parents' occupational standing.

Finally, parental education, class and income influence together, because a certain kind of education (or lack of it) leads to certain occupations, in turn providing a certain level of income. These shared effects are more or less indistinguishable. The shared effects also cover the effects of any unmeasured factors that correlate with all three socioeconomic characteristics. For instance, advantageous parental social networks may consist of their peers from school, their social connections in the labour market, and acquaintances met during leisure. One type of social network might be specific to one of the above-mentioned socioeconomic characteristics, but might also be associated with all of them. Similarly, some parental skills and traits related to their education may be helpful for the children only because they offer the parents access to a certain kind of occupation.

The few previous studies considering the life course variation of parental status do suggest that changes in parental status matter (for parental income in the US, see Akee, Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2010; for parental class in the UK, see Plewis & Bartley, 2014). These studies, however, do not shed any light on possible variation in the importance of different parental socioeconomic characteristics over the individual's life course. As already argued, parental education, class and income seem to exert different long-term impacts during the different phases of the individual's childhood and youth. The importance of the early childhood environment is often approached from the viewpoint of the multifaceted effects of economic deprivation, especially child poverty (Duncan, Telle, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2011). If material resources are the ones that matter, in particular father's income during early childhood should play

a key role in explaining the importance of early experiences for adult attainment, since fathers have earnings more often than mothers during their children's early childhood. If this is the case, however, the mother's contribution should increase as the children grow older, when it becomes more common for mothers to work, while the father may leave the workforce or move out of the household in case of partnership separation.

The effects of economic and material resources, however, are not limited to only the direct effects of extreme poverty, such as malnutrition and child mortality (Duncan et al., 1994; Heckman, 2006). Instead, the intergenerational effects of economic resources are often mediated by other factors. For instance, Hauser & Sweeney (Hauser & Sweeney, 1995; see also Warren, Sheridan, & Hauser, 2002) used the Wisconsin Longitudinal Panel to show that the effect of adolescent poverty on various socioeconomic adult outcomes was modest or non-existent when maternal education and family structure were controlled. Guo and Harris (2000) examined the effect of low income on children's intellectual development in the U.S. and found that the effect of poverty was mediated above all by lower *cognitive stimulation* at home (e.g., availability of quality books and newspapers, trips to museums). The second most important factor was a more negative *parenting style*, due to psychological stress levels associated to economic problems. Moreover, they found that poverty had no direct effect, which means that the sole lack of economic resources did not matter. Likewise Jæger (2007), studying multiple indicators of parental economic status, was unable to find any direct effect on children's completion of upper secondary education in Denmark for the generation born from 1975 to 1985. Furthermore, Mayer (1998) analysed U.S. panel data to show somewhat

similarly that once the basic needs of children are met, higher income does not improve child outcomes much but parental characteristics become more influential. She also found that unlike Guo and Harris, parental income does not appreciably influence children's outcomes by affecting parental stress or parenting style, although parent–child interaction itself appears to be important.

The findings above suggest that economic conditions alone are of lesser importance than other types of family resources. For instance, Bukodi and Goldthorpe (2013) found that parental education was the strongest predictor of children's education in the UK, although parental class and social status mattered as well. These findings fit with the life course theories on education and human capital, thus positive effect on children's achievement. (Becker, 2009; Mayer, 2009; Pallas, 2006).

Parents who are more engaged in their children's education tend to be more knowledgeable, about the school aims and goals. Holloway (2008) further mentions that they communicate the rationale of education to their children, help them and instil the love of reading at a tender age. In simpler terms such parents make an effort to find out what the school aims to achieve in relation to education of their children and how they intend to do it in order that they in turn engage their children. According to Connor & Wheeler (2009) parents involve themselves by sending their children to early childhood development centres, assist in provision of indoor and outdoor play materials, involve themselves in fund raising activities, advocating for children's issues, initiating and participating in feeding schemes, building and maintain infrastructure, ensuring that children are immunised, provide basic needs. Additional they mention that parents

ensure that the rights of children are met and attend centre or school events for example consultation as well as sports day, workshops and serve in School Development Association/ Committee. Occasionally, they assist the teachers as volunteers in classroom activities depending on their expertise. Experience has shown that such partnership can only be observed in schools where parents are acknowledged by the school staff who know the benefits of working as a team for the benefit of the child.

On the other hand Eldridge (2001) chronicles that at home the parents can create a literacy rich environment, to stimulate and offer sensitive and child-centred emotional support. Parents further give personal care of the child in the form of dressing, feeding and doing their laundry, and in some cases they accompany children on field trips and nature walks. Usually when parents are doing all these activities for their children some of them are not aware how this impact in the child's self-confidence and well- being

Australia, like much of the Western world, has witnessed a transformation in the historical model of family relationships. The major systems for ECEC delivery in Australia are the Commonwealth child care system and the various State and Territory preschool systems (Bennet, 2008). This division reflects historical circumstances as well as the policy agendas that divide the concepts of care and education. It is said that the national child care system was developed primarily to support female workforce participation, with accompanying access and funding policies (Access Economics, 2009) On the other hand, the State and Territory preschool systems are said to be

primarily designed to provide developmental programs for children, and are not tailored to meet the work-related needs of parents.

It is said that in the previous generations women usually had to give up paid employment during their young adult years to care for their young children full time. However, by 2008, half of Australia's three year old children attended formal child care services. Child care services in Australia are said to have long been provided under a 'mixed market' approach, with both for profit and non for profit providers. Government funding of preschool and kindergarten programs is the responsibility of State and territory governments and its administration varies across the jurisdictions (Sylva et al, 2003). In some States and Territories, preschools are delivered as part of the school system. As such, government provides capital and recurrent funding through education budgets on a similar basis as for school. The long-term challenge for Australian governments is to design a service system that meets the developmental needs of all children, regardless of their parents' financial and employment circumstances (Corrie, 2001). Placing the interests of the child at the centre of decision-making around ECEC services provides a common focus and orientation for the full range of stakeholders, including parents, providers, policy makers and the broader community (Currie, 2001).

Parents have the primary role in their child's development and it is also important to remember that parents are the child's first and most important carers and educators. It is noted that finally, engagement with parents is increasingly coming to be seen as a fundamental aspect of good practice for ECEC services in Australia. The government considers that services should have an understanding of parenting and family contexts,

and that parents are empowered to participate in decision-making about their child's experiences (Sylva, 2003). In their new National Quality Framework, 'collaborative partnerships with families and communities' have been embedded as one of the seven elements of the quality and regulatory framework (Productivity Commission, 2010).

Modern parents face many distractions in their daily lives and are too often caught up with their work, friends, the internet and social media. As a result, mothers and fathers in many households no longer spend enough time with their children. This kind of life is very common with working parents. The person who helps the children dress in the morning, serves them their meals during the day and gets them into bed is more often than not the nanny or maid.

In Dubai, for example, 94 per cent of Emirati parents and a substantial number of expatriate families hire nannies or maids to do home tasks and look after their children, according to the Dubai Statistics Centre. Caregivers such as maids and nannies play a major role in the upbringing of children, especially during the early years, which are crucial in the development of children's intellectual, emotional, physical and social needs.

This is not only an issue in Emirati households. A survey in the February edition of 999 Magazine found that expatriate parents are spending as little as 50 minutes a day with their children. Most of them blame long working hours and commuting times, or factors including TV, the internet and housework.

Parental Involvement in the Education of their Children in Dubai, a study by Rabaa Al Sumaiti, a bilingual inspector at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority, suggests that infants and young children in the UAE can spend between 30 and 70 hours per week in the care of domestic staff, which is longer than most institutional childcare hours in the United States or Europe. This could lead to serious consequences for children's maternal attachment, leading to emotional tensions when nannies finish their contracts and leave the home. Practically, this is very true because children easily bond with people who spend more time with them.

One critical aspect at stake here is language skills, because the multicultural nature of the UAE is perceived by Emirati and other Arabs as a threat to the Arabic language.

Most domestic staff are said to be non-Arabic speaking, and many of them don't speak fluent English, which means they can barely communicate with children. Studies have shown that this affects children's language skills as well as their social and emotional skills when they grow up. Parents need to monitor the effect of foreign staff on their children's acquisition of language and behavioural development.

The small amount of time parents dedicate to their children can also affect their academic performance. The Child Trends Data Bank suggests that pupils with parents who are involved with their school tend to have fewer behavioural problems and better academic performance than their peers. These pupils are also more likely to complete secondary school. One important factor leading to the high percentage of school dropouts among boys is the lack of parental involvement in the education process.

Research conducted about the Chicago Child-Parent Centers programme found that parental involvement in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten was associated with greater reading achievement and less grade retention through at least eighth grade.

Not spending enough time with children can also come at the cost of their mental and physical health. UAE health experts say that there is an increase in number of children being presented with anxiety issues – and they say that parents can play a significant role in preventing that.

A lack of parental attention can also mean that children's diets tend to lack nutritional quality and their levels of physical activity are not adequate enough to help them maintain healthy bodies. A study by the cardiology department at the Saif Bin Ghubash Hospital in Ras Al Khaimah revealed that UAE school children are 1.8 times more likely to be obese than children in the US. In Abu Dhabi, 30 per cent of six to 18-year-olds are either obese or overweight and nearly 10 per cent of children under the age of five in the emirate are anemic, according to the Health Authority Abu Dhabi (Haad).

These numbers could indicate the lack of attention paid to what children eat on a daily basis. A survey compiled for Al Aan TV's Nabd Al Arab (Arabs' Pulse) programme and The National by YouGov showed that 40 per cent of UAE parents often let their children consume unhealthy calorie-laden foods, including burgers, pizza, chips and chocolate.

The number of children as young as eight with Type 2 diabetes in the UAE is alarming doctors, who stress the role of parents in creating a home environment that fosters

healthy lifestyle behaviours by controlling food choices and meal times, and by being role models by adopting healthy eating practices themselves.

Many parents don't seem to realise the huge responsibility that comes with having children, as a result the development of society as a whole will suffer. Better parental involvement could prevent many serious national issues.

AE parents battling to deal with growing kids of 1-17 years must adapt 'positive parenting' as it be-comes critical since more real-life cases of kids suffering from behavioural issues come to the forefront. The twist is that kids are growing in modern times raised by those brought up on traditional parenting. The Oxford School, Dubai, organised a workshop on 'Effective Parenting' recently. "As teachers and educators, we are aware how intelligent today's children are; to cater to their needs effectively as parents we sometimes need special strategies. There are some behavioural issues caused by poor parenting " said Aisha Ansari, principal, The Oxford School.

The school shared the case study of a girl who was reluctant to attend class. Upon being questioned, the girl said: "Ma'am, can you let my father know that though he has provided us with facilities like iPads, laptops and enough pocket money to buy whatever we want, I want him to talk and sit with us at least for an hour in a week?" taken as it is from the study. This shows that parents usually meet the wants of the child at the expense of the basic needs like love and warmth.

It is said the father confessed it would be difficult for him to spend time with his daughter because he is very busy. The girl is venting her frustration and anger at school. Many

parents who attended the seminar shared their experiences. "My son is five, and it is important for us to learn how to raise him even though I come from a nursing background," said a Sri Lankan parent. Similarly, Fasly, also from Sri Lanka, said: "Such programmes will guide us in raising them, striking a balance between traditional and modern parenting." IloTanzanianFuadsbinKuwer, whose child is in grade 1, said: We need to raise children the right way. We are raising them in a multicultural society and they meet people from different backgrounds." Deepa V. Adyanthaya, occupational therapist, Dubai Community Health Centre, said: "Positive parenting is all about connecting with your child.

While few of the studies were experimental or quasi-experimental in design and many were correlation or case studies, when synthesized, the report had positive findings. For example, SEDL found that students with involved parents, no matter their income or background, are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enrol in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behaviour and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education

Nonetheless, when drilling down to determine what types of involvement work best, SEDL found one common factor: "Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement."

Other forms of involvement among Epstein's six factors (volunteering, attending school events) appeared to have less direct effect on student achievement, particularly in high school. Examples of academic gains among those in home learning activities abound:

- A literacy program in Minnesota that included home and school activities on literacy for kindergartners and their families generated significant positive gains. Under Project EASE (Early Access to Success in Education), trained parent educators provide coaching for parents in developing literacy skills. The teachers also send home literacy-related activities for parents and children to do together. A study of effects in four low-income schools and one middle-income school found that Project EASE participants had significantly greater gains on language scores than those in a control group (Jordan, Snow and Porche, 2000). In addition, children who began the program with the lowest scores recorded the greatest gains.
- In a Westat/PSA study, teachers at Title I elementary schools conducted extensive outreach to parents of low-achieving students by sending materials home, meeting face to face with parents and maintaining frequent telephone contact when their children had problems. Researchers found that this outreach led to improved student achievement in reading and maths. In schools with high levels of reported parent outreach, test scores increased at a 40 percent higher rate compared to schools with low levels of outreach.

- In West Virginia, nine schools sought to enhance parents' skills by offering workshops at school entrance at which the adults received learning packets in reading and maths and training on how to use them. In assessing the progress of 335 participating Title I students, Shaver and Walls (1998) found that students with more highly involved parents made stronger reading and math gains than less involved parents on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. The finding was apparent across all income levels. In addition, family income had no effect on involvement, as low-income families were just as likely to attend the workshops as higher-income families.

SEDL's conclusions are reflected in other studies as well. Catasambis (1998) uncovered similar findings in reviewing National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) data, analyzing data on 13,500 families as their children progressed through school. She measured the value of the six types of parent involvement and also concluded that techniques to enhance learning at home had the strongest effect. For older students, these techniques largely focused on enabling parents to convey high expectations to their children, encouraging them to take and succeed in rigorous courses with an eye toward college.

"When their families guided them to classes that would lead to higher education, students were more likely to enroll in a higher-level program, earn credits, and score higher on tests," she said. Regardless of family background, the issue of parent expectations had the strongest effect on grade 12 test scores in all subjects. Areas of

parent involvement that produced fewer long-term effects were communication between school and parent, attending school events/volunteering, and activities to promote effective parenting. Catsambis also found that families positively influence the educational achievements of their teens (as evidenced by larger number of course credits and more college-prep courses) through high levels of educational expectations and consistent encouragement.

For elementary and middle school-age children, interactive homework assignments that bring parents and children together are quite valuable. One of the leading examples is an initiative designed by Epstein and her Johns Hopkins colleagues called TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork). In a study of TIPS for Writing in two Baltimore middle schools, Epstein found that parent involvement boosted sixth- and eighth-grade writing scores of nearly 700 sixth- and eighth-grade students. In addition, the extent of TIPS homework completed affected student scores, with those doing more TIPS homework showing better language arts grades (Epstein, Simon, and Salinas, 1997).

Van Voorhis (2001) found similar results in science achievement when comparing students who had interactive TIPS homework and those who had no such interactive work. Among a diverse population of 253 students, students who started TIPS activities in 6th grade earned significantly better science grades during middle school than the comparison group. This trend was evident even after controlling for prior grades, family background, and amount of homework completed. In addition, some TIPS students

moved up from lower-level classes in 6th grade to average or honors classes by 8th grade.

At the high school level, there is less emphasis on a "Dear Parent" section, but the activities require specific parent involvement to complete. For example, a social studies assignment on "Why Do We Need Government" has students interview a parent or other family member who is at least 20 years older to answer whether certain social conditions - poverty, health care, education, crime, race relations, and individual freedom - have improved, gotten worse or stayed the same. Students then write down their own views on a separate piece of paper. At the end, parents answer whether the assignment helped them learn what their child is doing in class.

TIPS are not the only family-focused activity with home-based activities studied by Epstein and colleagues. Elsewhere, school-designed programs to involve families in student reading yield positive results in achievement. A review of literature on the topic found that, across the grades, subject-specific interventions to involve families in reading and related language arts activities positively affected students' reading skills and scores (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005b).

While parent involvement on homework may be the award-winning strategy, that doesn't mean that parent involvement elsewhere is useless. Targeted programs have proved effective, especially with solving problems that are typically barriers to student achievement.

For example, communicating with families using targeted content about attendance can increase average daily attendance rates and reduce chronic absences at elementary schools (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002) and at both elementary and secondary schools (Sheldon & Epstein 2004). This content can be grouped into two main categories:

- **Parenting practices.** Conducting workshops about getting children to school, making home visits, and using contracts to commit parents to high rates of children's school attendance.
- **Communication practices.** Conducting parent orientations to explain attendance policies and expectations; sending home newsletters with the names of students with excellent attendance; giving families information on how to contact the school; and providing access to children's attendance information on the Internet.

The scholars compiled the findings in a longitudinal study of 39 schools identified for the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), a group of more than 1,000 schools that have made school-community partnerships a priority. In addition, the authors noted, "Schools that conducted a greater total number of attendance-focused activities were more likely to decrease the percentage of students who missed twenty or more days of school each year. Sheldon followed up on this work with a 2007 study examining 69 NNPS schools against 69 non-NNPS comparison schools, finding that the NNPS schools posted higher attendance rates.

“Even after the strong effects of prior rates of absenteeism were accounted for, communicating with families about attendance, celebrating good attendance with students and families, and connecting chronically absent students with community mentors measurably reduced students’ chronic absenteeism from one year to the next,” the authors stated in the 2004 report. In addition, NNP schools in Ohio had stronger attendance rates than a matched sample of non-participating schools that did not focus on partnership development and parent outreach (Sheldon, 2004).

In a similar vein, schools with a strong record of family and community involvement often tied these activities to a goal of improved student behavior. These schools reported fewer student disciplinary actions from one year to the next (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). In addition, the studies reviewed in the first SEDL study show that outreach, communication and community organizing efforts can yield positive benefits such as increased levels of parent engagement, improved school facilities, greater after-school activities, and increased parent activism.

SEDL returned to the topic in a later meta-analysis on the school/family connection, reviewing 58 studies conducted between 2003 and 2008 (Ferguson, 2008). One conclusion of this study is that regular interaction between parents and teachers helps students adjust more easily to school and classroom expectations, which can translate into higher achievement. Also, while attending PTA meetings or participating in parent-teacher conferences are often expected, Ferguson concludes that districts and schools that “target activities and processes to give families the tools and the information they

need to engage effectively in school improvement create a stronger system of education and provide additional resources for both students and school systems.”

Therefore, it is essential for schools to first identify target areas where there is low student achievement. After that fundamental action, schools then are well positioned to design workshops, lending materials, and other activities so that families have information to help their children. Educators can seek parent input in this process, since they may have useful ideas on strategies that help their children learn.

Finally, one recent study (Warren, Hong, Rubin and Uy, 2009) also argues that community-based organizations (CBOs) can play an important role in helping schools engage parents. The researchers conducted three case studies of urban schools that partnered with CBOs to enhance parent outreach, concluding that CBOs help Schools Bridge the cultural and perceived power gap between teachers and parents.

However, as noted in a study of middle school transition, parent involvement alone does not solve every problem. In a study cited by the SEDL meta-analysis, Gutman and Midgely (2000) examined factors that promoted a smooth transition to middle school, finding that the combination of parent and school involvement had a strong effect on grades of low-income African American students. While no single factor appeared to promote success, a different picture emerged when examining multiple factors. For example, students reporting a high level of parent involvement and a strong sense of belonging had higher-than-average grades, as did student with high levels of parent involvement and teacher support. The study included parent involvement activities such

as checking homework, talking to students about school, attending events, and volunteering at school activities. Support from teachers was defined as teachers taking time to work with students in a constructive rather than critical way.

“This study suggests that if children don’t feel connected to school, parent involvement alone will not make a significant contribution to student achievement. Students must also feel that they belong at school and that their teachers support them,” SEDL noted.

Even an expert such as Johns Hopkins’ Epstein recognizes that parent involvement strategies, while important, are not a cure-all for a struggling school. As the SEDL meta-analysis reported, a 1997 study by the parent involvement expert and colleagues noted that parent involvement alone is not the only essential ingredient for high achievement. “School, family, and community partnerships can boost attendance and increase achievement slightly, but excellent classroom teaching will be needed to dramatically improve students’ writing, reading, and math skills to meet the state’s standards.” Nonetheless, as SEDL concluded, new high-quality programs and school reform efforts can be made more effective when they engage families as full partners in the drive to raise achievement.

Parents of all income levels and ethnicities want to be involved in their child’s learning, even if they aren’t often visible at bake sales or PTA meetings. However, schools and parents often have a different understanding of what that involvement should look like. Creating a partnership between schools and parents can have a significant impact on student achievement.

One of the best ways to structure that partnership is through involving parents in their children's homework. While all forms of parent involvement play significant roles in the health of the school and the community, home learning activities are perhaps the wisest investment of school dollars and effort to produce long-lasting academic gains. While such involvement is fairly straightforward in elementary school, it's also possible later on. At the middle and high school level, school activities that promote the parent's role in maintaining high expectations for their children benefit students.

Finally, targeted parent involvement to solve a particular problem — such as poor attendance or behavior — can also be beneficial. And parent involvement should be a support, not a substitute, for the true work of schools: good teaching and learning. But the research is clear: parents want to be involved, and parent involvement can make a difference in student learning. Structuring the partnership between schools and parents is one of the best things school boards can do:

- As SEDL noted, “Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education or cultural background, are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well.”
- Survey parents and teachers to understand their perspective on parent involvement. Investigate how parents want to be involved, and how teachers want parents to be involved.
- Work to create a common understanding of how parents could best support their child's education and how teachers could communicate with parents. This might be accomplished through discussions, flyers, meetings or other strategies.

- Identify barriers to achievement within schools. Can parents help address these challenges? If so, how?
- Give teachers training on how to develop homework assignments that involve parents.
- Regularly involve parents in their child's homework, and report on the results of doing so.
- In middle school and high school, talk clearly to parents about the courses and grades their students will need to succeed.
- Continue to survey or otherwise track the effects of involvement, in order to use schools' time and resources wisely. In these tight economic times, focus on putting schools' money and energy into what works best, rather than continuing ineffective programs.

In that context in Zimbabwe, the 1987 Education Act through Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 and 70 of 1993 in non-government and government schools, respectively, sought to lawfully introduce parental involvement in schools and regulate it at the same time.

The introduction of Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 and 70 of 1993 in non-government and governmental schools, respectively, gave power and authority to parents in their educational involvement in schools, hence educational developments in schools officially became vested upon the shoulders of parents. Through SDCs, parents are called upon to bridge the gap between what governments could provide and what the communities want in their schools (Zvobgo, 1996:30). The parental involvement through the Statutory Instrument is a clear sign that parents have come to be viewed as critical

partners in the education of their children in Zimbabwe for the success of the school programmes, hence their inclusion in policy at national and local levels. In Zimbabwe, the government strategy for securing parental involvement included providing parents with information giving parents a voice and encouraging parental partnerships in schools. The creation of such partnerships served to fulfil the various policy mandates for parental involvement in the education of their education.

The major responsibility of the SDCs is to raise funds for infrastructural development in schools through levies, donations and other funding activities (The Education Act, 1987:29a). Hence, in September 2011 the Minister of Education revealed that “Governments thrust to provide education for everyone required huge resources and government has had to rely on parents and communities to play a major role in providing many of the resources that their schools and children need.” The assertion shows that the government relies on parents to provide resources for their children’s schools as mandated by the Statutory Instrument which legalized parental involvement in the schools. In this context, the limitation of resources gave no option but to bring parents into the limelight. Parental involvement plays a pivotal role, as revealed by Berger (2007:27) who asserts that “to work with a child and not with the parent is like working with only the pieces of a puzzle. It would be like a person who put a puzzle together with a thousand pieces and then as he finishes found the centre missing.” The Education Act (1987) gave mandatory powers to parents to provide any needed resources for the development of the schools. Parental involvement in Zimbabwe comes in different forms that are home based and school based involvement and the

two impacts positively in the development of the young child. Research has shown that, parental involvement in the school has little, if any impact on pupil achievement, it is not entirely without significance (Singh,). However, according to Desforjes&Abouchaar (2003) the collaboration of teachers and parents to support children's education can perform as a necessary lubricant for the home involvement.

Chindanya (2011) in his case study on parental involvement in primary schools in Zaka District of Zimbabwe revealed that parents had limited knowledge/understanding of the concept parental involvement. He further mentioned that parents were involved in their children's education in a very limited way. The study also exposed that very few benefits accruing from parental involvement and determinants of parental involvement were known to school heads, teachers and parents. Parents in Zaka district involve themselves through payment of school fees, providing resources for teaching and learning, attending school events, provision of uniforms and food provisions to take to school, and visiting the school when there was a problem. The study also highlighted the following challenges experienced by parents in their involvement parents indicated that they are ignorant of how they should be involved, limited education hindered them to be involved, absence of clear policy, financial constraints and school heads' limited knowledge of the concept parental involvement just to mention a few.

A study on the influence of parental involvement on the learning outcomes by Muchuchuti (2015) in Matabeleland North Region revealed that most parents whose children were attending public and rural schools were not attending school activities or meetings. The study mentions that they rarely attended consultation days or had

voluntary discussions with either the teachers or the school heads. Teachers in the public schools felt that most parents were less committed to their children's schooling. Below are words from one of the teachers who was interviewed, 'He stays very far and comes to school very late. His homework is never done. His mother works night shift so really no one helps him... I am not quite sure of his background...Secondly the mother is very busy and he has no one to help him with homework literally. The father is a money trader as well. So I guess with school it's just formality otherwise no one takes responsibility' (quoted from Muchuchuti 2015). From the above statement it sounds as if the parent is the only person responsible for the child's learning, the teacher has excluded himself/herself. Also exposed in the statement is that there is no positive relationship between the teacher and the parent.

In the same study it was noted that most parents whose children were enrolled in private schools showed a lot of commitment. They attended consultation days, meetings, supported school activities such as sporting and prize –giving days, volunteered to perform certain duties in the school, supervised their children's homework, responded positively to invitations by teachers to come and discuss their children's problems. In one private school it is indicated that some parents even observed teachers teaching. There is a gulf of difference between levels of commitment of parents attending different school types. Possible reasons could be that parents who send their children to private schools need value for their money since they pay more in terms of school fees and levies. Secondly, most of these parents whose children attend private schools could be better educated than those who send their children to rural and urban schools. As a result, they are aware of the impact their involvement has on their

children's education. In view of the results one would say they are consistent with Boethel's (2003); Hampton & Mumford 1998 observations that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and their socio-economic status.

Tshuma and Ncube (2016) carried out a case study on parental involvement in children's education in Zimbabwe. The study was done in Colleen Bawn Cluster of Primary Schools in Gwanda district. The study revealed that parents in most schools were able to pay the required levies, fees and participated in the fund raising activities, however, their School Development Committee was not able to provide furniture, stationery and physical infrastructure and teaching and learning resources in spite of the high involvement highlighted by the study.

An evaluation of parental involvement in ECD programme in Kuwadzana suburb in Zimbabwe confirmed that parental involvement in ECD programmes has a positive impact on the children's learning and development. However, it was noted that some parents are often passive participants and rarely take part in making decisions what goes on in the ECD centre. Parental role in early childhood development involves parents helping teachers to lay down the stage for children's learning. It is therefore important that ECD teachers make every effort to establish this reciprocal relationship or partnership with parents in order to expose children to quality ECD programmes. This could be achieved if the ECD personnel be acquainted with all parents, regardless of income, education or cultural background, are involved in their children's teaching and learning (Mawere et al, 2015).

In Bubi district parents are involved in their children's work through attending toconsultation days to find out from the teachers how their children are performing in class. These parent teacher conferences provide a two-way communication between teachers and parents. At such conferences, parents provide teachers with communication on learners' life outside the school. The system also permits parents and teachers to ask questions, discuss common concerns in helping pupils and plan together programmes for improving pupils' learning and development. Many schools in the district use teacher-parent conferences in conjunction with term reports. Parental involvement in children's education comes in various forms and differs as the child moves through primary and secondary school, (Epstein et al 2002, &Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

The parents in Bubi district like all other districts in the province contribute in the building of the ECD classes as stipulated by the Director's circular No 12/2005 which mandates them to provide infrastructure for the school to facilitate a conducive learning atmosphere for their children. Parents contribute by moulding bricks and those with skills for building actually do the actual construction of the classes, that is, the men and the women either knit or make children's play materials like dolls and balls. Also parents attend meetings summoned by the school, especiallyat the beginning and end of the term or when there is a need for the parents to come and work in the school. Parents do the clearing of grass in the school, that is, when the term begins, so that children learn in a clean environment. Parents also take turns to come and cook porridge for children

at the school that is if it has been made available by Non-governmental organisations, for example, Plan International and Save the Children UK.

Zimbabwean ECD is said to be community based, hence the need to work with the parents through the School Development Committee. Within the structure of the Ministry at district level there is also personnel called District Trainer who assist the parents when it comes to the ECD programme. The Trainer does not only educate parents on their importance in the running of the programme but also imparts some skills to them.

From observation at a distance, experience has shown that the District Trainer for Bubiworks hand and glove with the parents to assist the community in carrying out some projects like nutrition gardens. The community takes turns to come and work in the school garden. Once there is produce from the garden, part of it is given to the learners and the rest is sold to raise funds to pay the Para-professional teacher who works as an assistant teacher and is not paid by the government because of her low qualification which is not recognized by the Ministry. Some of the money, I want to believe, is used to buy other learning play materials.

Also noted is that, at times, communities are seen helping during educational trips, especially parents who are not gainfully employed. During the trip they assist during feeding times as well as being involved in supervision during the tour.

Research by Siggh (2006) on the role of parents in sport reveals that parents play several roles in children's sport. Parents and guardians have been responsible for the

initial exposure, encouragement, motivation, support and guidance required by their children to be successful in sport. The child should be allowed to explore his or her talents in sports to maximize his/her opportunity for the widest possible array of life experiences, safe from harm. This, therefore, means that parents should support and encourage their children in sporting and other talent oriented activities. Whilst the Zimbabwe Government gave power and authority to parents in their educational involvement in schools, the level of parental involvement in the Bubi district has not been fully explored, hence, the importance of this study.

2.6 Examples of experiences of parental participation from different contexts

Parental involvement has always played a significant role in education. Parents who volunteer in the classroom are often visible around campus and well informed about their child's academic performance. They are in regular contact with the classroom teacher and are consistently informed of events and news occurring at the school. They also monitor assignments at home and attend informative events, such as back to school night or parent teacher conferences (McKenna & Millen, 2013).

Children with actively involved parents tend to have a more positive attitude towards school and are conscious of their parents' high expectations in so far as their performance in the classroom is concerned (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). These children tend to get their work done consistently and effectively, and strive to achieve satisfactory, if not exemplary grades. They also have better overall school attendance (Lunenburg & Irly, 2002). A positive relationship between parents and teachers consists

of regular teacher communication with the parents regarding their child's performance in the classroom, and is established on respect and a mutual goal of success for the children (McKenna & Millen, 2013).

A study carried out in Australia on the state and importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) demonstrated that the skills and abilities acquired in early childhood are fundamental to a person's success and well-being in later life. The study found out that by age seven, children who attended high quality pre-schools scored higher on measures of social, behavioural and cognitive development. The study further highlights the fact that parents play a primary role to complement their children's development. However, it was noted that some families relied on the ECEC services to share the care and education of their very young children, just as they rely on the school system to do this for their older children. It must also be acknowledged that some parents struggle in their parenting task and government has a role to play by providing increased support for those parents and creating opportunities for their children to receive the possible ECEC services.

The study suggested that;

- Parents should be empowered to make decisions on behalf of and in relation to their children, rather than having governments determine their choices;
- Service delivery should be responsive to the changing needs of parents and families;

- As the most important carers and educators of young children, and, in most cases, the primary provider of a developmental environment, parents should be closely engaged in an ECEC system.

A study from Brazil, however, found meaningful correlations between various factors in the home and children's learning achievement, with indications that parents, even illiterate parents, can make a significant difference to children's achievement, especially when active measures are put in place to involve them (Fuller et al., 1999). Pressure from parents can be very effective in ensuring a more proactive attention to children within schools (Save the Children 2003; Banerjee & Duflo 2006; Lipson & Wixson 2004).

Ngwaru (2010) recounts the fragile relations between parents, the school and teachers. At the outset, parents perceived that they had no role to play in the formal schooling of their children, believing and convinced that this was the sole responsibility of the school. Most children have two main types of educators in their lives, that is, the parent and their teachers. It is generally said that parents are the primary caregivers and educators until the child attends ECD or starts formal learning. It is widely recognized that if pupils are to maximize their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents (Childs Trends Data Bank, 2004). It is expected that parents should play a role not only in the promotion of their own child's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and school governance. Furthermore, learners with parents who are involved in their school tend to have fewer behavioural problems and better academic performance. They are also more likely to complete secondary school than learners whose parents are not involved in their school.

Similarly, the teachers saw parents as having no part to play. The only engagement with parents was through the Parent Teacher Association (PTC), the main purpose of which was administrative rather than pedagogical. This unfortunately left all children going to school with no developed social or emotional skills and risking failing to adapt to school expectations (Ngwaru 2010:144). However, when they were sensitized and when they learnt that reading with children could also mean utilizing any print materials that might be available, or telling a stories around pictures, or encouraging children to read and play and feel relaxed with print materials, parents started to realize they could play a big role in their children's education.' Furthermore, a World Bank report (Glewwe et al., 2011) has found that parents' participation in the education of their children is one of the most potent aspects of pedagogy. It follows that a raised awareness, arising from greater empowerment, can lead to parents playing a bigger and positive role in their children's literacy development.

Similarly, in the East Africa Quality Early Learning (EAQEL) project in Kenya and Uganda encountered a similar situation of parents being unaware of how they can contribute towards their children's literacy development (Ngwaru&Njoroge 2011). At the onset of the EAQEL project, which was based on a pedagogical intervention that included the introduction of classroom and community- based libraries and a reading for children programme, parents refused to volunteer to take part in the running of the libraries, saying they had no skills to offer and, in some cases, could not read themselves (Ngwaru&Njoroge: 28). Interestingly, after being empowered through project

training, however, they were surprised by their effectiveness when many children became inspired by having parents taking charge of their reading.

A study on parental involvement in Dubai revealed that the situation in Dubai surrounding the level of involvement by parents in the education of their children is quite mixed. Apart from the age of the child, other factors including the cultural background of parents, the role of family helpers, the extent to which schools communicate with and involve parents, and the range of choice of schools play a role in the extent of parental involvement observed (Department for Education and Skills, 2005; Ismail, 2012; Bouhlila, 2011; Bennett, 2009 & Roumani, 2005). The study, using the data from the National Child Development Study on parental involvement on achievement found that:

- Parental involvement in a child's schooling was a more powerful force than other family background indicators, such as social class, family size and level of parental education, and contributes to more than 10 percent of variation in achievement;
- The involvement of parents in secondary education has an effect on continued development;
- Very high parental interest is associated with better examination results compared with children whose parents show no interest;
- Children with very interested parents progressed between 15% to 17 % more in mathematics and reading between ages 11 to 16 (Bennet, 2009, Ridge, 2010 and Farah, 2011).

Another interesting observation is that most parents in Dubai distance themselves from the direct education of their children is not limited to interactions with the school. The practice of private tutoring in Dubai is high. It has been found that many Dubai parents look to private tutoring when they have insufficient time cannot provide the necessary academic support or want to prove that they are “good” parents by providing their children with maximum opportunity (KHDA/CfBT, 2011, UAE, 2011).

A longitudinal study conducted on the effects of Chicago’s Child-Parent Centres (CPC) revealed positive results promoting school readiness and higher academic achievement persisting into adolescence as well as lower drop-out rates. The Child Parent Centres focus on five areas, one of which is parental involvement. The study’s positive results included the following:

- Parental involvement in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten was associated with greater reading achievement and less grade retention through at least eighth grade;
- Parents who participated in the pre-kindergarten program were more likely to be involved in primary school;
- The more years that the parents were involved in primary school, the more successful their children were.

A recent report by Herrold and O’Donnel (2008) from the National Center for Education Statistics found over 90% of parents of elementary school children attending general school meetings, like those for the PTA/PTO, as well as participating in regularly scheduled parent teacher meetings throughout the school year. Roughly 80% of parents

in the nationally representative sample reported attending school events and about 60% reported volunteering in the classroom. Parent involvement is often considered a pathway through which schools enhance the achievement of underperforming children (Berger, 1991). Consequently, parent involvement is encouraged by teachers, childcare providers, policy makers, parents and researchers (Duch, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Moreover, parent involvement is a key component of early childhood development education programmes such as Head Start. These programmes encourage parent involvement by inviting parents to participate at school and facilitating parent –teacher communication.

Past research on parent involvement and children's academic skills is mixed (Fan & Chen, 2001). Some studies have found no significant association between parent involvement and academic achievement (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001; Reynolds, 1992; White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992) and a few have even detected negative associations (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Yet, positive associations between parent involvement and academic achievement have been demonstrated repeatedly in the literature. A recent meta-analysis by Fan and Chen (2001) finds moderate associations between parent involvement and an array of learning-related or academic skills, such as achievement motivation, task persistence, and receptive vocabulary, during preschool and kindergarten. With a predominant research focus on parent involvement and achievement in either preschool and kindergarten or high school, the potentially supportive role of parent involvement during middle childhood remains understudied.

Past non-experimental research on parent involvement commonly investigates contemporaneous associations between parent involvement and academic achievement. These studies typically examine within-grade associations of parent involvement and academic skills (Fantuzzo, Mc Wayne, & Perry, 2004; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & SEKINO, 2004). Other work incorporates contemporaneous research in the early grades with longitudinal follow-up data later in elementary school or beyond (England et al., 2004; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). For example, Miedel and Reynolds (1999) detected positive associations between parent involvement in preschool and kindergarten and reading achievement in kindergarten and eighth grade. Izzo and colleagues (1999) also found significant positive association between average parent involvement in early elementary school and socioemotional development and achievement in later elementary. Such studies reflect the common practice of considering parent involvement as a static predictor of concurrent achievement or educational outcomes in later school years. A notable exception is a study by Dearing and colleagues (2006) which employed longitudinal data on parent involvement and reading achievement to examine within and between-family associations of parent involvement and literacy across elementary school. Findings suggested that differences in levels of parent involvement between-families and changes in parent involvement within-families were both predictive of children's literacy skills, and increasing parent involvement during elementary school improved literacy growth.

Involvement of parents is generally credited with promoting academic performance. However, parent involvement may also enhance children's behaviour at home and in the classroom as parents and teachers work together to enhance social functioning and address problem behaviours. A growing literature has demonstrated benefits of parent involvement for social functioning (Izzo et al., 1999; McWyne et al., 2004; Reynolds, 1989; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley, 2003; Supplee, Shaw, Hailstones, & Hartman, 2004). For example, a recent study of Head Start students revealed that parent involvement was associated with lower conduct problems (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Such findings are also evident in adolescence (Hill, Castellion, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004). However, studies addressing parent involvement's links to socio emotional skills have typically focused on early childhood and utilized cross-sectional designs.

Wylie, Hodgen, Hipkins and Vaughan (2009) and Myers (1992) observe that the period of early childhood development has a strong and positive impact on further developments and children's learning in later ages. Studies by Wylie et al. (2009) indicate that attendees of ECD centres continued to benefit from their attendance 11 years later. In order to curb wastages in the education system, ECD has been touted in research studies as diminishing the potency to drop out of school and it has also been found out that grade repetition in primary education is lowered due to attendance in ECD education (Myers, 1992; Young, 2002). These findings were replicated in studies by Plan Bangladesh, among others, which found out that early stimulation and preparation for education to enhance student learning in school increases retention

rates up to the terminal grades. There is also the reduced educational expenditure because of little or no need for remedial action for the slow learners since these are minimized through the ECD programmes (UNESCO, 1996). For those children who are not participants of ECD education, there are personal and social costs in the form of poor adjustment, continued high primary school repetition and dropout rates, and consequently, for the country, another generation of functional illiterates (Halpern and Myers, 1985). Thus, ECD results in low cost to the financiers of education.

As per the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), ECD is a long-term plan for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by developing a better skilled and more resilient population and quality early childhood education improves the efficacy and cost efficiency of primary schooling by creating school readiness which leads to greater success and thus reduces grade repetition and dropout rates, an important step towards universal primary education (Young, 2002). Because they lay the foundations for acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, they help reduce dropout and repetition rates and, if well managed, they generate a predisposition of the child towards learning and attending school (UNESCO, 1996). Also, quality early childhood education programmes tend to provoke greater demand and attention to quality as children move up the ladder to primary education, therefore, a good early childhood programme helps improve all aspects of quality education (Wylie et al, 2009). ECD and pre-primary education programmes are widely recognized as having a significant and positive impact on the subsequent performance of children in basic education programmes.

Research in the Chicago (USA) has shown that 219 children who did not participate in ECD education were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for violent crime by age 18 in Michigan, 3 and 4 year olds from low income families who did not receive preschool were likely to have become chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than those who were assigned to the High/ Scope Educational Research Foundation's Perry Preschool programme (High Scope, 2005). Thus, ECD has been instrumental in the reduction of crime in later lives of attendees.

Research by UNESCO (1996) indicates that there is improved preparation of children for primary education, especially in the development of basic skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and language learning. The detection, treatment, correction, improvement and prevention of nutritional, health, physical or mental defects and the early removal of learning difficulties is also catered for in ECD programmes. Children are also provided with the opportunity to develop positive attitudes, self-confidence, motivation and ability to learn which are conducive to the child's development, happiness and success at school. ECD education also leads to the development of capable children who will eventually contribute to a society of educated, responsible and productive citizens (UNESCO, 1996). A significant factor common to children who repeat classes is related to their initial lack of readiness for learning, writing, numeracy and language acquisition as well as unpreparedness for entry into primary schools (UNESCO, 1996).

Malawi is one of the countries with the most extensive network of ECD centres in Africa. These centres comprise of, among others, community-based childcare centres

(CBCCs), pre-schools and day care centres (Yallow et al., 2012). These ECD centres were established in order to ensure that children in Malawi benefit from such interventions. The emphasis on ECD interventions, such as the establishment and running of CBCCs, is based on the evidence that exposing children to such programmes ensures that they develop their basic skills, attitudes, behaviours and values that will last their life time (Yallow et al, 2012). The CBCCs cater for children aged 3-5 years and are managed by members of the community, namely, parents, guardians, caregivers and community members (Messner and Levy, 2012).

While Government, development partners and other stakeholders appreciated the role that CBCCs were playing in the cognitive development of children, the exact number of these CBCCs remained unknown and so were the numbers of children enrolled in the CBCCs, the number of caregivers and members of CBCC communities who had been trained, the type and range of services that the CBCCs were offering to children and the type of infrastructure and equipment including play materials and cooking and eating utensils that were available in these CBCCs. This study was, therefore, conducted in order to create an inventory of CBCCs operating in Malawi in the years 2006/2007.

The study established that Community Based Care Centres and ECD structures in Malawi, which are established and managed by communities, are playing an important role in communities by providing a pre-primary school learning environment and in 2006/2007 over 400,000 children were attending these CBCCs. While Malawi specific studies have not been done to determine the impact of CBCCs on the future development of the child, it is evident that these CBCCs ensure that children have

access to preschool education, health services, and nutrition. In addition to this, the CBCCs admit a considerable proportion of orphaned children, hence constitute an important component of the national response to the HIV and AIDs epidemic. Apart from the training of caregivers which is the responsibility of the national authorities, all other activities within CBCCs are being managed by community members, hence such a community-based and a community-owned approach to ECD programming can be sustainable as long as communities are mobilized to support and own the process. However, it was noted that there is a need for the Government of Malawi to invest in ECD in order to meet the MDG for poverty reduction, education and health (Springerplus, 2014).

A study carried by Tshuma& Ncube (2016) in Zimbabwe in Gwanda district on parental involvement revealed that while parents in most schools in the Colleen Bawn Cluster Schools paid the required levies, fees and participated in the fund raising activities, they were, however, unable to provide furniture, stationary, physical infrastructure, teaching and learning resources and vehicles for their children's school. The picture that emerges is that parents of Colleen Bawn Schools have not provided adequate teaching and learning resources for their children's schools, despite paying the stipulated fees and levies and participating in fund raising activities. One then wonders how the collected fees and levies are utilized, their adequacy and the extent to which parents are involved in the utilization of the collected funds. The other emerging picture seems to indicate lack of parental participation in the decision making process.

The failure is experienced despite the fact that most parents paid the stipulated fees and levies. In the schools fund raising activities the failure could be due to high levels of illiteracy among parents that result in lack of meaningful participation in the decision making process on how to spend the collected funds. The study revealed that, in most schools in the Colleen Bawm Cluster of primary schools, parents are actively involved in Co-Curricular activities through attending and supporting sporting activities at the school and inviting some parents to come and coach some sporting disciplines. However, the study concluded that In-Service training for SDCs, teachers and school heads on parental involvement in school issues was necessary.

In an evaluation study of the East Africa Quality Early Learning (EAQEL) programme Ngwaru and Njoroge (2011) exposed that in the Sub-Saharan Africa challenges of low literacy remain a critical problem due to lack of access and quality education. The region is said to have the highest proportion of out of school children, the greatest gender disparities, the highest ratio of pupils to teachers and the lowest primary completion rates (UNESCO, 2008). The study also revealed that in most African countries, low-income children grow up in environments where parental involvement in their education is either minimal or absent. It further says that low-income parents do not see beyond their economic state of affairs. The study also revealed that in a community in southern Zimbabwe parents are preoccupied with poverty, socioeconomic insecurity, morbidity arising from the scourge of HIV/AIDS and lack of educational awareness.

Parents in this study indicated that their active participation in the education of their children would only be possible after families' physiological needs of hunger, thirst and bodily discomforts have been met (Ngwaru, 2010). In this Zimbabwean community, as in so many others throughout Africa, disease and poverty are everyday realities. To confirm this one of the quoted participant in this study expressed this- our fields are now sandy and require fertilisers or organic manure, but we have none because our government cannot give us agricultural inputs and our cattle are depleted. There does not seem to be an easy way out of this quandary because we have no means to pull ourselves out of this on our own....(quoted in Ngwaru 2010:88).Parents are engrossed in these concerns as noted by Barton and Hamilton (1988) who called these ruling passions, many parents appeared not to place a high value on the educational and intellectual achievement of their children, almost as if they believed that education was not for them. Yet these same parents did everything in their power to help their children do well at school.

The same project (EAQEL) was conducted in Kenya and Uganda where similar situation was encountered whereby parents were not aware of how they can contribute towards their children's literacy development (Ngwaru&Njoroge 2011). In low-resourced communities Ngwaru (2011) suggested that literacy-rich environments do not necessarily have to be based on Western situations with abundance of books or parents reading to children, but can have the following characteristics:

- Children can be surrounded by oral language based on family experiences and the resources and artefacts available throughout the home for children and adults;

- Adults can share their ideas and feelings with children and encourage them to express themselves, ask questions and feel confident;
- Children can see adults using materials for practical and specific purposes, such as paying bills, merchandising or learning about the news;
- Where book and print materials are available, families should consider children's emergent reading and writing to be real, valuable experiences. They should accept children's efforts without correcting mistakes or providing direct instruction and;
- Families can talk with children about the print they see around them and explain how it provides information (eg signs on buses, labels on food and writing on commodity packaging).

From experience this will expose children from a tender age to reading material, hence interest for literature will also be developed. In view of the above mentioned characteristics parents should not have any reason not to engage children in literacy development except for lack of awareness. This will further develop the children's social and emotional skills prior to formal schooling.

Practically every observed study on parental involvement finds that parents' engagement in their children's education varies by socio-demographic and economic circumstances, such as marital status, educational level and the child's gender (Georgiou, 2007; Schimpl-Neimanns, 2000; Schmitt & Kleine, 2010). A baseline data experiment conducted in Ghana revealed the following findings on differences in parental involvement on marital status, education level, gender and child's gender.

It was noted from the study that married parents are more likely to be involved in their children's education than single parents. Responses in the study revealed that married parents reported that they check whether their children have done their homework more frequently compared to the single parents. Also noted was that married parents provide more direct assistance with homework.

On educational level the study noted that parents' educational level and involvement in their children's education shows that parents are more engaged when their own educational level exceeds their children's current level of education. However, it was also noted that parents less educated than their children are more engaged within their children's school environment than parents who have a level of education equivalent to or greater than their children's. Less educated parents are more involved perhaps because many would like to see their children attain higher education than they did. The study further noted that in the same way, parents more educated than their children are more engaged at home than those whose education is equivalent to or lower than that of their children.

On gender it was noted that overall, parents' involvement is fairly consistent for male and female children. However, parents are more involved at home than at school for female children, and more involved at school than at home for the boy child. This gender difference may be an outcome of social norms that long favoured active participation in school for boys and home schooling for girls. This inequality is changing as Ghana attempts to eradicate the gender gap in education (ICF Macro, 2010). The study also revealed that there is a slightly higher involvement of mothers at home than

the fathers. It is said fathers mostly talk about their expectations than actual assistance given to the children.

Parental occupational class in turn is the main determinant of parental income and thereby an indirect indicator for the material resources available in the childhood family. But it may also be a signal of social status or prestige that may be helpful for the children. Parental income, on the other hand, may have a direct effect on children as well, but in most cases it is dependent on the parents' occupational standing.

Finally, parental education, class and income influence together, because a certain kind of education (or lack of it) leads to certain occupations, in turn providing a certain level of income. These shared effects are more or less indistinguishable. The shared effects also cover the effects of any unmeasured factors that correlate with all three socioeconomic characteristics. For instance, advantageous parental social networks may consist of their peers from school, their social connections in the labour market, and acquaintances met during leisure. One type of social network might be specific to one of the above-mentioned socioeconomic characteristics, but might also be associated with all of them. Similarly, some parental skills and traits related to their education may be helpful for the children only because they offer the parents access to a certain kind of occupation.

The few previous studies considering the life course variation of parental status do suggest that changes in parental status matter (for parental income in the US, see Akee, Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2010; for parental class in the UK, see

Plewis & Bartley, 2014). These studies, however, do not shed any light on possible variation in the importance of different parental socioeconomic characteristics over the individual's life course. As already argued, parental education, class and income seem to exert different long-term impacts during the different phases of the individual's childhood and youth. The importance of the early childhood environment is often approached from the viewpoint of the multifaceted effects of economic deprivation, especially child poverty (Duncan, Telle, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2011). If material resources are the ones that matter, in particular father's income during early childhood should play a key role in explaining the importance of early experiences for adult attainment, since fathers have earnings more often than mothers during their children's early childhood. If this is the case, however, the mother's contribution should increase as the children grow older, when it becomes more common for mothers to work, while the father may leave the workforce or move out of the household in case of partnership separation.

The effects of economic and material resources, however, are not limited to only the direct effects of extreme poverty, such as malnutrition and child mortality (Duncan et al., 1994; Heckman, 2006). Instead, the intergenerational effects of economic resources are often mediated by other factors. For instance, Hauser & Sweeney (Hauser & Sweeney, 1995; see also Warren, Sheridan, & Hauser, 2002) used the Wisconsin Longitudinal Panel to show that the effect of adolescent poverty on various socioeconomic adult outcomes was modest or non-existent when maternal education and family structure were controlled. Guo and Harris (2000) examined the effect of low income on children's intellectual development in the U.S. and found that the effect of poverty was mediated

above all by lower *cognitive stimulation* at home (e.g., availability of quality books and newspapers, trips to museums). The second most important factor was a more negative *parenting style*, due to psychological stress levels associated to economic problems. Moreover, they found that poverty had no direct effect, which means that the sole lack of economic resources did not matter. Likewise Jæger (2007), studying multiple indicators of parental economic status, was unable to find any direct effect on children's completion of upper secondary education in Denmark for the generation born from 1975 to 1985. Furthermore, Mayer (1998) analysed U.S. panel data to show somewhat similarly that once the basic needs of children are met, higher income does not improve child outcomes much but parental characteristics become more influential. She also found that unlike Guo and Harris, parental income does not appreciably influence children's outcomes by affecting parental stress or parenting style, although parent–child interaction itself appears to be important.

The findings above suggest that economic conditions alone are of lesser importance than other types of family resources. For instance, Bukodi and Goldthorpe (2013) found that parental education was the strongest predictor of children's education in the UK, although parental class and social status mattered as well. These findings fit with the life course theories on education and human capital (Becker, 2009; Mayer, 2009; Pallas, 2003). According to these theories, parental human capital is accumulated through education and has a salient effect on first educational choices, which will continue through life.

Many other studies have underlined specifically the importance of mother. For example Korupp et al. (2002) were using data from the Netherlands, West Germany and the U.S., showed that resources from the lower-status parent matter for children's educational attainment—this parent usually being the mother. Buis (2013), using eleven Dutch surveys covering birth cohorts born between 1931 and 1991, found that the mother's education mattered more in children's attainment than that of the father, especially when the mother was not employed. Likewise Conley (2008) found that the influence of the family background (sibling similarities) increased over the life course for children with highly educated mothers, while a different pattern surfaced for the children of mothers with less education.

The mothers' greater influence on the children's attainment through their own and the children's education may be explained by the above-mentioned better parenting skills of educated mothers. If this is the case, the mother's education should matter the most when the child is very young. But even more simple explanations may apply; the parent who spends more time with a child may be more likely to be a role model in making educational choices, and during childhood this is often the mother. On the other hand, in many educational systems the key educational choices are made during adolescence, when the mothers have often returned to work. It is thus possible that the differences between the contributions of mothers and fathers are smaller during that time of life than they may have been earlier. Furthermore, the parents' education does not change much after the children are born; thus they will be “exposed” to the same level of parental education throughout whole life. Because of this most of the life course variation in the

importance of parental education should presumably result from the growing or diminishing importance of the other parental characteristics in socioeconomic inheritance that can change, in our case class and income.

Parental occupational class can be seen as a necessary link between their education and their income; having a good education does not alone guarantee material wealth, well-being or high social status for individuals or their families. The main source of income for most people in developed societies consists of earnings from work (either current or previous) or from a job held by another family member. In addition to its role as a link between education and income, class may be seen as a proxy for social standing and social prestige, as well as an indicator for both cultural and social capital (i.e. Weeden&Grusky, 2005). Even if the aspects of occupational standing that can be associated with income and education are controlled for, it is thus likely that occupational class will still prevail as a significant proxy for many other valuable aspects of socioeconomic status.

We should expect the importance of maternal and paternal class to vary much as in the case of income. Female employment, socioeconomic status, and consequently also other work-related resources are usually lower during the infancy of their children and increase when the children are growing up, while fathers are likely to retire earlier or (in the case of parental separation) become non-co-residing parents. Social class is also sometimes viewed as a particularly good proxy for permanent income (c.f. Erikson &Goldthorpe, 2010) and is closely related to unemployment risk (Goldthorpe&McKnight, 2006).

According to the previous literature, however, other patterns of life course variation can be expected as well. Earlier research on occupational mobility suggests that in particular entry into the labour market may be decisive for the “final” or long-term occupational standing achieved by the children (Erola, 2009; Härkönen&Bihagen, 2011). It may be argued that parental social networks, especially those built up at work, may be particularly advantageous for children at that point in their life course.

We analyse the intergenerational influence of parental socioeconomic status during the children's childhood and youth using Finnish data. This societal context provides a particularly interesting setting for examining the importance of different socioeconomic resources of mothers and fathers. The Nordic welfare state itself provides a number of income transfers targeted in particular at low-income families, thus mitigating the disadvantages caused to economically vulnerable families by economic deprivation. Young people's independent living is supported by the government and the local authorities, in the form of housing subsidies and needs-based subsidies for rent deposits and moving costs. These institutional characteristics of Finnish society should reduce the importance of parental economic resources from children's adolescence onwards.

The heavily subsidised daycare system is universally accessible and of high quality, possibly also reducing the influence of parenting skills. The comprehensive educational system introduced in 1966 has been shown to reduce the importance of family background in socioeconomic attainment (Pekkarinen, Uusitalo, & Kerr, 2009). Education in Finland is free of charge and higher education has been entirely tuition-

free since 1974. The comprehensive school begins at the age of 7 and continues until the age of 16. The most significant transition occurs after this when children choose an academic (general upper secondary) or vocational track, both lasting for 3 years. From the general upper secondary school, they often continue to study at the university (master or bachelor level courses) or polytechnic schools (bachelor level courses). The education system does not have official dead ends: in principle, anyone can apply from secondary level education to university through an intake exam or special targeted (but much smaller) quotas (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015).

It is therefore not surprising that in country comparisons Finland appears to be a fairly open society in terms of equality of opportunity (Erola, 2009; Jäntti, Saari, & Vartiainen, 2006). On the other hand, in Finnish society education plays a particularly strong role in socioeconomic achievement. Formal educational qualifications are required for many public-sector occupations, and are often considered important in private-sector recruitment as well (Kivinen, Ahola, & Hedman, 2001).

From the point of view of the current study, however, perhaps the most interesting institutional aspect is the female labour participation rate. This has traditionally been high in all Nordic countries, but particularly in Finland. In 1970 the female labour-force participation rate was already 61%, and by 1980 it was over 70% (OECD, 2014). Half of Finnish mothers having pre-school children work full-time. While it is likely that female labour force participation is strengthened by the availability of daycare and the comprehensive school system, the employment rate of women was high already before these systems became widely available (Julkunen & Nätti, 1999). This suggests that

female employment has long been seen as a norm rather than being a recent development. At the same time, however, the female-male earnings gap has remained rather persistent, at around 20% (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005). Women also appear to have weaker access to high-status professional class occupations (Erola, 2009). If it is employment alone that matters, we should therefore not expect to observe great differences in the contribution of mothers and fathers in intergenerational socioeconomic achievement. If, on the other hand, resources acquired through work are more important, we should expect fathers to contribute more.

2.7 Influences of parental participation in early education of children

The first six years of the child's life have been documented as the most critical ones for most favourable development. Humane development is said to be cumulative in nature, hence, the need to invest in programmes for the children below six years. It is now undisputedly recognized that the systematic provision of early childhood care and education helps the child to develop holistically.

Research on child development continues to refer to the significance of parental involvement from the early childhood years and highlights the influence of parent and community involvement in a child's academic achievement and social adjustment (Comer, 2005; Epstein, 2001; Henderson, 2002; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Swap, 1993). Parents are responsible for the overall health, development and social adjustment of their children, and there is growing evidence of their impact on the child's academic success when working cooperatively with schools.

The history and philosophy of parental involvement is supported by ecological and developmental systems theories that stress the importance of relationships and the interconnections of environments where children grow and learn (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Epstein, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).

Epstein's model highlights "family, school and community as overlapping spheres of influence" (Hornby and Lafale, 2011, p38). Family involvement is indispensable for children's academic success and building cross-context reinforcement (Weiss et al. 2009,p16). Teachers consider a number of support parts of the role for all family members, for example, the extended family. However, Weiss et al. (2009) argues that the mutual benefits of family and school partnership necessitate a comprehensive policy that engages parents' involvement across key learning contexts in order to promote continuity of learning and surround children with linked network of support structures

Research has established that when parents are involved, and have keen interests in what children do at the school, learners obtain good grades and score higher on standardized tests. Furthermore, children whose parents are involved have better attendance records, usually do not drop out of school, have higher aspirations, and a more positive attitude towards school and homework (Harris and Goodall, 2008; Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack, 2007; Su, 2015). According to Ganga and Chinyoka (2010), the child's first place of interaction with the world is their family. As such, the child acquires original learning and socialization from parents, home and community environment, thus making the parents the child's first educators. Jeynes (2005) in his forty-one studies discovered that there was positive association between parental

participation and academic achievement of scholars in the elementary school, at the same time, Hill and Tyson (2009) recognized that parental participation was positively linked with learners' achievements on fifty published studies on parental involvement in middle school.

The home and the school are influential environments that build attitudes and readiness to learn. Family involvement researches clearly demonstrate that children thrive academically when the family and school agree that they are stronger together than apart. Schools and homes that share philosophies, resources, goals, information and hard work of teaching give children the stability, consistency, and encouragement they need for academic success.

Family engagement or involvement has proven to work regardless of the educational context, the age of the child, or the family situation and experiences. As in any relationships, family-school partnerships depend on the willingness and readiness of each partner to collaborate. However, in this 'equal' partnership the responsibility lies more heavily with the school to build the tone and context within which productive home/school interactions can occur.

The school can celebrate children's achievement with parents. The head of the centre needs to help them understand their children's education process by organizing an afternoon to celebrate the children's achievement at the end of each term. The activities can be varied from the young children's reciting the alphabet, singing songs and rhymes or acting drama to create awareness, for example, on malaria prevention. These events can not only recognize achievements, but also highlight important messages regarding

the ECD centre, and the events need to be highly anticipated by the community, the learners and the teachers. Through these activities many parents who had never been to school themselves, will discover what their children are learning, the value of their children's education and how they could support it. This, in turn, improves discipline in the school/centre, and improves attendance and participation by the community. The head of the centre needs to bring up the subject of involvement of the parents by timing meetings.

Parent involvement typically involves parents' behaviours in the home and school settings meant to support their children's educational progress. Measures of parent involvement usually include the quality and frequency of communication with teachers as well as participation in the school functions and activities (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Machen, Wilson & Notar, 2004). Parent involvement also characterizes parents' values and attitudes regarding education and the aspirations they hold for their children (Catsambis, 2001; England, Luckner, Whaley, & England, 2004). Although values and attitudes may not directly influence academic outcomes, they may enhance academic achievement indirectly by promoting children's motivation and persistence in challenging educational tasks.

Parent involvement bridges two key contexts in children's early development, namely, the home and school settings. Within an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), the home and school contexts are characterized as autonomous microsystems and parent involvement is conceptualized as a mesosystem, which is made up of

interactions between microsystems. Although each setting can independently influence a child, together the home and school contexts interact to offer a unique influence. In this study, a parent is conceptualized as a product of interactions between the influences of school and home settings by providing continuity between the two environments. For example, if parents are aware of teacher's instructional goals, they may provide resources and support for those learning aims at home.

Further benefits of ECD education include their care and stimulation, the identification and the corrections of a variety of problems related to health, nutrition, physical and mental handicaps, pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-numeracy skills, the development of the joy of exploration, experimentation, a heightened sense of curiosity, a love for learning and motivation. Thus, to ignore ECD education before their entry into primary education is to jeopardize their educational success at their later levels of learning and education (Young, 2002). In all cases, the importance of relationship between parents and the school is arguable because "the family is the most important and most enduring resource in a child's life" and "family-school partnerships produce impressive results for children and teachers" (Petr, 2003, p11).

However, the effects of lack of all forms of involvement are statistically significant (Jeynes, 2011). For example, Jeynes identified that conversations about school between learners and their parents and parents' participation at school events have a statistically considerable influence on the learners' academic achievement, whereas the effect of checking the learners' homework by parents is not statistically significant. On the other hand, according to Jeynes (2007), the effect of parents' participation at school

events on learners' academic achievement is less than parents' expectancies and Parental styles. Interestingly, parental expectancies and discussion have more influence on middle-income learners' academic achievement than on low-income learners' academic achievement (Desimone, 1999). Furthermore, Desimone (1999) identified that talking with their mother or both parents (mother and father together) positively affects the learners' academic success, but discussion with only their father can lead to a reduction in the learners' test scores. Also, the research conducted by Bobbett et al. (1995) showed that the effects of parental involvement can be different, based on the learners' ages. According to Fan and Chen (2001), parental control is weakly related to pupils' academic success, while parental desire and hope for learners' academic success is strongly related to learners' academic success. They found that close parental control may even have a negative influence on learners' academic achievement.

Delores Pena, like many educators, discovered that there are many advantages that accrue from closer relationships between parents and the school. The academic achievement of low-income students, in particular, seems to improve as parent involvement increases. Also parents are a valuable source of volunteer help and political support for the school programmes. Research has shown that increased parent involvement increases teacher efficacy. Teachers and principals show more respect for families who participate in school activities. In addition, when low-income parents are trained to work in the schools, they become more actively involved in their children's education and begin to seek additional education for themselves.

Involved parents develop higher academic aspirations for their children and parent-child communication improves. Still, Pena agrees with Feuerstein that despite all these benefits, schools have difficulty developing successful parent programmes. Parents need information and guidance from school, but teachers receive little help in developing the skills and knowledge for collaborating with parents or the time to pursue it. Successful parent programmes often require considerable training for parent and teachers.

Keeping families involved in the life of the classroom is an important responsibility for early childhood teachers. Sharing with families the role, for example, of art in the curriculum and the activities in which their children are participating will encourage their support of the programme and of their children's learning. Family involvement can be encouraged in several ways. Inviting parents to participate in museum field trips and classroom art activities provides the opportunity for shared experiences and discussion between children and their parents.

According to Mawere, Thomas Nyaruwata (2015), parental involvement was there before formal education was introduced; parents have always been involved and played crucial role in the education of their children. On the other hand, Spodek, (1983) in Mawere et al. (2015) says that Pestalozzi and Froebel observed that the partnership between parents and educators was emphasized since the 18th Century. Mawere et al. argue that since that time a growing literature suggests that parental involvement has a positive impact on children's learning and development. The care and education of children are the natural right and primary responsibility of the parents with little or no

formal involvement from a structured Education entity (Rosen, 2007; Mapolisa et al., 2014; Hiatt, 1994; and Mawere et al., 2015).

Research has shown that when parents become involved, standards of education improve including understanding the curriculum, keeping track of the children's progress and helping with homework and parents' understanding of what the school is trying to achieve and how they can help them (Hampton and Mumford, 1998; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005). Research on parental involvement by Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg (2005:15) proved that children benefit when schools and parents work closely and such benefits include higher grades and test scores, improved attendance, improved behaviour at home and at school, better interpersonal skills and more responsible decision making. Success in the education of children depends, at least, in some part, on the involvement of parents (Burke and Picus, 2001:3). If the children see that their parents are enthusiastic about their education, they are most likely to view their schooling in a positive light and would be more receptive to learning (Hampton and Mumford, 1998:414). In that sense, schools should work in true alliance with parents if the education of children is not to be compromised.

Parental involvement extends to simply ensuring that homework was completed successfully and attendance of parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. This is further supported by Luneburg and Irby (2002) who reported that parental involvement extended to expectations for their children's achievements: participating in school activities, offering encouragement and providing home learning environments

and participation in school based activities such as parents' conferences and in the development of school infrastructure. Teachers revealed that parental involvement in their children's education had benefited the school and pupils. The teachers found it easy to understand children's environment as a result of constant interaction between parents and the school.

In terms of learning, what happens before and after school can be as important as what takes place in the class (National Education Association, 2008). Schooling is merely a part of education and, therefore, parents are intimately involved in the greater part of what occurs outside the school (Munn, 1993). In addition, parents can ensure to make reading materials available for their children, particularly in early literacy stage. Shared reading activities with children can effectively enhance their early reading capacity. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that there is a significant positive relationship between the availability of reading materials at home and the child achievement in reading (Becher, 1985).

Harvard Family Research Project conducted a meta-analysis drawing 77 studies to determine the impact of parental involvement on 12 learners' academic achievement. The results indicated that parental involvement is associated with higher academic achievement. The achievement of learners with highly involved parents was higher than children with less involved parents. Parental involvement reduces disruptive behaviours on the part of the learners. To reduce the negative outcome of disruptive behaviours, parental involvement in children's education can play an effective role (Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon and Semke, 2012).

According to the Michigan Department of Education (2002), family participation was found to be twice predictive of learners' academic success as compared to family socio-economic class. According to Evangelou and Syliva (2003) in the University of Oxford researchers found that children whose parents participated in the Peers Early Education Partnership (a program geared towards supporting families of children ages 0-5 years) made notably greater progress in their learning than children whose parents did not participate. These strides were found in children ages 3-5, and included progress in vocabulary, language comprehension, understanding of books and print and number concepts. In addition, these children also exhibited high sense of worth in comparison to children of non-participating parents. A study published in the Journal of Instructional Psychology reported that improving parental involvement in the classroom can also improve schools in general (Machen, Wilson & Notar, 2005). The authors describe how everyone within the school community can benefit when parents and teachers work as partners.

Research has shown evidence that where parents are involved in the child's education and development positive results are realised. Thompson (2002) and National Scientific Council (2004) noted that if parents participate early in their children's literacy development they make children more confident and socially-emotionally stable, especially when they are affectionate and quick to respond. When most people think of parenting, they picture changing diapers, messy feeding times, and chasing a screaming child through a crowded grocery store. But parenting goes far beyond the requirements for meeting the basic survival needs of the child, and parents have a

significant influence on how children turn out, including their personality, emotional development, and behavioral habits, as well as a host of other factors. It is important for the overall development of children that parents be present enough to support them, and this support fosters confidence and growth in many areas. Here we will explore the ways parents can impact the emotional development of their children.

Sometimes, just being physically present is not enough. Parents that may be nearby but that are not emotionally invested or responsive tend to raise children that are more distressed and less engaged with their play or activities. A study investigating the connection between parent's investment and children's competence suggests that the emotional involvement of parents really does matter and affects the outcome of their child's emotional competence and regulation (Volling, 458). Parents should keep this in mind when considering the quality of the time they spend with their children, because if they do not invest enough of their time and commitment into pouring emotionally into their child, the child will struggle to learn how to regulate his emotions and interact with others appropriately.

In studying the outcomes of Ainsworth's Strange Situation experiments, L. Alan Sroufe found that the style of early attachment relationships predicts later emotional development of children. Sroufe asserts that, "Such variations [of relationship quality] are not reflections of genetically based traits of the infant but of the history of interaction with the parent" (188). This suggests that attachment styles are not inborn but are driven by how parents interact with their infant from birth. Longitudinal attachment studies show that children with anxious attachment were likely to be emotionally

disturbed and have low self-esteem (Sroufe 1990). If the form of attachment has such long-lasting impacts on children, it is clear that parents must treat their children in ways that foster secure attachment in order for the children to grow into emotionally stable adolescents and adults.

An important factor in the emotional development of children is how warm caregivers are, and studies have been done to find the effects of depressed mothers on the emotional development of children. Depressed mothers have maladaptive thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors, and these, along with being in a similarly stressful environment as the mother, put a child at risk of developing his own emotional problems (Sroufe 2004). The fact that depressed mothers are likely to be indifferent towards their children, put them in less social situations, and generally provide less stimulation for their children, puts the children at a disadvantage for achieving normal emotional development.

A key aspect of emotional development in children is learning how to regulate emotions. Children see how their parents display emotions and interact with other people, and they imitate what they see their parents do to regulate emotions (Sheffield Morris et. al). A child's temperament also plays a role in their emotion regulation, guided by the parenting style they receive (Belsky et al2001). For example, children more prone to negative emotions or episodes of anger are deeply affected by hostile and neglectful parenting, often leading to even more behavioral problems. Difficult temperaments can become a bidirectional problem that evokes even more negative emotions from the parent if not monitored. Parents should be aware that not only do their own emotions

and parenting style affect the emotional outcomes of their children, but if they are not aware of how their children's tempers affect them, they could fall into a spiral of ineffective and indifferent parenting which further contributes to negative behaviors from the children.

Furthermore, how parents address the emotions of their children and respond to them affects how expressive the children feel they can be. Reacting with criticism or dismissing the sadness or anger of a child communicates that their emotions are not valid or appropriate, which can cause children to be even more prone to those negative emotions and less able to cope with stress (Siegler et al 2006). Instead, guiding children's emotions and helping them find ways to express them in a healthy manner helps them continue regulating their responses to challenges and even aids their academic and social competence. This sort of emotion coaching greatly helps in reducing future problem behavior in children.

In addition to being able to express their own emotions, it is important in social situations for children to be able to identify and deal with the emotions of those around them. Parents model for their children how to comfort someone who is crying or smile at someone who is smiling, but other parental behaviors also influence how their children learn to understand the emotions of others. It has been found that the interaction between parents affects a child's emotional and social development, and marital conflict contributes to problems in these developmental areas (Sheffield Morris et. al 1988). The biggest contributing factor in marital relations affecting children's emotional development is whether the child hears the parents fighting. This is referred to as

“background anger” in the child’s environment and if the child is exposed to it, even though it is not directed at the child, problems with emotional security and regulation are likely to result from it (Sheffield Morris et al 1988). Coming from a family with divorced parents, I (Kristi) can relate to this issue of background anger being a factor, because although my parents split when I was at a vulnerable age, they made sure not to fight in front of my sister and I, and I think that allowed us to have a healthier reaction to the divorce and to be emotionally well-adjusted in social interactions.

Parenting decisions affect how children turn out physically, socially, and emotionally, but that is not to say parents should be obsessed with following certain steps to have a perfectly well-adjusted child. We accept that there is no perfect formula for parents to model behavior or speak to children in certain ways to make them have a perfect emotional development experience, and that places a limit on our exploration of this subject. Parents can help their children develop into emotionally stable people by giving them a supportive environment, positive feedback, role models of healthy behavior and interactions, and someone to talk to about their emotional reactions to their experiences.

Authoritative parenting is generally regarded as the most successful approach to parenting because of its high level of involvement and balanced levels of control. Authoritative parents set realistic expectations and consistent limits for their children, and provide them with fair or natural consequences. Natural consequences are those that occur as a natural result of the child's behavior (or lack of a particular behavior), with no intervention required; for example, if a child touches a hot stove and is burned

by the heat, the burn is a natural consequence. Authoritative parents express warmth and affection, listen to their child's point of view, and provide opportunities for independence. Parents set rules and explain the reasons behind them, and they are also flexible and willing to make exceptions to the rules in certain cases—for example, temporarily relaxing bedtime rules to allow for a nighttime swim during a family vacation.

Of the four parenting styles, the authoritative style is the one that is most encouraged in modern American society. American children raised by authoritative parents tend to have high self-esteem and social skills and work well with others. However, effective parenting styles vary as a function of culture, and the authoritative style is not necessarily preferred or appropriate in all cultures.

In the authoritarian style, parents put a high value on conformity and obedience. The parents are often strict, tightly monitor their children, and express little warmth. These parents exhibit a large amount of control over their child's decisions and behavior. Authoritarian parents set rigid rules with firm consequences; in contrast to the authoritative style, authoritarian parents probably would not relax bedtime rules during a vacation because they consider the rules to be set, and they expect obedience at all times.

Children who grow up in authoritarian homes often become anxious or withdrawn or suffer from self-esteem problems. Due to gender socialization, those raised as male may experience anger problems, while those raised as female may become dependent upon

others for approval. Although these children may do poorly in school, they do not tend to engage in antisocial behavior for fear of their parents' reaction. However, it is important to keep in mind cultural differences: different cultures respond better to different parenting styles than others (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010). For instance, first-generation Chinese American children raised by authoritarian parents did just as well in school as peers who were raised by authoritative parents (Russell et al., 2010).

Permissive parenting tends to be warm and loving but lacks follow-through on setting limits or rules. Permissive parents tend to be overindulgent, make few demands, rarely use punishment, and allow their children to make their own decisions, regardless of the consequences. They tend to be very nurturing and loving and may play the role of friend rather than parent. These parents might be caught up in their own lives and therefore inattentive (although not neglectful) and exhibit little control over their children.

Children raised by permissive parents tend to lack self-discipline, and the permissive parenting style is negatively associated with grades (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). The permissive style may also contribute to other risky or impulsive behaviors such as alcohol abuse (Bahr & Hoffman, 2010), risky sexual behavior, especially among female children (Donenberg, Wilson, Emerson, & Bryant, 2002), and increased display of disruptive behaviors by male children (Parent et al., 2011). However, there are some positive outcomes associated with children raised by permissive parents: many tend to have higher self-esteem, better social skills, and report lower levels of depression (Darling, 1999).

With the uninvolved style of parenting, the parents are indifferent and sometimes referred to as neglectful. They don't respond to their child's needs and make relatively few demands. This could be because of severe depression, substance abuse, or other factors such as the parents' extreme focus on work. Neglectful parents may look to their children for support and guidance, and these children often end up "parenting their parents." These parents may provide for the child's basic needs, but little else; in more extreme forms of neglect, basic needs may not be cared for at all or children may be placed in harmful situations.

These children, much like those raised in permissive homes, tend to have myriad problems, but often the problems are often much more serious. Children raised in this parenting style are usually emotionally withdrawn, fearful, and anxious; perform poorly in school; and are at an increased risk of substance abuse (Darling, 1999).

Child-rearing attitudes are cognitions that predispose an individual to act either positively or negatively toward a child. Attitudes most frequently considered involve the degree of warmth and acceptance or coldness and rejection that exists in the parent-child relationship, as well as the extent to which parents are permissive or restrictive in the limits they set for their offspring. Researchers have also studied more situation-specific thoughts or schemas – filters through which parents interpret and react to events,, particularly ambiguous ones. These include cognitions such as beliefs about parenting abilities, expectations about what children are capable of or should be expected to do, and reasons why children have behaved in a particular way.

The influence of attitudes on parenting behaviours has been a favourite topic of investigation, with research suggesting that linkages are generally of a modest nature.¹ In part, this is because reported attitudes do not always have a direct impact on parenting actions which are often directed by specific features of the situation. For example, parents might endorse or value being warm and responsive to children, but have difficulty expressing those feelings when their child is misbehaving. As a result of this realization the study of parent cognitions has been widened to include more specific ways of thinking.

The study of parent attitudes, belief systems, and thinking has taken place along with changing conceptions of child-rearing. These changes have emphasized the bidirectional nature of interactions, with children influencing parents as well as parents influencing children. Accordingly, an interesting extension of research on attitudes and cognitions has to do with how children's actions affect parents' attitudes and thoughts, although little work has been done in this area.

A large body of research on attitudes indicates that parental warmth together with reasonable levels of control combine to produce positive child outcomes. Although not strong, as noted above, the results are consistent. Researchers have noted that what is seen to be a reasonable level of control varies as a function of sociocultural context. Attitudes toward control are generally more positive in non-Anglo-European cultures, with these attitudes having less detrimental effects on children's development because they are more normative and less likely to be interpreted as rejecting or unloving. In accord with the realization that children's behaviour affects that of their

parents, researchers have found that, whereas parent attitudes affect child behaviour, this relation shifts as the child grows, with adolescent behaviour having an impact on parenting style and attitudes.

Research on more specific cognitions also highlights the importance of parent thinking on child outcomes. As an example, parents look for reasons why both they and their children act the way they do. These attributions can make parenting more efficient when they are accurate. They can also interfere with effective parenting when they lead to feelings of anger or depression (a possibility if children's bad behaviour is attributed to a bad disposition or an intentional desire to hurt, or the parent's failure or inadequacy). These negative feelings distract parents from the task of parenting, and make it more difficult for them to react appropriately and effectively to the challenges of socialization.

Specific cognitions have been assessed both with respect to their impact on children's socioemotional development and on their cognitive development. For example, Bugental and colleagues have studied mothers who believe their children have more power than they do in situations where events are not going well. These mothers are threatened and become either abusive and hostile or unassertive and submissive. They send confusing messages to their children, with the result that children stop paying attention to them as well as showing a decrease in cognitive ability. This view of the power relationship takes its toll on mothers' ability to problem-solve and therefore to operate effectively in their parenting role. Similarly, mothers of infants who are low in self-efficacy, that is, do not believe they can parent effectively, give up on parenting when the task is challenging and become depressed. They are cold and disengaged in

interactions with their babies. Furthermore, parents who trust that their child's course of biological development will proceed in a natural and healthy way are able to adjust better to their parenting role and less likely to develop a coercive parenting style.

Other aspects of parent thinking include the ability to take the perspective of the child. Mothers who recognize what is distressing for their children have children who are better able to cope with their own distress and parents who can accurately identify their children's thoughts and feelings during conflicts are better able to achieve satisfactory outcomes for those conflicts. "Mind-mindedness," the ability of parents to think of children as having mental states as well as being accurate in their assessment of these mental states, has been linked to children's secure attachment, with a positive link between mothers who describe their children using positive mental descriptors and mothers' sensitivity.

Little has been done to see how fathers' cognitions and attitudes affect child development. There has been some investigation of how mothers and fathers differ in their parental cognitions and parenting style: Mothers report higher endorsement of progressive parenting attitudes, encouraging their children to think and verbalize their own ideas and opinions, whereas fathers endorse a more authoritarian approach. What is unknown is the extent to which these differences in attitudes affect child outcomes. Another gap has to do with the direction of effect between parent and child, that is, how children affect their parents' cognitions and attitudes.

The study of parent cognitions, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings can expand our knowledge of child development. Child-rearing cognitions influence parents to act either positively or negatively towards their children. These beliefs have been considered good predictors of parenting behaviour because they indicate the emotional climate in which children and parents operate and the health of the relationship. In sum, parents observe their children through a filter of conscious and unconscious thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes, and these filters direct the way they perceive their children's actions. When the thoughts are benign, they direct positive actions. When the thoughts are accurate they will usually lead to positive actions. When they are distorted and distressing, however, they distract parents from the task at hand as well as leading to negative emotions and attributions that ultimately impair effective parenting.

Parenting

- For attendance issues, the school to use direct letters or home visits via education welfare officer
- Triple P parenting class
- Home visits

2.8 Factors affecting parents' participation in ECD

Working with parents as partners is critical for young children's development and learning, which is why ECD centre staff work hard to put the partnership with parents into practice. Parents' involvement in their child's early education programme sets the

stage for continued involvement in the school environment and sends a message to the child that education is valued and important. However, studies have shown that the involvement experiences some strains, as noted by some authors. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) assert that international and national research reveals that relations between ECD practitioners and parents are often strained because of the following factors:

- Lack of knowledge of pedagogical principles (the fact that education is not just teaching).
- Lack of knowledge of child and development issues and the need of each developmental stage.
- Lack of father's involvement in the education of young children.
- Working women, a lack of involvement compounds her problems. She is a mother, a worker and an ideal wife at the same time.
- Financial difficulties produce family pressure leading to parents failing to meet the children's basic needs.
- Marital difficulties.
- Intervention from the extended family.
- Lack of confidence on the part of both parents and ECD practitioners regarding mutual communication.
- Different understanding and expectations of each other's contribution to children's early learning.

- Lack of attention to skills necessary to work with parents and families in pre-service and in-service training of practitioners.

In the same vein, Mawere, Thomas and Nyaruwata (2015) noted that factors that strain parental involvement in ECD include lack of knowledge of the pedagogical principles and of the stages of child development, these deter some parents to establish a partnership with their children's school. They further indicated that some parents raised issues like "We are never consulted about what we would like to know about caring and educating our children. Some teachers do not really know my child's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, there is no need for me to attend consultation days. I have no confidence in what goes on in the centre so there is no need for me to attend the sessions." These comments point out that there is a strained relationship between ECD practitioners and parents concerning the education of children. However, Kernan, (2012) observed that topics of discussion and information given by teachers to parents at evenings or informal meetings have little influence on child rearing behaviours at home. Kernan, (2012) further concludes that the mutual sharing of information regarding children's learning and development between parents and practitioners is not happening.

Factors accounting for these findings include a clear separation in the minds of parents between child-rearing at home and education at school, differences in norms and values regarding child rearing and education between parents and teachers, cultural differences in communication styles and differences in views regarding respective responsibilities for child-rearing (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). A further observation

by Christenson (2002) highlights that an important factor contributing to the strained relations between parents and practitioners is lack of attention given to the skills necessary to work with parents and families in pre-service and in-service training of professionals. An important finding of the Kernan (2012) stipulates that the finding of the study about professional competencies and training in ECD was that many formal professional competence profiles and training profiles focus mainly on knowledge and competences about working with children, neglecting the essential work with parents and local communities.

Jafarow (2015) revealed that factors affecting parental involvement in education can be divided into various categories, for example, parent related factors, school related and student. Parental involvement can be affected by several socio-political factors, such as socioeconomic conditions and parents' negative school experience (LaRoeque et al., 2011). Studies have shown that one of the factors contributing to the level of parental involvement is parents' educational background (Pena, 200; Lee Bowen, 2006; Jordan et al., 2001; Potvin et al., Crozier, 1999; Baeck, 2010). For example, Lee and Bowen (2006) found that parents with very young children or higher college degree have considerably more attendance in the activities or meetings organized at school, talk more often about educational issues with their children and expect their children to be more successful in their education.

On the contrary, parents whose educational levels are low may be less involved, because they do not feel self-confident enough to contact school staff (Lee & Bowen, 2006). However, Pena (2000) recognized that parents with low levels of education more

frequently volunteer in different types of activities at schools than those with high levels of education. Jafarow (2015) stated that the problem for parents with low levels of education, as reported by the parents themselves, is that they cannot help their children with homework or other school related issues, because their knowledge is limited. Fascinatingly, when it comes to parents with a university degree, they confirm lack of time as a main reason for not getting involved (Baeck, 2010).

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992), beliefs about whether the effects of involvement will contribute to their children's academic achievement also influence their levels of involvement. Furthermore, parents' income levels also affect their levels of involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Jafarow (2015) further discovered that high-income parents take part more often in the activities organized by school than low-income parents. Furthermore, parents with high socio-economic status try more effectively to get involved than parents with low socio-economic status (Domina, 2005). Again, because of the seriously compromised socio-economic status of most families, many parents in today's world tend to spend very little time if any with their own children, as they are anxious with bringing food to the table. Sitting down with children to discuss issues of life has become a luxury for many families. As a result, parents may fail to effectively impact on the proper or desired conduct. In contrast, Shaver and Walls (1998) identified that parents' income level is not a contributing factor to their level of involvement.

In addition, family structure also has an effect on parental involvement (Astone&McLanahan, 1991; Povtvin et al., 1999; Jordan et al., 2001). For

example, Astone & McLanahan (1991) establish that children with a single parent or step parents are provided with less support and control in comparison to children who live in two-parent families.

Marital disruption in the family can lead to low levels of involvement by reducing the amount of time parents spend with children. This change is particularly typical for fathers, because the number of children who live with their mothers after divorce is significantly higher (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Additionally, parenting style is another factor influencing the level of involvement (Cooper et al., 2000). Captivatingly, Mapp (2002) identified that parents' own experience of parental involvement when they were school pupils also affects how they get involved.

Gender also contributes to the involvement, that is, the child's gender as well as the parent's gender. Feuerstein, (2000) noted that not only the child's gender, but also the parent's gender is a factor contributing to the level of involvement. Deslanders and Potvin (1999); Carter & Wojtkiewicz, (2000) institute that that male students' mothers contact teachers more frequently than female ones. Interestingly, according to Cooper et al. (2000), male students' parent involvement levels are higher than females in elementary school, but in high school female students' parents' involvement levels are higher than males. Another reason why parents do not get involved is that they do not perceive their involvement as a parental duty (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). To some parents, it is the responsibility of the school to educate learners (Carrasquillo & London, 1993).

Other reasons for the lack of involvement are cultural differences, parents own unsuccessful school experiences (Aronson, 1996) and lack of transportation (Pena, 2000) are also considered as influential factors. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) mention that a student's age is another issue affecting the level of parental involvement. Aronson (1999) & LaRocque et al. (2011) mention that language is another issue that has an influence on parental involvement. The language used at school can be very academic (LaRocque et al., 2011). He indicates that most school staff does not know how to contact parents with different language background. Even when parents and teachers do not have any problem in understanding each other, teachers' attitudes influence the level of involvement (Pena, 2000; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). According to Mapp (2002), if parents trust the attitude of school staff, they are likely to get more involved because "every parent wants to trust the school and to be trusted" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p189). Pena (2000) identified that parents anticipate the most important stimulation from teachers, but sometimes they do not feel this stimulation. Comer and Haynes (1991) stated that teacher requests made within an adequate and attractive school environment have a noticeable effect on parents deciding to get involved. On the other hand, sometimes parents' roles in getting involved are unclear, and they may need clear explanations from teachers about what they are expected to do (LaRocque et al 2011). Fields-Smith (2005) found that parents respond more frequently to teachers' demands that are well defined. Besides, many parents confront the reality of a confused academic curriculum that brings its own difficulties... parents do experience a considerable degree of confusion about what their children are doing in school (Crozier, 1999, p.228).

Researchers at the University of Oxford found that children whose parents participated in the Peers Early Education Partnership (a program geared towards supporting families of children ages 0-5) “made significantly greater progress in their learning than whose parents did not participate.” These strides were found in children ages 3-5, and included progress in vocabulary, language comprehension, understanding of books and print and number concepts. In addition, these children also exhibited higher self-esteem in comparison to children of non-participating parents (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003).

Similarly, Journal of Instructional Psychology reported that improving parental involvement in the classroom can also improve schools in general (Machen, Wilson and Notar, 2005). Invite parents into the classroom. Extend frequent invitations for parents to visit their child’s school and spend time in the classroom. Whether parents are invited to be silent observers or to help with activities, these visits can be most helpful and enjoyable. (Think about how special a parent will feel receiving a note from the class thanking them for their visit). Furthermore, communicate frequently. Whether in person (parent-teacher conferences), through printed materials (flyers, newsletters, school bulletin boards) or online (school Web sites, group or individual e-mails), try to make frequent contact with parents. Be sure to ask parents whether the information being shared is useful and how it can be improved, both in terms of content (for example about school activities, upcoming events) and format.

Abe Feuerstein of Bucknell University, explored several school variables thought to influence parents’ participation in their children’s education. Feuerstein found that many types of parent involvement, including monitoring homework, are not easily influenced

by educators. However, he reports that parent volunteerism and participation in parent-teacher organizations can be increased when teachers make substantial efforts to contact parents.

In another study of an elementary school in Texas with predominantly Mexican-American parents, Delores of Pena Texas Tech University, found that the school staff, despite significant efforts to include parents in the school activities, failed to recognize many factors that discourage parent participation: language, parent cliques, parents' education, cultural influences, educators' attitudes and family issues can have detrimental effects on parents' efforts to become more involved in their children's education.

Mexican parents in Pena study believe that educating children is solely the responsibility of the school and do not think it is proper to intervene in a teacher's professional duties. Despite a bilingual staff, language influenced how much parents participated in school activities. Despite the staff's ability to speak to parents in their home language, some parents' limited education created serious barriers to participation in many school activities.

Pena also observed some negativity among teachers concerning parent involvement. Teachers expressed concern that increasing parent involvement was an extra burden on them. Teachers' attendance at many after-school activities was minimal and they often did not take the opportunity to interact with parents, reducing the opportunity for parents to get to know teachers in social settings. Parents described feeling unwelcome in certain teachers' rooms.

Home factors beyond education and language also influenced parents' ability to be involved in school activities. One of the largest obstacles for parents was their schedule. Many parents worked long hours or had two jobs. The availability of transportation and childcare also pose significant problems for many parents. In particular, the lack of childcare on Saturday mornings kept many parents from attending classes. Although parents were allowed to bring young children to the classes if they did not have childcare, this proved distracting for all.

The study by Mubanga (2012), however, attributed lack of parental involvement to high poverty levels among families and lack of knowledge on the importance of education. As a way of increasing the level of parental involvement in their children's education, parents and teachers, Mubanga (2012) suggested that parents should attend school meetings, participate in the decision making process and support their children with school work. Other suggestions were that parents should visit the school to discuss academic performance with teachers and that they should be sensitized on the importance of education. Fitzgerald (2004:3) argues that some parents really need education in that direction because often parents are ignorant of their roles and do not understand that the way they raise their children greatly influences their development and learning.

According to Lareau (2006:3), on the other hand, some like to be involved as much as possible but their social class prohibits them from doing so. Fuller (2006) in Mapolisa et al. (2014) argues that, even if low socio economic status families are worried about their children's poor performance, the majority of them are not always able to assist their

children due to illiteracy. Given such a scenario, education managers need to know that families, schools and communities have a common goal to nurture and guide children to adulthood.

At times, what hinders parents from engaging with schools is that schools are hard to reach for parents, which is also an important aspect to explore. For example, in Afghanistan most of the parents, particularly women, do not have any experience of education, schools seem intimidating and inaccessible to parents which necessitates a proactive role on the part of the school to invite parents. Uneducated and semi-literate parents may feel inadequate in their capacity to help their children. Men may get discouraged from involvement in children's literacy because of the perceived gender roles and feelings of inadequacy in their own literacy (Fletcher and Daly, 2002).

The way parents view their role has a significant impact on how they engage in their children's education. Parents who believe that their role is to get children in schools, which then takes over the responsibility of their education, may not actively participate in their children's education at home or school (Hornby and Lafaele, 2012). Other barriers might be parents' lack of confidence in their own academic competence to support their children.

Despite the growing importance of Early Childhood Education, there are number of challenges that have continued to pull down its effective implementation. These include inadequate teaching and learning resources, socio-economic factors, High Teacher /Child ratio with poor remunerations, financial constraints. Many ECDE centers lack adequate teaching and learning resource and facilities

suitable for ECDE in their learning environment. These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture suitable for children, kitchen, safe clean water, playground, toilets and play material (International Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991). This implies that teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources to enable them to implement ECDE Curriculum effectively. This affects implementation of ECDE Curriculum negatively as creation of a sustainable learning environment helps deprived children to improve their academic performance (Offenheiser& Holcombe, 2003).

Malnutrition and ill-health are factors associated with the socio-economic factor. These factors can significantly damage the cognitive processing ability of children. Children whose processing capacity is impacted by ill-health and malnutrition may require more hours of instruction to learn various skills. As such, implementation of early childhood education may prove critical especially low income countries (van de Linde, 2005).

Socio-economic differences affecting effective implementation of ECDE also cut across regions, with some being labeled 'marginalized' or Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL). Regional disparities have significant role in facilitating access to early childhood care and education, where enrollment levels in rural and marginalized areas are low in comparison to those in the urban areas. Children from the marginalized communities in rural Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) suffer from lack of access to early childhood education. One typical example is nomadic Maasai community, which is one of the communities experiencing the least access to early childhood education and care because of way of life and regional disparities.

Financial constraints can lead to ineffective implementation of early childhood education. At macro level, Kenya has suffered from the heavy debt burden following its pursuit on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund fiscal policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programs. It is reported that these debt-servicing programs is partly responsible for significant reduction in government funding for subsidized education, health care and school related expenses. The result has been that families bear more responsibilities in implementation of early childhood education programs (Kilbride& Kilbride,1990).

Teacher child ratio has been a subject of much attention among researchers in relation to the factors facing teaching and learning process. Early childhood development education has not been left out. Research shows that teacher child ratio has continued to grow. On average, teacher child ratio for both 3-5 years old children and 6-8 years olds still remains critical. Teachers are not comfortable with the increasing number of children in their classes they handle (Dodge & Colker, 1992). Still with these high ratios, ECDE teachers are poorly remunerated and under the mercy of parents (most of whom have little or nothing to give).

This article has briefly highlighted the key challenges facing Early Childhood Education in Kenya. However, there are various other underlying issues like lack of proper government policy framework on ECDE which continue to hinder every good gain that could be realized in through effective development of early childhood program. Thus, there is need to build more realistic policy provisions in order to safeguard the integral development of the Early Childhood Education in Kenya.

Christenson, and Sheridan, (2001) assert that international and national research indicates that relations between ECD practitioners and parents are often strained because of the following factors:

- Lack of knowledge of pedagogical principles (the fact that education is not just teaching);
- Lack of knowledge of child development issues and the needs of each developmental stage;
- Lack of father's involvement in the education of young children;
- Working woman a lack of involvement compounds her problems. She is a mother, a worker and an ideal wife at the same time;
- Financial difficulties produce family pressure leading to parents failing to meet the children's basic needs
- Marital difficulties;
- Intervention from the extended family;
- Lack of confidence on the part of both parents and Early Childhood Development practitioners regarding mutual communication;
- Different understanding and expectations of each other's contribution to children's learning;

- Differences in views between parents and practitioners regarding respective responsibilities for child-rearing and education;
- Lack of attention to skills necessary to work with parents and families in pre-service and in-service training of practitioners.

However, according to Kerman, (2012) topics of discussion and information given by teachers to parents at parent evenings or informal meetings have very little influence on child rearing behaviours at home. Kernan, (2012) further concluded that mutual sharing of information regarding children's learning and development between parents and practitioners is not happening.

Factors accounting for these findings include a clear separation in the thoughts of parents between child-rearing at home and education at school, differences in norms and values regarding child rearing and education between parents and teachers, cultural differences in communication styles and differences in views regarding respective responsibilities for child-rearing (Desforges and Abouchaar,2003). A further important contributing factor to strained relations between parents and practitioners as cited by Christenson (2002) is the lack of attention given to the skills necessary to work with parents and families in pre-service and in-service training of professionals. An important finding of the Kernan, (2012) study about professional competencies and training in Early Childhood Development was that many formal professional competence profiles and training profiles focus mainly on knowledge and competences about working with children neglecting the essential work with parents and local communities. The study by Mubanga (2012) revealed barriers to parental involvement

to be very high illiteracy levels among parents, high poverty levels among families and lack of knowledge on the importance of education.

Experience has shown that traditionally much work is done by school staff at all levels to raise the self-esteem of pupils, but much less consideration is given to the self-esteem of parents. Bandura (1986) uses the term 'self-efficacy' to describe self-esteem in the sense of self belief, and for parents this is established in the belief that they can make a positive input to their own child's learning. This has also supported the positive link between the level of parental efficacy and parental involvement. Melhuish et al (2008) chronicle that, parents with a strong self-efficacy are more likely to become involved in their children's education. It has been noted that parents who feel more successful and who believe in their capacity to influence their child's performance will exhibit greater involvement in school linked activities. This can be observed in home learning where the parents is more than willing to assist the child and will always check if the child has homework to be done. Zellman and Waterman (1998) have noted that it becomes very easy especially if the parent has been involved in the early stages of their child's education, thus the pre-school years. Melhuish et al (2008) also indicates that research has shown that high levels of parental involvement correlate positively with higher reading scores.

In BINGA district, Zimbabwe — It's a bad memory for Brenda Mudzonga,* a geography teacher at Mupambe Secondary School in Zimbabwe. During her first six months at the school, there was no room for her in the cottage where most teachers lived. She stayed in a school store room with another teacher. "I cried almost every day," Mudzonga said.

“I couldn’t see the other teachers’ cottage because it was so far away, and when my roommate wasn’t here, I was afraid to be by myself.”Mupambe’s headmaster, John Dube, said poor living conditions like this continue to make attracting qualified teachers difficult. At rural schools, like Mupambe, teachers live on campus because their homes are too far away.

Mupambe Secondary School is one of seven schools supported by Mennonite Central Committee’s (MCC) Global Family education program in Matabeleland North Province: Siachilaba, Simatelele, Pashu, Tinde, Siansundu and Dampa secondary schools are all part of the program.

All of the schools are forced to conduct some classes outside. Tafa Benjamin, a teacher at Siachilaba Secondary School, said teaching under the trees is difficult. “Voice projection is hard and we don’t have a good blackboard,” she said. “It’s crisis management.” And the headmaster at Siachilaba, Peter Munkuli, said when it rains all students must come indoors “It’s a challenge. Learning stops and everyone is put in one classroom. If it rains for a week, learning stops for a week,” Munkuli said.

Another challenge that teachers face is livestock and other animals wandering through the outdoor classes. The schools are located in the Binga District of Matabeleland North province about 217 miles from Bulawayo. It’s a remote area and has the highest rate of poverty in the country. Families rely on marginal farming, mining, fishing and some casual labor for income.

Parents are charged fees to send their children to school – usually about US\$50 per term. But up to three-quarters of families are unable to pay. Twenty-two year old Irvine Muzamba walks nine miles a day to attend Mupambe Secondary School. But at times he's been forced to work to support his family and help pay school fees. "I worked herding cattle for almost a year and then I came back to school," he said. "My parents have tried to pay. If I could, I would come to school all of the time." Global Family is supporting the schools in Matabeleland North in a variety of ways, including providing textbooks and classroom furniture, as well as materials for fencing, new classrooms and teachers' housing. Global Family also has established committees in all of the schools in Matabeleland North province, to bring together school officials, teachers, parents and community leaders. School officials say that approach works well, as issues are confronted on a community-wide basis. "The solution could be to send students home," he said. "But that's not a good gesture in a Christian community and it would be a disservice. Education is a right." Community members and parents at the schools assist by keeping the school yard clean and gathering stones and other construction materials and helping with construction projects. Global Family works with partners around the world, supporting more than 100 educational programs.

2.9 Strategies to support parents' participation in their children's education

Parent-teacher relationships are not as simple as many articles lead us to believe. New teachers could mistakenly come to think that parent volunteers are common and that all parents will attend parent conferences if they are invited to do so. However, teachers of

young children need to recognize that although parent involvement is very important, it is not always easy for the teacher, the school, or the parents to facilitate (Brewer, 2007).

Numerous strategies have been put forward by researchers to improve working relations between parents and educational settings. Authors such as Epstein (2002) point to the necessity of clarifying the overall responsibilities of parents versus school. Parents ultimately have the responsibility of their children's upbringing and ECD /school centres remain ultimately responsible for the organization and quality of education of their children.

According to National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2005), both parents and educators need to acknowledge that they need each other in order to be able to communicate about the pedagogical climate at home and at school, so that they can complement each other's contribution to children's learning and development. This can develop respect for each other's contributions to the childrearing and education of children. Kernan, (2012) places the emphasis on improving communication and mutual understanding. For educators, listening to parents more improves communication, taking concrete action and learning about family situations seems to be the key aspect for overcoming problems (De Graaff cited in Kernan, 2012). The responsibility for action is placed squarely on practitioners' shoulders.

According to Armstrong and Goldfield (2004), another form of parental involvement is to implement (Triple P) Positive Parenting Programme, developed in Australia, which uses a five model of family intervention in both treatment and prevention and is tailored to

individual families' needs. The focus is on parenting skills, competence, communication between parents and reducing parental stress.

The approach (Triple P) involves interventions at different levels of intensity that explore children's behavioural and emotional problems and children at risk. The programme has involved changing the ways parents think and behave in relation to both themselves and their children. Parents are taught to be good problem solvers and to monitor and evaluate their parenting performance according to reliable criteria. They are also encouraged to see themselves as competent and successful parents. In addition, parents are taught ways to create positive learning environments for their children by using descriptive praise, for example (thus great, Getrude, that you ate every bit of your meal tonight), offering quality time by organizing activities that the child finds particularly engaging and setting a good example. Parents are taught to be assertive in disciplining their children rather than being coercive and are encouraged to have realistic expectations about their child's capabilities. Parents are encouraged to take care of themselves so that they can feel good about parenting (Armstrong and Goldfeld, 2004).

Getting parents involved in the classroom and in activities to help their children succeed in school is an important part of work. Benson and Martin (2003) recommend the following principles for encouraging parent involvement in urban schools.

- Focus on students' successes and achievements;
- Send personalized information to parents, that is, specific information about their children that is directed to them;
- When possible, use extended family to support students;

- Extend frequent invitations to parents;
- Use school staff and parent volunteers in creative ways to organize programmes;
- Coordinate planning with administrators, parents and teachers;
- Think of other ways to make parents feel welcome in the classroom, such as serving refreshments, providing nametags, reimbursing parents for transportation and babysitting costs, meeting in accessible buildings such as community centres, planning events at different times and on different days, meeting in a room conducive to communication using learners as hosts/guides and recognizing parents and staff for their efforts.

Face to face interviews also revealed that there are different ways in which parents can be involved in the education of their children. This can be done through participating in educational activities such as seminars, workshops on different early childhood issues, observing classes formally so that they get first-hand experience on challenges teachers encounter with their children. They can also offer services or courses according to parents' profession, for example, presentation of folk tales and childhood songs by elderly family members, dentists, nurses, lawyers and accountants, to mention just a few. They can assist non-instructional activities such as organizing ECD sports days and supervising children on field trips. They also assist in instructional activities as teacher aides and this activity helps them acquire basic teaching skills, how to prepare teaching/ learning materials such as toys, constructing the outdoor play area, maintain infrastructure and attend special events at the school or even work as resource persons (Connor and Wheeler, 2009).

Some suggestions on involving parents are for teachers to provide a short biography of themselves. Parents seldom have opportunities during “drop-off” and “pick-up” time to get to know their child’s teacher, and conversations during these brief encounters often focus on the events of the day. Sharing some particular details about special talents and interests can lessen any stranger anxiety and make parents feel more at ease. Alternatively, invite parents to complete a brief questionnaire. Not only can parents be an invaluable source of information about their own children, but they can bring special interests and talents to share with the entire school community. The teacher may want to ask parents to fill out a questionnaire on the first day of school or invite them to take it home and return it at a later date. Some questions to ask might include:

Would you be interested in being a “guest” in our classroom? or Could you be a story reader?and so on.

Provide a “dialog notebook” or “daily diary” for each learner. These note books, kept in children’s backpacks, are an excellent way to send messages to and from school and home regarding a child’s progress. For parents whose schedule do not allow for visits to the school building this offers them a way to stay involved, avoid feelings of guilt, and share regular and timely feedback. In line with that, one can make use of the drop-off and pick-up activities. Even though these times can be tumultuous, don’t miss out opportunities to engage interested parents. Greet with enthusiasm and when possible, acknowledge their arrival in some special way. For example, prompt the class by saying “look who’s here-let’s say hello to Sarah and Mr Khumalo.” This serves several purposes: it makes Sarah feel welcomed, makes her dad feel more at ease about

Sarah's being there, and teachers and acknowledge the importance of greeting and acknowledging others.

Various models will be consulted in an effort to create knowledge that will address the most intervention programs for parents involve teaching effective strategies for managing children's behaviour. But problems can also arise when parents engage in maladaptive thinking. Mothers at a higher risk of child abuse, for example, are more likely to attribute negative traits to children who demonstrate ambiguous behaviour, and see this behaviour as intentional. Bugental and her colleagues have administered a cognitive retraining intervention program for parents which aim to alter such biases. They found that mothers who participated in the program showed improvement in parenting cognitions, diminished levels of harsh parenting, and greater emotional availability. In turn, children, two years after their mothers participated in the program, displayed lower levels of aggressive behaviour as well as better cognitive skills than those whose mothers had not undergone such cognitive retraining. These findings, then, clearly underline the important role played by parental beliefs in the child-rearing issue of parents' involvement in the education of their children at ECD level.

Research has shown that various strategies have been forwarded in an effort to improve the level of parental involvement especially at ECD level. Below the study outlines the Epstein's (2001) version of parental involvement which shows the overlapping spheres of influence:

- Home liaison officers

- Looking to praise as much as criticise their child so that the news isn't always bad
- Parent support advisers
- Family first officers
- Employing an attached social worker and inclusion workers who aren't obviously school authority
- Inviting parents to health checks
- Using extended services funding to employ a family support worker who works with families
- Pyramid for parents group
- New intake programme including home visits and several visits to school followed up by inviting them in to see what the children are doing
- Attendance officers employed by the school to target persistent absentees

Communicating

- Sharing information via notice boards
- Becoming a dyslexia-friendly school
- Pastoral workers for children and families within the school
- Combining parents' evenings with other information sessions
- Quick responses and constant dialogues to enquires and problems

- Monthly drop-in
- Open afternoons- last hour on Friday- parents and families go into classes
- Weekly celebration assembly
- Local press
- Phone, text and email
- Contact at the school gate
- Personal contact with staff
- Trying to reach out informally-just forming a relationship with them at the school gate can break the ice
- Newsletters
- Parents' evening
- Regular parent consultation
- Evening meetings with children's facilities
- Being flexible with parents' evenings
- Nursery and reception classes for parents to share play with their child for half an hour every morning.

It has been noted that sharing information is a great way to set up partnership with parents. Interaction between teachers and parents can help with a child's development

and wellbeing. The way this interaction happens has a major impact on how parents relate to teachers and the organisation. When communicating to parents it is advisable to tell them about what your school or child care services does and why in order for the parents to gain confidence in the management. Tell them about the approach of the school and what it hopes to achieve at the end of the day for the child. At times it is good to find out their expectations from the school, and how they would like to be kept informed about their child and day to day accomplishments of the school

Volunteering

- Parent governance
- Saturday opening for dads to play with children in playground
- Parent Teachers Association
- Parent council
- Help in the classroom
- Reading workshops twice weekly in key stage 1 with parents listening to their child read- in the case of ECD children it will mainly picture reading
- Inviting parents in to share play sessions with children
- Play club bags (story bags that are made with parents and children, with follow-up work in the home)
- Stay and play sessions

- Homework clubs

In this case parents would be expected to volunteer in assisting the teachers, administration and children in their everyday activities. It also refers to parents may be taking part in sport or any other event in the school. Furthermore, parents may use their various expertise in the maintenance of the school.

Decision-Making

- Connexions advice on higher education
- Parent governance
- Parent-led curriculum
- Parent owned schools and academies
- Parent council
- Parent Teachers Association
- Parental contributions to the school development plan
- Stakeholder day
- Home-school agreement
- Parent questionnaires

Parents should be involved in decision making on issues concerning the welfare and learning of their children. This means that the school should have organizations like the

SDCs/SDA being very active when it comes to making decisions on school goals in an effort to improve the learning of the children.

Collaborating with the Community

- Invitations to events where children are performing or receiving awards in and outside school
- Refreshments and food events
- Football team
- Various timings for meetings, parents' evening
- School reception area friendly and accessible
- Pupil-led events bring in the parents
- Religious ceremonies
- Wide range of activities to try and meet the interests of everyone
- Links with children's centre
- Friendly meet-the teacher evenings with local teaching assistants acting as host
- Buddy system (parents from the community who are eager to come into school, round up parents who want to come in but are not at ease or confident enough to come alone)

- Theme days or weeks that involve external agencies that might encourage parental involvement
- Community room where parents are invited to attend courses and workshops run by the school and external providers
- Community week, where every child in the school has the opportunity to have a visit out or a visitor in to enhance the curriculum
- Community fun day
- Visits to the local home for the elderly
- Enterprise days
- Engagement with city learning centres and media centre.

RemoteInvolvement

- Text messaging alerts
- Use of website for information
- Contributing to podcasts
- Contributing to and commenting on school blogs
- Voting systems
- Online questionnaires
- Resources on the virtual learning environment (VLE)

Ohio Department of Education suggested the following strategies as best practices for parental involvement in schools:

Welcoming School Climate

- Provide a personal greeting and welcome packet for all parents visiting the school, a community services directory, important school contact information, school calendar and coupons to local businesses
- Have teachers make personal contacts with families through e-mail, phone calls or home visits
- Hold an open house, prior to school opening, at which families can meet their children's teachers, tour the school building and meet other parents
- Provide transportation and child care to enable families to attend school sponsored family involvement events
- Offer translators to welcome and assist families during school activities
- Provide workshops and materials for parents on typical development and appropriate parent and school expectations for various age groups
- Print suggestions for parents on home conditions that support learning at each stage level
- Partner with local agencies to provide regular parenting workshops on nutrition, family recreation communication

- Have school personnel make home visits at transition points such as preschool and elementary, middle and high school to help families and learners understand what to expect

Establish Effective School-To-Home and Home-To-School Communication

Provide printed information for parents on homework

- policies and on monitoring and supporting learners at home
- Send home folders of learners work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment
- Develop electronic grade booklets so families can frequently monitor their children's progress
- Clearly communicate school policies to all families in their home language
- Establish formal mechanisms for families to communicate to administrators and teachers as needed (eg direct phone numbers, e-mail addresses, weekly hours for families to call or meet).
- Create a families "suggestion or comment" box (electronic and onsite) for families to anonymously provide their questions, concerns and recommendations.

Strengthen Families' Knowledge And Skills To Support And Extend Their Children's Learning At Home And In The Community

- Provide training and for parents on how to improve children's s learning

- Make regular homework assignments that require learners to discuss with their families what they are learning in class
- Engage families in opportunities to work with their children in setting school

The school can provide relevant information and ideas to families on how they can help their children on school related issues.

Engage Families In School Planning, Leadership and Meaningful Volunteer Opportunities

- Create roles for parents on all decision-making and advisory committees, properly training them for the areas in which they will serve (eg curriculum, budget or school safety)
- Provide equal representation for parents on school governing bodies
- Conduct a survey of parents to identify volunteer interests, talents and availability, matching these resources to school programs and staff-support needs
- Create volunteer recognition activities such as event, certificates and thank-you cards
- Establish a parent telephone tree to provide school information and encourage interaction among parents

- Structure a network that links every family with a designated parent representative

Connect Learners and Families to Community Resources That Strengthen and Support Learners 'S Learning and Well-Being

- Through school community partnerships, facilitate families' access to community based programs(e.g. health care and human services) to ensure that families have resources to be involved in their children's education
- Establish school business partnerships to provide learners mentoring, and experiential learning opportunities
- Connect learners and families to service-learning projects in the community, invite community partners to share resources at annual open houses or parent-teacher conferences.

2.10 Implications of the reviews to the current study

From the various studies reviewed, the most important aspect that is clearly coming up is that teachers are concerned about "making parents feel welcome". Parents know when teachers have ambivalent or negative feelings, no matter what the teachers actually say to them. It is important that teachers recognize the real advantages of working with parents so that they will truly welcome collaboration with their children's parents.

Time is a crucial factor for teachers as well as parents. Teachers need time to plan and organize parent activities. Although administrators may want to increase parents' involvement, this is only possible if they provide teachers with the training and time to work with parents. Schools must consider the educational level, language, culture and home situations of their students' parents.

The staff must communicate regularly with parents through various means. Providing written information in the parents' native language is not enough-oral methods of communication must be available for parents who do not read well in any language. Establishing telephone networks by which parents keep one another informed could help. Parents gain confidence to participate in school when they understand practices and what is expected of them.

For most parents, schools need to establish a welcoming climate and an open-door policy so that any parent who has questions can feel confident that she will be welcomed and given the help she needs. Involvement in the social activities of the school must be honoured as an important contribution. The interests and needs of the parents are considered when planning activities. Some parents need to be educated on the importance of partnership between them and the professionals. There is clear indication that some lack knowledge on what the involvement entails.

Studies on parental involvement have shown that there is need for their engagement in their children's learning. However, do we know how to mount effective programmes to increase parents' involvement in their child's school? Also, it has been noted in some studies that parental involvement is a skill that can be taught and learned. Parents are

also involved at home by ensuring their children attend school, providing a variety of reading materials and learning opportunities and limiting excessive television viewing.

According to Epstein's theory (1995), parents need to be involved in these decisions as knowledgeable partners. They need to know how the school system works, what programmes and activities are available, how these decisions will affect their child's chances for future success, which courses are needed to prepare for future job and careers, what teachers expect in their courses for learners to do well, and in what ways parents can get involved in decisions that affect how schools operate.

A consistent body of research concludes that parents are the first and foremost influence on their children's development and school success. But does positive impact of parental involvement apply to all families or just to those with more education and material advantages?

Research has demonstrated that from birth to adolescence children need a variety of positive learning experiences that should be provided in a secure and loving environment if they are to achieve their full potential. Parental involvement is the process whereby schools, parents and other services support each other in stimulating children's curiosity, motivation and development (de Wit, 2005). Centres or schools decide their particular aim, motivation and approach to educational partnership (Kalthoff, 2011) once basic legal requirements are fulfilled. Children learn through interacting with and observing parents (Bandura, 1969) and such learning is affected by the level of interaction or engagement. Kellaghan (1993) concluded that academic success is influenced by what parents do in the home, and it is not children's family

background, that is significant. Similarly, the potential limitations associated with poor economic circumstances can be overcome by parents who provide stimulating, supportive, and language-rich experiences for their children (Redding, 1999). Ceci et al. (1997) observed that parent-child interactions are the forces that lead to academic performance, even though there is need to take into account the potentially constraining or expanding opportunities provided by children's family backgrounds.

From experience it has been noted that schools are not keen to have parents volunteering their services. Therefore, there is need for the schools to provide some form of training to parents so that the assistance may be more meaningful and benefit the learners for example parents can be taken for reading lessons so that they can help at home and read for the young children. Having noted that Bubi is a dry district and most of the parents are not working the school can assist parents and the community to do income generating projects. Below is a suggestion from one school teacher in a school where Muchuchuti (2015) carried a case study 'we have devised a model whereby parents work on school projects for a fee. However, we do not give those cash, but we credit school fees for their children. We have allowed some to pay in kind, which is with goats, chickens. We now have a goat pen and at this point we have 3 goats'.

From the statement the model sounds very applicable especially in the rural settings. The idea of parents working within the school in order to raise funds for their children and the school channels the whole amount to the child's fees or levy is a very noble idea. The idea of domestic animals also can be tried. Once they are there, the school can find buyers, once bought the money is also channelled to fees. From the study the

school indicated that the model has since improved the attendance of learners, hence it is worthy trying.

The district can also try to implement the Epstein typology of parental involvement whereby all the steps are taken one by one with parents on board, that is parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaboration. In this model some of the practices the parents would do them separately while others would be conducted jointly in order to influence the children's learning and development.

2.11Chapter summary

This chapter has described the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner whose philosophy forms the basis for parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children below six years. The microsystem, which is closer to the child, encompasses the associations and interactions a child has with the immediate surroundings. The techniques described in this chapter are by no means all encompassing but rather serve to highlight the broad repertoire of practices needed by schools as they make every effort to work more effectively with parents. The policy put into practice in Zimbabwe has been briefly described, that is, from pre-colonial to date. Furthermore, participation of parents in early childhood development in the Bubi district has been specified.

Worldwide experiences of parental participation from different contexts have been highlighted as well as benefits of parental participation or influences in the early

childhood development. The chapter also looked at the factors affecting parents' participation in early childhood development. A variety of strategies for increasing parent involvement has been suggested. Finally, the implications of the reviews to the current study were also highlighted. A point worth mentioning here is that although the partiality favouring parent involvement in schools is indicated, it is also clear that effective intervention does not just happen without the dedicated effort on the part of all involved. The following chapter will explore the methodologies on parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section the research approach, paradigm and research design will be given. Also to be presented is the location, population, sample and sample procedure. The instruments to be used and procedures for data collection and data are also explained and elaborated here. Ethical considerations will also be highlighted in this section

3.2 Research paradigm

Diem (2015) points out that a research design is simply a scientific methodological way of finding answers to the questions; while Santrock (2010) defines a research design as a print to conduct a research study which involves the description of research approach, study sections, sample size, sampling techniques, tools and methods of collecting data and analysis to answer questions. Research paradigm, according to Maree (2007), is a set of assumptions or beliefs about aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view. According to Maree (2007), paradigms serve as the lens or organizing principles by which reality is interpreted. On the other hand, Jonker & Pennink (2010) say that a paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Sharing the same sentiments, Babbie (2013) describes a paradigm as an interpretative framework which is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. The interpretative

paradigm will be adopted for this study as it allows the researcher to be in a position to understand the thinking and feelings of the respondents and how they interact and communicate verbally and non-verbally. Shirish (2013) postulates that qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. It is against this background that the writer chose the interpretative paradigm because of its unique and distinct approach in examining the subject matter. In this study the writer went to the field; in this case, it was the selected schools in the Bubi District in Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe.

3.3 Research approach

This study followed a qualitative research approach. Creswell (2014) argues that Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. The information is gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context, this is a major characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research methodology is chosen because it uses an emic perspective, in other words, it derives meaning from

the research participants' perspective (Schurink in De Vos, 1998:242, McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 32,323).

The aim of qualitative research, therefore, is to find out and comprehend a fundamental phenomenon in its real-situation. While the research questions may be wide and general, they are pursued to understand informants' experiences with the fundamental phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2007). Broadly defined, qualitative means any type of exploration that produces findings arrived at from actual world surroundings where the phenomenon of interest manifests naturally and not by means of quantification statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

3.4 Design of the study

The research design is the blueprint for conducting a study (Denzin& Lincoln, 2005; Johnson, 2011). A study design is the strategy or plan that changes from the underlying theoretical expectations to postulating the choosing of informants, the data collecting procedures to be utilized and analysis of data to be completed (Maree, 2007). This study will adopt a case study design. Case studies are designs in which the researcher attempts to develop an in-depth analysis of a case, event, activity or a programme (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2011) further points out that the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. This description brings in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). This study will investigate parent's experiences with involvement in the educational development of children below

six years of age, hence, it's rationale for a case study designs. Such understanding informs the current researcher's rationale for a case study design.

3.5 Location of the Study

This study will take place in the rural community of Bubi District in Matabeleland North Region in Zimbabwe. Once the proposal had been approved a comprehensive discourse on the dynamics of the study site and its impacts on parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years and its implications for childhood education provisioning was undertaken.

3.6 Sample size and sampling procedures

Cohen and Manion, Morrison (2011) define a sample as a sample group or subset of the total population. Sampling in research could mean taking any portion of a population as a representative of that population. It is difficult for the researcher to investigate the whole population because it will need time and a lot of resources. It will also make it difficult for the researcher to interpret colossal volume of data, so a small and manageable group called a sample is preferred. A sample is selected from the group of people on which information is being collected (Cochram, 2015). Tansley (2010) agrees by saying that a sample is a small group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. Purposive sampling will be used to come up with a sample because it enables people or respondents, who have particular specific characteristics which are relevant to the topic of the research, to be selected on the basis of these characteristics (Zink, 2012). Babbie (2013) mentions that in purposive sampling the units to be

observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones are most useful or representative. Two schools will be used for this study, a total of twenty-two people will be part of the study that is, two heads, four teachers, two from each school, and sixteen parents, that is, eight from each school.

3.7 Instruments for data collection

Researchers are guided by the nature of the research problem and type of questions to be addressed in selecting the appropriate instruments. Biddix (2015) says that instruments are measurements devices researchers use to gather information. Briggs and Coleman (2007) say that a tool is used in research to obtain information, which serves as evidence to support findings. As no one method is adequate on its own, triangulation assures one of gaining valid and reliable information, hence the researcher has opted for the employment of varied methods. This study was conducted through the use of focus group discussion for parents, semi-structured interviews for ECD teachers, and the Head of the schools and document analysis. The researcher opted to use the focus group discussion as one method for this study because it is useful to obtain detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions; they can save time and money compared to individual interviews and they can also provide a broader range of information. Focus groups offer unique insights into the possibilities of or for critical inquiry as a deliberate, dialogic, and democratic practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.8 Instruments' trustworthiness

In this study, issues of qualitative validity and reliability will be addressed through instrument credibility and dependability (Bartlett & Burton, 2007). Qualitative validity speaks to the demonstration of objectivity on the part of the researcher. Credibility means the relationship between the findings and collected data; dependability is the assurance to the people about the findings from the raw social context. In qualitative research, issues of trustworthiness suggest that the research is credible when those familiar with the topic of the study recognize the findings to be true. Also to be considered is transferability, as well as conformability for the purpose of ensuring that public that actions were appropriate and without biases (Lee and Lings, 2008). Transferability has a great deal to do with whether findings can justifiably be transferred to other contexts. It is critical to address trustworthiness measures in this research and this was ensured through member checking.

3.9 Data collection procedures

Face to face interviews were planned, organized and conducted by the researcher to gather information from the participants. With the interviews the researcher sought to establish and understand parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years of age. An interview guide will be prepared and used to keep the interview focused. These interviews involved open ended questions which are intended to elicit stakeholders' views on their experiences in the involvement

in the education and development. Interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes and were recorded with participants' consent.

3.9.1 Interviews

Mkandla (2011) defines an interview as a formal dialogue or consultation to obtain information for teaching or learning through questioning somebody. Farrant (1980), cited in Kelvin (2010), asserts that an interview is the art of acquiring certain data from people through face to face conversation or structured open ended questions. Nachimias (2013) mentions that interviews enable the researcher to obtain information from the young aged as well as illiterate people. Therefore, an interview is a way of collecting data through interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. In this study, information will be collected from the parents through focus group discussions.

3.9.2 Focus Group discussion

A focus group "... is carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. It is conducted with approximately seven to ten people by a skilled interviewer. The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion"(Ohio State University (2012, Krueger, 1988).

Focus group interviews are qualitative research methods that consist of a carefully designed "discussion" which allows people to express their points of view in a group setting and provide researchers with indicators of the programme impact. Focus group

interviews nurture different perceptions and points of view and are used to gather information for discovery, bench marking, evaluating, verifying perceptions, feelings, opinions and thoughts (Patton, 1990). Participants in the focus group interview are brought together because they possess certain characteristics related to the subject under study. Group members can influence each other by responding to ideas and questions that may not otherwise be brought out in measuring the quality and impact of a current or potential programme. While the purpose of focus group is to promote self-disclosure among participants in a group by ascertaining their perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts, focus group interviews are not intended to help groups or researchers reach decision, gain consensus or establish how many people hold a particular view, like statistics (Ludwig 2000).

Focus groups are most productive when used to determine information on a new proposal or programmes, determine the strengths and weaknesses of a programme, assess whether a programme is working and in the evaluation or success of a programme (Greenbaum, 1993). Advantages of conducting a focus group interview are the flexibility in questioning, the encouragement of dialogue and exchange of ideas, the generation of hypothesis being relatively fast and inexpensive and producing findings in a form that most users fully understand (Miller, 2000). According to Crossman (2017), a focus group is a socially oriented method which captures real-life data in a social setting, is flexible, has high face validity, meaning that it measures what it is intended to measure. It generates quick results and group dynamics often bring out aspects of the topic or reveal information about the subject that may not have been anticipated by the

researcher or emerged from individual interviews. In this study, sixteen parents from two schools were part of the focus group.

3.10 Data analysis procedures

The following steps, as recommended by Creswell (2014), were followed:

The data will be organized and prepared which will involve transcribing the information;

The researcher will scrutinize the data in an effort to get general sense of the information and opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning such as the impression of the overall depth, credibility and use of the information;

The researcher will start to code the information into categories and labelling it with a term using Tesch (1990) eight steps;

The researcher will use the coding process to generate a description of the people as well as themes for analysis.

A general overview of the results of the coding process for all the individual cases will then be presented. Selected cases will be repeatedly read and interpreted precisely with reference to a particular question asked and answered by the participants during the interview. The result of the interpretation will then be reported descriptively.

3.11 Ethical considerations and requirements

Ethical considerations are also known as codes of conduct which regulate the researchers' behaviour. In laymen's terms it means doing what is right, treating other

people fairly and not hurting anyone. Ethics define what is or what is not legitimate to do or what “moral” research procedure involves (May, 2011). He emphasizes that the researcher should never cause unnecessary or irreversible harm to participants, secure prior voluntary consent when possible and never unnecessarily humiliate, degrade or release harmful information about specific individuals that is collected for research purposes. Ethical considerations in this study will focus on the following principles: confidentiality, informed consent and gaining entry, respecting the right to privacy, voluntary participation, avoiding harm to participants, and anonymity. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of Fort Hare, and permission from Matabeleland North Provincial Department of Education.

The following ethical issues will be considered: -

3.11.1 Gaining entry

Channels of communication were observed in order to negotiate entry into the district. The right to privacy and participation equally applies to the idea of accessing entry into the schools where the data is to be collected. This is emphasized by Creswell (2014) that researchers need to respect research sites so that the sites are left undisturbed after the research study. An introductory letter was secured from the University to confirm the intention of the researcher to carry out a study in the selected Education District Office. In this study the researcher required to meet the parents outside the school. Permission was requested to carry out interviews at the participants' venue where they were comfortable to reveal their experiences as well as their involvement in the education and development of children below six years.

3.11.2 Participants' right

The authority of a researcher to conduct the study comes with the responsibility to guide, protect and oversee the interests of the respondents. Firstly, permission was requested for them to participate, bearing in mind that they have the right to agree or disagree. The researcher provided a guarantee that participants are never forced to participate in the study. During interviews, the researcher discussed with the respondents the contents of the consent form to ensure that they understand its implications. This requires that researchers respect anyone who decides not to participate in the survey (Marshall and Rossman 2015). According to Patton (2015), participants have a right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time. Therefore, the researcher observed the rights of the participants by seeking their permission before involving them in the study.

3.11.3 Informed consent

In every research discipline it is unethical to collect information without the knowledge of the respondents, and their confirmed willingness (Kurmar, 2005, Mertens, 2010). Informed consent is a written agreement to participate given by people after they have learnt some basic details about the research procedure (May, 2011). The emphasis on informed consent arises as a result of the fundamental democratic rights to freedom and self-determination (Cohen et al, 2000). In the same vein, Bryman (2012) explains that codes and consent mean that research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of research and the right to

withdraw from participating in the research at any given time. Consent forms which will briefly describe the expectations of the participants were issued, at the same time, goals and procedures will be discussed with them.

3.11.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was ensured by the researcher and the participants were ensured that all information made public will neither include the name of the participant, nor make it possible for the information to be linked with a particular participant. According to O'Leary (2014), confidentiality is protecting the privacy of participants by keeping the data sources as confidential as possible. Expressing a similar view is Cohen et al. (2000) who emphasize the prominence of protecting the rights of the participants; maintaining privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and avoiding harm, betrayal and deception.

3.11.5 Protection from harm

As far as reasonably possible, the researcher ensured that no harm comes to the participants, physical or otherwise. After obtaining permission to carry out the study the researcher has to establish rapport and address any reservations that respondents may have in giving out earnest views, opinions and responses. Respondents and sites were coded to conceal identity.

3.11.6 Achieving anonymity

The researcher promised the respondents anonymity. The names of the respondents will not appear on the research instrument or the data. Interview guides will bear no names. The participants were made aware that this study will by no means reveal their identities, nor link responses with participant's identities, unless they allow permission for that.

3.11.7 Maintaining professionalism

The researcher tried at all times throughout the study to maintain her professionalism. According to Silverman (2013), researchers should be reminded that they should bear in mind that while they are conducting research, they are in actual fact entering the private spaces of their respondents. Therefore, professionalism by researchers should always be maintained at all times.

3.11.8 Participants' vulnerability

Although the focus of this study is the African parent's experiences with involvement in the education development of children, under six years, the researcher is aware of the impact that participating in the research, directly or indirectly, may have on children as well as the participants in terms of potential harm or benefits.

In any study, one needs to be alert of possible scenarios that can take place. For instance, it is possible that some parents may feel that they have let down their children and community if the interviews make them to realize their failures and this may cause

psychological problems to them. The researcher attempted to ensure that participants know that the study is not meant to criticize or blame anybody but to enrich the parents in their involvement in the education development of children below six years.

It is also the researcher's intention to conduct the interviews at a time and place that is convenient and comfortable for the interviewees. As the researcher is not intending to involve the children at all, she would conduct the interviews after school or at any other venue of the participant's choice, that is, if the participant's prefer not to be interviewed at school. This further ensured confidentiality. In order to erase any suspicion and build confidence between the researcher and participants, the researcher offered the participants the opportunity to read through the transcripts before they were used. Once again participants were assured that their names will never be used. The researcher remained alert and sensitive to any consequences to participants as well as provided the necessary support and guidance if needed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The foregoing chapters formed an important background to the investigation contained in this thesis. Chapter two examined the observable facts of a comprehensive model of parental involvement within the framework of Uriel Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Consideration was also given to the contributions made by other researchers in the field of parental involvement. Chapter three looked into the research methodology and data collection procedures in the provision of Early Childhood Development with special reference to Bubi District in Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe. Briefly, the two chapters gave the theoretical background against which this research was to take place. The aim of the investigation was to explore parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children under six years. This chapter presents and describes the data gathered through qualitative methodology; two schools were part of the study.

The researcher collected qualitative data from two school heads, four teachers, two from each school and sixteen parents that is eight from each school. The process of analysing the data is an elevating experience and the words of the informants are presented verbatim. No corrections have been made to the words of the informants. Although the ecological systems theory has been the frame of reference throughout the study, the data has not been artificially categorized within this framework. Similarly, all

participants were allowed to discuss parent involvement from their own frame of reference and the categories and sub categories allowed to emerge organically from the data. The findings will be discussed following emerging themes from the interviews in the next chapter.

4.2 Biographical Data Presentation and Analysis

4.2.1 The Demographics of Participants

Comprehensively, focus group interviews were conducted in two schools with sixteen parents, eight from each school. Face to face interviews were also conducted in the same two schools with two school heads and four teachers, respectively. Biographical data of all informants are presented in the tables below. In the same way information that may have an impact on the responses has been also captured.

The School Heads

Table 4.1: Demographics of School Heads

SCHOOL HEAD	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Gender	Female	Male
Age	55	49
Qualifications	Diploma in Education and Bed Primary	Diploma in Education and Bed Primary
Teaching experience	35 years	18 years
Years as head of school	15 years	8 years
Years in the present school	10 years	5 years
Area that you live in	Local-community	School cottage

The heads of schools normally serve in a school for a good number of years if meaningful development has to be realized. This allows them to study the community and, hence, develop a sound knowledge about the community. In this case, the two heads have served a good number of years that is fifteen and eight years, respectively. The two heads have required qualifications, that is, first year degree required to head a school as recommended by the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture. Also noted is that gender is also taken into consideration, noting that the head of school A is a female and in school B there is a male. Head from school A is a local leader and it is assumed that she is there not only there to head the school but also expected to develop her own community.

The Teachers

Table 4.2: Demographics of Teachers in School A

SCHOOL A	TEACHER A	TEACHER B
Gender	Female	Female
Age	45 years	50 years
Qualifications	Diploma in ECD	Para-professional
Teaching experience	10 years	8 years
Marital status	Married	Married
No of children	4	7
Area that you live in	Local	Local

The teachers in school A are both mature female teachers who have served in the education system for a good number of years, that is ten and eight years. Teacher A holds a Diploma in Early Childhood Development while teacher B is a Para-professional, meaning that she has short courses on early childhood development. They

are both from the local community and they are married. It is also assumed that women are very good teachers at ECD level. From the interview the researcher noted that the teacher who holds a Para-professional certificate has been supplementing her 'O'Level with the assistance of the school. Having attained her 'O' level, she will now go for teacher training.

SCHOOL B

Table 4.3:Demographics of Teachers in School B

SCHOOL B	TEACHER A	TEACHER B
Gender	Male	Female
Age	35	40
Qualification	Diploma in ECD	Diploma in infant education
Teaching experience	9 years	12 years
Marital status	Married	Married
No of children	3	4
Area that you live in	School cottage	School cottage

In school B teacher A is a male and teacher B is a female. It is pleasing to note that males have developed interest in the field of early childhood development. They are both mature in terms of age and hold relevant qualifications to teach at that level. They are both married and have children, however, they are both not from this community where the school is located. It is assumed that in spite of the fact that these teachers are not local, they will work hard to improve the programme considering that ECD is a new programme.

The Parents

PARENTS IN SCHOOL A

Table 4.4: Demographics of Parents in School A

PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	40	35	30	37	50	60	55	48
Marital status	Married	Single	Married	Married	Widow	Married	Married	Single
No of Children	3	1	4	3	5	6	5	2
Breadwinner	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
No of people in the family	5	6	4	3	7	5	4	5

The majority of Interviewed parents in school A were females and only two males were part of this group. All parents are mature in terms age; that is, between 35 and 60 years of age. Five are married, two are single parents and one is a widow. It is also noted that the majority of them are the ones that fend for the family. Also it was pleasing to note that all the invited participants managed to attend the interviews. Issues of ethics were discussed before the focus group took off. Participants were assured that all issues discussed were to remain confidential.

Table 4.5: Demographic of Parents in School B

PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	47	35	34	45	50	49	46	52
Marital status	Single	Married	Single	Married	Married	Single	Divorced	Married
No of children	2	1	3	2	4	1	4	5
Breadwinner	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
No of people in the family	5	4	5	5	6	7	3	5

The majority of Interviewed parents in school B are females there are only three males. It is exciting to note that fathers have also developed interest in their children's

education especially at this tender age. Four parents are married; three are single while there is only one parent who is divorced. It was observed that all parents who attended are mature in terms of age, that is, 35 up to the age of 50. All interviews were conducted in the school premises. For purposes of clarity, participants were allowed to use the language which they were more comfortable with in explaining issues.

4.3The Schools

4.3.1 School A

This is a school built and maintained by the community. Generally, the children or learners live in this community. Most of the parents are not employed. Bubi district is dotted with mines; hence the few working parents are in these mines. The school is about two kilometres away from the growth point where one would find the shopping centre and the clinic. The school is orderly, the buildings and grounds are in good condition though they are visible old. The only new building is the ECD A and B classes which are on the northern part of the school together with their playground which is fenced. The outdoor play equipment is made out of gum poles and painted in bright and attractive colours which are primary colours. Also observed from the playground is the traditional summer hut made of pole and dagga.

4.3.2 School B

School B used to be a mission school before it was handed over to the community. The buildings are old, especially for the junior school. In the Early Childhood Development

department some renovations have been made though not completely finished. The ECD section is separated from the main school. There is only one classroom block for about 100 children. Teachers and children rotate to make use of the classroom. It was noted with concern that from 2005 when schools were instructed to incorporate the programme in the schools, up to now this school has only one block for the number of children enrolled. For easy presentation and interpretation, the collected data from the two schools was categorized in the following themes below.

4.4 Understanding the term parental involvement: heads, teachers and parents

The three groups of stakeholders were asked to explain their own understanding of the term parental involvement. Responses from the two school heads seem to indicate that parental involvement has to do with parents knowing their responsibility towards the development of the school and children's learning. The two heads seemed to agree that parental involvement has to do with meeting physical needs of the school. This was very interesting because two heads were interviewed at their respective schools, hence, there were no opportunities or chances to influence each other.

The heads of schools view parental involvement as parents' understanding and responsiveness towards school requests. In explaining the term parental involvements, the head of school A emphasized parents' support of their children at all levels, starting from ECD A up to grade seven. On the other hand, the head from school B mentioned that parental involvement entails that:

- Parents assist in the school by paying school fees and providing learning materials for the children.

- She further elaborated by saying: “attending meetings is crucial for parents so that they are aware of the school requests for example if the school has a Para-professional assisting in the school this teacher is paid by the parents not the government.
- This is because the government only pays fully qualified teachers holding a Diploma in Education.

The responses from the school heads will seem to mean that their understanding of parental involvement is more biased to parents providing in terms of material things in the up keep of the school. In explaining the term parental involvement, the two heads seem to understand it as providing learning and play materials, that is, in cash or kind for the learners. This is also a clear indication that the heads were clearly separating school based activities from home based activities.

The explanation of parental involvement from the teachers was different from the heads of schools in that they were more focused on the indoor provisioning than the outdoor. Teacher A from school A responded by saying that parents should involve themselves by providing learning materials, for example, making mats for children to sit on and buying educational toys for the children to use in class. From the teacher’s response it would appear that parents are meant to be only service providers of the physical needs only. Teacher B in the same school also expressed the same sentiments on the provision of learning materials by saying “Aaa.... the duty of parents is to make sure we have adequate learning resource materials and to also come and prepare meals for the children since we do not have assistant teachers to help us.”

4.4.1 Focused group interview

In contrast, interviewed parents in school A and B explained their involvement in the school in the form of providing physical needs of the school such as assisting in the construction of classroom blocks and toilets, making toys and play equipment for the children. One parent said “when women are sewing toys and blankets for the children the men will be working on the outdoor on the play equipment, for example, making swings, sand pit and many more.”

Some few parents responded by also mentioning that, at times, they are asked to pay the Para-professional teachers who are no longer paid by the government. Another parent further elaborated that when they have no money to contribute, they contribute produce from their fields. The school will sell that and then pay the Para-professional teacher. From the focus group responses, it also clearly came out that women are more involved in the school activities than the men. This was evident when one parent indicated that “as mothers we have a rotational duty roster to come and prepare meals for the children at the school.” In the focus group of school A one parent indicated that their main role was to do fund raising for the school needs and the rest was the responsibility of the school head and his ECD teachers.

It is worth noting that in practice it is very obvious that the parents’ roles and the teachers are clearly demarcated. From the teacher’s responses, teachers believe that teaching is solely their responsibility and parents should focus on providing physical needs as they are requested by the school. Only one teacher had this belief that parents should be used as resource persons implying that they can also contribute to their children’s learning in the classroom. Also to be noted is that, at this level, parents’ relationship with teachers is very good.

Heads of schools, ECD teachers and parents seem to have varied understanding of what parental involvement entails. The differing perceptions seem to suggest that all the three categories have limited knowledge and understanding of this concept. In view of this, it is clear that there is need to have clear policies on parental involvement. For example, the Secretary's circular 14 of 2004 states that the community should assist in the implementation of the ECD A and B in schools. This statement is not explicit on the parents' roles in this implementation. The question is to assist on what and how? If policies were clear, the various stakeholders would be made aware of their responsibilities as the instrument states. This also clearly indicates that there is need for staff development on the concept of parental involvement for both the heads of schools and ECD teachers so that their perception and appreciation of parental involvement is in sync. It is very clear that if a common understanding of parental involvement among school heads and teachers is not reached it means they will work at cross purposes to the disadvantage of learners.

In the focus group with parents, what seemed to come out clearly was that parents gave an impression that their role is to provide infrastructure and play and learning materials. For example, here is a statement from one parent "if we do not play our part to build classrooms for the learners they will learn under the trees." Some parents clearly mentioned that they are expected to do fundraising for the benefit of the school and the pupils. Others indicated that they are prepared to do anything for the benefit of their children; however, they were not sure if they were doing things according to the expectations of the school. From this statement, one might conclude that there is no dialogue or clear guidelines

of the parents' roles in the education and development of their children. In one focus group some parents indicated that some of them are more than willing to assist but their limited education limits them. Some parents strongly felt that since children are still in the informal education all they can do is meeting their physical needs as per school requests. This clearly means that parents' understanding of parental involvement is very limited.

Some few parents seemed to have a good idea about what parental involvement meant, however, they were limited by poverty, hence they are not able to contribute towards their children's education. All these responses seem to point to one thing, that parents have varied understanding of parental involvement. As a result of this fact, there is a need to educate them on what parental involvement means. From the researcher's point of view, there is a need to create an awareness of what parental involvement entails so that they might have a common understanding and appreciation of what it is.

Among the few men who were part of the focus group, one of them indicated that most men do not participate in children's education and development because they strongly feel it is the duty of the women. Such a response shows that there are some misconceptions among parents about what exactly is parental involvement.

From the responses of the school heads, teachers as well as the focus group, it emerged that the knowledge on parental involvement is limited and variegated.

4.4.2 Parents' experiences and their role in the education and development of children below six years

From the first focus group most parents were free to share their own experiences in the education and development of children below six years. The following experiences were shared:

- One parent mentioned that it is easy to be involved in the ECD classes because there is no homework given by the teachers, which, in turn, should be supervised by them;
- School development and maintenance of the school;
- Payment of school fees and levies;
- Providing teaching and learning resources;
- Food provisions
- Sewing toys for children
- Some parents responded by saying at times they assist teachers when children go out for trips and during graduation days.

4.4.3 Activities that involve parents in their learners' education in the Bubi District

School heads mentioned the few activities in which some of the parents were involved in as part of supporting their children's learning:

- Participating in the fundraising;
- Bring and buy;
- Working in the nutrition garden;

- Making toys for the children. From the teacher's responses there was mention of cleaning the school grounds and assisting in the cooking, especially when there is food donated by the Non-Governmental organizations. The parents also echoed the same sentiments when it came to activities in which they are involved in the school. It is noted with concern that academic issues are not part of the parents' activities.

4.4.4 Rationale for parental involvement at Early Childhood Development level

School heads and teachers indicated a good number of reasons why it was important for parents to be part of their children's learning.

- In some cases, their responses were not consistent; for example, heads were more concerned about the school infrastructure while teachers were more concerned about learning resources.
- School heads through their experience have found that when parents are involved their children are better achievers.
- For the teachers, it gives them an opportunity to expand their programme because of increased assistance.
- With regards to children, it is motivational to see their parents in a different role and they enjoy it and become very proud when they see their parents come to school.

4.4.5 Barriers to parental involvement at ECD level **Socio-economic factors**

Interviewed families ranged from the nuclear family, divorced, single as well as polygamous families who are facing so many challenges in the education and

development of young children. It came out during interviews that most families are very poor; hence, they experience a lot of challenges when it comes to the payment of fees and levies for their children. "The majority of parents are too poor and cannot make payment of fees and levies on time." It was also noted that some of the children stay with their grandparents.

Poor communication between the school and the home

Communication involves designing effective ways or forms of school based to home and home to school about school activities and children's learning programmes. From the interview discussions it clearly came out that there was no consistency in communication from the school side, as was cited by one parent: "when children started learning beginning of the year the teachers used to write small notes if they needed something or wanted us at school, of late they tell us using children." In most cases children forget what they been told by their teachers. "This shows that teachers have no respect for us or what they are telling us through the children is not very important", one parent lamented.

School heads' limited knowledge of the concept

From the interview discussions of all groups it clearly came out that everyone looked up to the head of the school to be more knowledgeable in all school matters, including parental involvement of teachers. The school head should direct all activities, as indicated by one parent "we strongly depend on the advice we get from school heads anything concerning the education and development of our children." This explanation given indicates that the school head is expected to have all the necessary knowledge in order to handle school issues properly, including parental involvement.

Teachers' limited education on parental involvement

From the four teachers interviewed, only one teacher had an idea of the concept, however, she clearly indicated that it was difficult for her to introduce parental involvement further than infrastructural development and cooking for the children because she was not sure how the head of the school was going to react to that. The other three teachers agreed that they had limited knowledge on the concept of parental involvement. One teacher was brave to mention that during their training there was no mention of this concept; hence, she assumed that it was the business of the school head, not them as teachers. This means that the teachers also strongly feel that involving parents in the education development of children was the role of the head of school.

Parents' limited education on their roles

From the interview responses it also clearly came out that parents' limited knowledge was a big barrier when it came to how far they should be involved in the education and development of their children, especially at this tender age. One parent clearly indicated that "we are supposed to build classrooms and provide learning materials and end there, the rest is the duty of the teacher who is trained and paid for that job", the other parent also supported this view by saying if the teacher is not doing her work it is the duty of the head of the school to see to it that it is done because they are both paid to do so. From such responses, it is very clear that parents have limited knowledge on the subject. However, among the parents there was a handful of parents that were willing to do more than they have been doing, provided the school was willing to incorporate them in the learning of their children.

Negative teacher attitude

Teachers' negative attitudes clearly emerged during the research period as a contributing barrier in parental involvement in the education and development of their children below the age of six years. Some teachers looked down upon the parents because they regarded them as uneducated; this was evidenced by their comments that they echoed. Some teachers felt parental involvement should be limited to physical needs only. One teacher expressed "involving parents in schooling activities will distort what we are teaching, considering their level of their education".

Parents also indicated that teachers have an attitude towards them when it comes to classroom activities. One parent expressed that *"teachers' negative attitude convinced them that they are not welcome into classroom activities."* Another parent concurred by saying as parents *"we feel we should leave classroom issues to the teachers because they are trained yet us as parents we are not."* Such comments from the parents clearly show that there is no good relationship between the teachers and parents who are supposed be the first teachers of their children.

Negative parental attitude

Heads of schools expressed the view that some parents had negative attitude towards school activities. This attitude manifested in a number of ways, according to the heads of schools. The following were some of the ways:

- not attending school meetings;
- consultation day or open day;

- Some to an extent of not putting an effort to pay just something towards the education of their children. When explaining these issues, you could tell that the heads of school were annoyed when parents do not play their part, as expected by the schools.

Culture

Culture also seemed to be a barrier towards parental involvement in the education and development of children. From the interview discussion it emerged that there are some activities that should only be done by women. One man declared that in the Ndebele culture cooking is for women. Strange enough, the women were also in agreement of that statement and further added by saying that also includes indoor cleaning.

Lack of clear Government policies on parental involvement

For effective parental involvement in the education and development of children the school heads, teachers as well as parents strongly felt there is need for the government to craft clear policies on boundaries relating to parental involvement in schools.

Lack of clear school policy

On school policy the heads of schools mentioned that for them to craft such policies they should be guided by government policies, thus the procedure in government schools confirmed one head.

4.4.6 Strategies to overcome barriers to parental involvement.

In order to mitigate the barrier in parental involvement in the children's education and development the following suggestions were put forward by the participants:

- Government to craft clear policies on the concept;
- Heads should be capacitated on these policies before implementation;
- There should be staff development programmes for teachers;
- Parents also felt that they should also be educated on their roles in order to facilitate a good partnership with the school personnel.

4.5 Summary

The chapter presented data collected from face to face interviews for school heads and ECD teachers as well as focus groups for parents from the respective schools in Bubi district. Issues on benefits of parental involvement, barriers and strategies to mitigate challenges experienced by all stakeholders were presented and discussed. It emerged from the discussions that the following stakeholders: parents, teachers as well as school heads had limited knowledge on parental involvement. The next chapter provides conclusions regarding the findings and recommendations based on the findings will be made.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four provided insight into the findings gathered during the analysis of data. The data revealed that the research problem has been addressed and the research aim achieved. The study aimed at exploring parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years using the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner. The study was carried out in Bubi District of Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe by means of qualitative investigation. The chapter mainly focuses on the conclusions drawn from the data, and the recommendations are based on the literature reviewed in chapter two.

5.2 Objectives and Methodology

The main research inquiry which the study sought to answer was: What are the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years in the Bubi district of Zimbabwe? The following research objectives guided the study. It was to:

- i establish parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years;
- ii understand parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years;

iii find out the challenges confronting parents in the discharge of their parental responsibilities in the education development of children below six years;

iv establish intervention strategies to augment parental engagement in early education and development of children below six years.

The study identified a significant gap of knowledge concerning the parents' experiences with involvement in the education and development of children below six years. In light of this identified gap, a qualitative research approach was adopted to acquire in-depth information concerning the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years (Reynolds, & Ou, 2011; Modesaotsile, 2012). The researcher projected that the results of this study would provide insights to assist all relevant stakeholders such as practitioners, teachers, community, the parents and children as well as the policy makers.

Children will greatly benefit if parents are aware that it is their responsibility to be partners with the centre staff in the total development of their learning. Effective time management and balance between times spent with the children will greatly improve the development and performance of children. The study will further assist ECD officials to have an understanding of parents' experiences, background, cultures, concerns, needs and views of their children. ECD policy makers will take into cognizance parents' experiences in the crafting of legal framework in the running of these centres. Lastly, the findings of this study may generate new knowledge on strategies of how the parents may be effectively involved in the education development of their children below six years, especially in the rural settings. It may be used by other researchers as source of

information or springboard to develop other studies in the area of parenting in early childhood. The sample size comprised of twenty-two (22) participants that is two (2) school heads, four (4) teachers and sixteen (16) parents from two schools.

5.3 Summary of the findings

This section gives the summary of the main findings on matters surrounding the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children below six years. The following are findings that resound over the data presented in chapter four.

5.3.1 Understanding the term parental involvement

School heads

According to the school heads who were interviewed parental involvement means parents providing infrastructure and the up keep of the school.

ECD teachers

The understanding of the ECD teachers on parental involvement is to provide learning materials.

Focused group

Parents interviewed explained that their involvement in the school is to provide physical needs of the school such as assisting in the construction of classroom blocks and toilets.

5.3.2 Parents' experiences and their role in the education and development of children

Mixed answers were given on the experiences and their roles in the education development of children below six years.

5.3.3 Activities that involve parents in their learner's education

Mentioned activities included fundraising, nutrition garden, bring and buy and making children's toys.

5.3.4 Rationale for parental involvement at ECD level

- Build infrastructure
- Provide learning materials
- Enhance children's education and development.

5.3.5 Barriers to parental involvement at ECD level

Socio-economic factors

Majority of families are poor and most children are being looked after by grandparents.

Poor communication between the school and home

From the interview discussions it was revealed that there is no consistent communication from the school to the parents. Schools only communicate when they need something from the parents.

School head's restricted knowledge on the concept

The interviewed school heads admitted that they have limited knowledge on the concept of parental involvement.

Teacher's restricted education on parental involvement

Among the four teachers interviewed only one teacher had an idea on parental involvement.

Parents' limited education on their roles in the education development of children

From the responses it clearly came out that parents have restricted knowledge on their role, that is, how far they should be involved in the education and development of their children, especially at this tender age.

Negative teachers' attitudes

Responses from parents clearly indicated that teachers look down upon them. The teachers also expressed that parents' involvement should be only limited to physical needs, classroom issues should be left to them.

Negative parental attitude

Heads expressed that parents have a negative attitude towards their children's learning and this was evidenced by failing to attend school meetings and paying fees for their children's learning.

5.3.6 Culture

It emerged from the discussion that some of the activities in the school can only be done by women, not men. For example, in the Ndebele culture a man cannot be seen cooking.

5.3.7 Lack of clear Government policies

There is no policy which clearly indicates the parameters on how far the parent can be involved in the education development of their children under six years.

5.3.8 Lack of clear school policy

Heads of schools admitted that they do not have school policy on parental involvement.

5.3.9 Strategies to overcome barriers to parental involvement

- Government to have policy on parental involvement.
- Staff development for heads of schools and teachers on the concept.
- Conduct awareness workshops for parents on their role in the education development for their children.

5.4 Discussion on the findings

5.4.1 Understanding the term parental involvement: heads, teachers and parents

Responses from the school heads seem to indicate that parental involvement has to do with parents knowing their responsibility towards the development of the school and children's learning. The heads of schools view parental involvement as parents' understanding and responsiveness towards school requests. In explaining the term parental involvement, the head of school A emphasized parents' support of their children at all levels starting from ECD A up to grade seven. On the other hand, the

head from school B mentioned that parental involvement entails that parents assist in the school by paying school fees and providing learning materials for the children.

The responses from the school heads will seem to mean that their understanding of parental involvement is more biased to parents providing in terms of material things in the up keep of the school. In explaining the term parental involvement, the two heads seem to understand it as providing learning and play materials, that is, in cash or kind for the learners. This also indicated that the heads were clearly separating school based activities from home based activities.

The explanation of parental involvement from the teachers was different from the heads of schools in that they are more focused in the indoor provisioning than the outdoor. Teacher A from school A mentioned that parents should involve themselves by providing learning materials, for example, making mats for children to sit on and buying educational toys for the children to use in class. Teacher B in the same school also expressed the same sentiments on the provision of learning materials.

In school B teacher A clearly mentioned that parental involvement “involves parents helping us by buying the colouring books, picture books, toys and other stationery to facilitate our teaching and learning.” This seems to suggest that if parents provided the above mentioned items it would make their job very easy. Teacher B in school B also highlighted the same sentiments as her colleague, however, she further mentioned that, at times, parents help by telling folk stories to the little ones and teach them cultural songs and dance, especially when the teacher is not very conversant with the culture of

that area or community. This was very interesting to note that teachers, at times, use parents as resource persons to enhance children's learning.

Focused group interview

In contrast, interviewed parents in school A and B explained their involvement in the school in the form of providing physical needs of the school such as assisting in the construction of classroom blocks and toilets, making toys and play equipment for the children. Some parents also mentioned that, at times, they are asked to pay the Para-professional teachers who are no longer paid by the government. This parent further elaborated that when they have no money to contribute, they contribute produce from their fields. The school will sell that and then pay the Para-professional teacher. From the focus group discussion, it also clearly came out that women are more involved in the school activities than the men. This was evident when one parent indicated that as mothers they have a rotational duty roster to come and prepare meals for the children at the school. In the focus group of school A, one parent indicated that their main role was to do fund raising for the school needs, the rest was the responsibility of the school head and his ECD teachers.

It is worth noting that, in practice, it is very obvious that the parents' roles and the teachers are clearly demarcated. From the teacher's responses, teachers believe that teaching is solely their responsibility and parents should focus on providing physical needs as they are requested by the school. Only one teacher had this belief that parents should be used as resource persons, implying that they can also contribute to

their children's learning in the classroom. Also to important note at this level is that parents' relationship with teachers is very good.

Heads of schools, ECD teachers and parents seem to have varied understanding of what parental involvement entails. The differing perceptions seem to suggest that all the three categories have limited knowledge and understanding of this concept (Reynolds, & Ou, 2011). In view of this, it is clear that there is need to have clear policies on parental involvement, that is, by clearly stating how far they can be involved in their children's education development. For example, the Director's circular 14 of 2005 states that parents should assist in the implementation of the ECD A and B in schools. This statement is not explicit on the parents' roles in this implementation. The question is assist on what and how? If policies were clear the various stakeholders would be made aware of their responsibilities as the instrument states. This also clearly indicates that there is need for staff development on the concept of parental involvement, for both the heads of schools and ECD teachers, so that their perception and appreciation of parental involvement is in sync. It is very clear that, if a common understanding of parental involvement among school heads and teachers is not reached, it means they will work at cross purposes to the disadvantage of learners.

In the focus group with parents what seemed to come out clearly was that parents gave an impression that their role is to provide infrastructure, play and learning materials. Some parents clearly mentioned that they are expected to do fundraising for the benefit of the school and the pupils. Others indicated that they are prepared to do anything for the benefit of their children; however, they were not sure if they were doing things

according to the expectations of the school. From this assertion, one might conclude that there is no dialogue or clear guidelines on the parents' roles in the education and development of their children. In one focus group some parents indicated that some of them are more than willing to assist but their limited education limits them. In view of such responses, it is clear that parents are incapacitated to participate in their children's education either by not knowing how they should be involved and lack of communication with the school. Some parents strongly felt that, since children are still in the informal education, all they can do is meeting their physical needs as per school requests. This clearly means that parents' understanding of parental involvement is very limited.

Some few parents seemed to know or have a good idea what parental involvement meant, however, they were limited by poverty; hence they are not able to contribute towards their children's education. All these responses seem to point on one thing, that parents have varied understanding of parental involvement. As a result of this fact, there is a need to educate them on what parental involvement means. From the researcher's point of view, there is a need to make an awareness of what parental involvement entails, hence they might have a common understanding and appreciation of what it is.

Among the few men who were part of the focus group, one of them indicated that most men do not participate in children's education and development because they strongly feel it is the duty of the women. Such a response shows that there are some misconceptions among parents about what exactly parental involvement is all about.

From the responses of the school heads, teachers as well as the focus group, it emerged that the knowledge on parental involvement is limited and variegated. According to Mawere, Thomas, and Nyaruwata (2015), the major reason for lack of parental involvement is that teachers do not know how to involve the parents. In view of this gap there is need for Teacher Training colleges to empower teachers in this concept during their course of training.

5.4.2 Parents' experiences and their role in the education and development of children below six years

From the first focus group most parents were free to share their own experiences in the education and development of children below six years. One parent mentioned that it is easy to be involved in the ECD classes because there is no homework given by the teacher, which, in turn, should be supervised by them. Such a response might reveal that some parents do not involve themselves in their children's education and development because they are not confident of themselves; they are not sure what to do, at the same time, cannot even ask, lest they might reveal their ignorance.

5.4.3 Activities that involve parents in their learners' education in the Bubi District

School heads mentioned the few activities in which some of the parents were involved in as part of supporting their children's learning. These activities are initiated for the purpose of raising funds and not to establish closer links with the parents. Parents were to provide resources for teaching and learning and also to pay the school fees and levies. However, the school heads were quick to highlight that very few parents were

able to pay the fees or levies, hence they resort to fundraising activities because these would even involve non-parents. Both heads indicated that when it comes to children's food almost all parents were participating, however, with uniforms the majority of the learners usually do without or get the uniform towards the end of the year. The reason given for this was the pupil will then continue with the same uniform in the coming year when they are in grade one. This activity is the most reliable source of funds for the ECD children in the Bubi district. Once all produce is ready they are sold to the community and the teachers in school and funds are channelled to the centre development or buying necessary stationary. Also highlighted by the heads of schools was the encouragement they give to parents on the children as soon as they have attained the age of three years, thus ECD 'A'. Parents were also said to participate in the maintenance of the school, for example, on the outdoor play area things like the swings.

From the parents' responses, of consistence were the provision of learning and play materials, nutrition garden and the fundraising activities. The majority of parents lamented that the nutrition garden was their main source of fundraising. Vegetables planted in the garden included green vegetables like chomolia, cabbage, rape and spinach just to mention a few. Vegetables like tomatoes and onions are also planted. They also indicated that they do school maintenance if the head of the school calls for their help or the Teacher in Charge. Parents also expressed that they can do anything for their children; however, it was very difficult to raise money.

From the parents' responses it is clear that their activities are only inclined to the school. There was no mention that they also have some activities which they do with their

young ones, for example, telling stories or discussing anything before they left for school and after they returned from school.

It would appear that parents were not aware that motivational talk or conversations with children is associated with education and development and higher achievement scores in reading and writing (Chindanya, 2011). Engagement of children in motivational conversations should be emphasized to parents in order to build children's confidence and self-esteem. At the same time, when these conversations take place parents begin to note their children's learning challenges, hence solutions to the challenges can be generated.

In providing teaching and learning materials parents were very much aware that it was their responsibility to do so, however, were quick to highlight that it was a big challenge due to poverty and unemployment of most of the parents.

With regards to solving children's learning challenges, the majority of parents strongly felt that this is the teacher's domain, any intervention by the parent is interfering teacher's work. Parents felt they do not have the necessary knowledge to handle such issues.

5.4.4 Rationale for parental involvement at Early Childhood Development level

School heads and teachers indicated a good number of reasons why it was important for parents to be part of their children's learning. In some cases, their responses were not consistent, for example, heads were more concerned about the school infrastructure while teachers were more concerned about learning resources.

School heads, through their experience, have found that when parents are involved their children are better achievers.

According to Hilderbrand (2011), having parents as part of the teaching team benefits the parents, the teachers, and the children. For the teachers, it gives them an opportunity to expand their programme because of increased assistance. With children, it is motivational to see their parents in a different role and they enjoy it and become very proud when they see their parents come to school.

5.5.5 Barriers to parental involvement at ECD level

Socio-economic factors

Interviewed families ranged from the nuclear family, divorced, single as well as polygamous families who are facing so many challenges in the education and development of young children. It was raised during interview time that most families are very poor; hence, they experience a lot of challenges when it comes to payment of fees for their children. It was also noted that some of the children stay with their grandparents. This implies that some of the parents are failing to meaningfully contribute towards their children's learning.

Some parents who were present in the focus group discussion did mention that it is their responsibility to pay fees and levies; however, they are so embarrassed that they fail to play their role for the benefit of their children. From the parents' views, it appears as if paying fees is the only way they can be involved in their children's education and development under the age of six years. This is confirmed by literature that parents with

a poor socio-economic background are likely to have low levels of education, very low income and, in most cases, no stable jobs. As a result, their self-esteem is very low.

Poor communication between the school and the home

Communication involves designing effective ways or forms of school based to home and home to school about school activities and children's learning programmes. From the discussion it clearly came out that there was no consistent line of communication from the school side, as was cited by one parent. When parents do not respond to the teacher's request it would appear they are not interested in their children's education and development, yet, in the true sense, they are not aware of the teacher's expectations.

This barrier in communication can be as a result of so many factors or perceptions. For example, when teachers stopped writing letters it could have been assumed that parents were not able to read those letters due to their low level of education. On the other hand, teachers could have stopped because of their tight schedule or they are demotivated by their working environment. It was noted that parents did not have much interaction with teachers because they suspected that teachers look down upon them, hence, whatever they might raise will not be taken seriously. The head of school B admitted that they do not have any policy on how and when to communicate with the parents, while the head from school A mentioned that they only communicate with parents when there is need to do so. This implies that communication between the home and the school seemed to be based on needs rather than an essential element of the child's education and development.

The discussion revealed that both parties were frustrated by this discord in communication because almost everything was based on assumptions and perceptions.

At ECD level, communication and personal interviews between parents and teachers are very crucial, hence the need for the school to develop a policy that stipulates the times when parents may visit or have dialogue with the school staff. Such a policy may assist to eradicate negative perceptions and create an environment where the school communicates with parents on regular basis and not only when there are problems to be attended to. This will facilitate a healthy atmosphere for the benefit of the learners in terms of school collaboration and decision making at the same time appraising each other about children's performance as well as school activities and vice versa. The heads of the schools and teachers are the key stakeholders in establishing an element of trust and co-operation with parents if meaningful partnerships is to be realized.

School heads limited knowledge of the concept

From the interviews of all groups, it clearly came out that everyone looked up to the head of the school to be more knowledgeable in all school matters, including parental involvement. The school head should direct all activities, as indicated by one parent. This is based on the assumption that once you are a head you are expected to be knowledgeable on all the procedures to be employed in order to manage the school more effectively. The teachers mentioned that, even if they know that they should include parents in the school activities, but, if the head of the school has no initiative, they are also limited to do anything about it. There is need to educate the school heads

on parental involvement through staff development so that the learners, teachers, parents and the entire community can benefit from his/her leadership.

Teachers' limited education on parental involvement

It was noted that among the teachers only one teacher had an idea on parental involvement, however, she lamented that it was very difficult for her to introduce parental involvement further than just building of infrastructure and cooking for the children because she was not sure how the head of the school would react to that. On the other hand, she was not sure if the parents would accept that with open hands. This response seems to indicate that teachers who had just completed their training are aware of this parental involvement because it is now taught at colleges. From experience, this is true, considering that the Zimbabwean ECD is community based, hence the need to empower the teachers while on training. According to Zvobgo (1996), through SDCs parents are called upon to bridge the gap between what government could provide and what communities want in their schools. In the same vein, the Minister of Education in September 2011 revealed that government's thrust to provide education for everyone required huge resources, and government has had to rely on parents and communities to play a major role in providing many of the resources that their schools and children need. The other three teachers also interviewed agreed that they were not well versed about the content on parental involvement during their training not much was covered on parental involvement the topic was mentioned just in passing; hence, they have no confidence on the topic. From such responses from the teachers it was very clear that there is need for staff development for the teachers so that they are

instrumental in the involvement of parents in all activities concerning the education and development of children.

Parental restricted education on parental involvement

From the interview discussion it also clearly came out that parents' limited knowledge was a big barrier when it came on how far they should be involved in the education and development of their children, especially at this tender age (Fitzgerald, 2004). From such responses it is very clear that parents have limited knowledge on the subject. However, among the parents there was a handful of parents that were willing to do more than they have been doing, provided the school was willing to incorporate them. Parents should attend school meetings, participate in the decision making process and support their children's education (Mubanga, 2012).

This is also confirmed by Hanni, & Phippen (2010) that most parents felt that parental involvement is very important to them and they would want to see teachers involved, showing or giving them something to do with their children at home.

Negative teacher attitude

Teachers' negative attitude was observed during the research period as a contributing barrier in parental involvement in the education and development of their children below the age of six years. Some teachers looked down upon the parents because they regarded them as uneducated. Some teachers felt parental involvement should be limited to physical needs only. This translates to the fact that, in this case, parents are

not even given any opportunity to say something on the expectations about their children's education, let alone to be asked to help with academic issues.

Parents also indicated that teachers have an attitude towards them when it comes to classroom activities. Another parent concurred by saying "as parents we feel we should leave classroom issues to the teachers because they are trained yet us as parents we are not." This shows that parents have mixed feelings about helping in the school activities. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2004) confirm that the attitudes of schools towards active parental involvement are repeatedly indistinct. Given an opportunity they would definitely assist in the educational development of their children to a larger extent.

Negative parental attitude

Heads of schools expressed that some parents had negative attitude towards school activities. This attitude manifested in a number of ways, such as not attending school meetings, consultation day or open day, some to an extent of not putting an effort to pay just something towards the education of their children. One head said they do this in confidence because they know that the children will not be returned home because they have not paid anything, this is in line with government policy that children should not be turned away but heads of schools should deal with the parents and leave children to attend lessons.

Culture

Culture also seemed to be a barrier towards parental involvement in the education and development of children. It appeared among parents there was a strong feeling that some activities should be done by women not men, for example, never in their culture would a man be seen cooking. In the Ndebele culture one man declared that their culture does not allow them to cook. However, they were also quick to confirm that they can do anything in the school in the interest of their children's education except cooking. Strange enough, women also agreed that cooking and indoor cleaning is women's work and they are willing to do that for their children. From these responses, it is clear that parents need to be educated on their roles in the education and development of their children below the age of six years.

Lack of clear Government policies on parental involvement

For effective parental involvement in the education and development of children the school heads, teachers as well as parents strongly felt there is need for the government to craft clear policies on boundaries relating to parental involvement in schools (LaRocque et al, 2011). Fields-Smith (2005) also chronicles that parents respond more frequently in clearly stated demands from the school.

Lack of clear school policy

On school policy the heads of schools mentioned that for them to craft such policies they should be guided by government policies, thus the procedure in government schools, confirmed one head of school.

5.6 Strategies to overcome barriers to parental involvement.

The discussions in the various groups suggested some strategies that can be employed to mitigate the barriers to parental involvement in children's education and development. The heads of schools suggested that the government should come up with very clear policies on parental involvement and school heads should be educated on these policies before they are implemented. One head stated "do not put us in the deep end like they did when the ECD programme was implemented in schools we were just given a directive to implement without preparing us considering it was a new programme." The head further mentioned that it was critical to be clear where parental involvement starts and ends.

Teachers and school heads should have staff workshops on the importance of parental involvement and all that it entails. The strategy was mentioned by the teachers and school heads. On the other hand, parents also felt they need to be educated on parental involvement to facilitate a good partnership with the school personnel.

5.7 Conclusion

Parent involvement in ECD is characterized by various activities between parents and school personnel. It is very evident from the study that parents and educators understand parental involvement from different perspectives; hence this has evolved over the years. In spite of the challenges experienced by various stakeholders it featured that both parents and education personnel view and welcome parental

involvement as a significant aspect in the education and development of children below six years.

Implications of the reviews to the current study

From the various studies reviewed the most important aspect that is clearly coming up is that teachers are concerned about “making parents feel welcome”. Parents know when teachers have ambivalent or negative feelings, no matter what the teachers actually say to them. It is important that teachers recognize the real advantages of working with parents so that they will truly welcome collaboration with their children’s parents.

Time is a crucial factor for teachers as well as parents. Teachers need time to plan and organize parent activities. Although administrators may want to increase parents’ involvement, this is only possible if they provide teachers with the training and time to work with parents. Schools must consider the educational level, language, culture and home situations of their students’ parents.

The staff must communicate regularly with parents through various means. Providing written information in the parents’ native language is not enough-oral methods of communication must be available for parents who do not read well in any language. Establishing telephone networks by which parents keep one another informed would help as well. Parents gain confidence to participate in school when they understand practices and what is expected of them.

According to most parents, schools need to establish a welcoming climate and an open-door policy so that any parent who has questions can feel confident that she will be welcomed and given the help she needs. Involvement in the social activities of the school must be honoured as an important contribution. The interests and needs of the parents are considered when planning activities. Some parents need to be educated on the importance of partnership between them and the professionals. There is a clear indication that some lack knowledge on what the involvement entails.

Studies on parental involvement have shown that there is need for their engagement in their children's learning. However, do we know how to mount effective programmes to increase parents' involvement in their child's school? It has also been noted in some studies that parental involvement is a skill that can be taught and learned. Parents are also involved at home by ensuring their children attends school, providing a variety of reading materials and learning opportunities and limiting excessive television viewing.

According to Epstein's theory (1995,) parents need to be involved in these decisions as knowledgeable partners. They need to know how the school system works, what programmes and activities are available, how these decisions will affect their child's chances for future success, which courses are needed to prepare for future jobs and careers, what teachers expect in their courses for learners to do well, and in what ways parents can get involved in decisions that affect how schools operate.

A consistent body of research concludes that parents are the first and foremost influence on their children's development and school success. But does positive impact

of parental involvement apply to all families or just to those with more education and material advantages?

Research has demonstrated that from birth to adolescence children need a variety of positive learning experiences that should be provided in a secure and loving environment if they are to achieve their full potential. Parental involvement is the process whereby schools, parents and other services support each other in stimulating children's curiosity, motivation and development (de Wit, 2005). Centres or schools decide their particular aim, motivation and approach to educational partnership (Kalthoff, 2011) once basic legal requirements are fulfilled. Children learn through interacting with and observing parents (Bandura, 1969) and such learning is affected by the level of interaction or engagement. Kellaghan (1993) concluded that with regards to academic success, it is what parents do in the home, and not children's family background, that is significant. Similarly, the potential limitations associated with poor economic circumstances can be overcome by parents who provide stimulating, supportive, and language-rich experiences from their children (Redding, 1999). Ceci et al. (1997) observed that parent-child interactions are the forces that lead to academic performance, even though there is a need to take into account the potentially constraining or expanding opportunities provided by children's family backgrounds.

5.8 Limitations of the investigation

Experience has shown that all investigations carried out have strength and weaknesses. The limitations of this study is a small sample which was used of the heads of schools,

ECD teachers as well as parents to explore parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years in the Bubi district of Zimbabwe. Therefore, the present qualitative findings cannot be generalized to a larger population of heads of schools, ECD teachers and parents.

5.9 Recommendations

The research study makes the following recommendations based on the findings;

- For meaningful parental involvement, which is not only biased to physical needs, the Government should provide policies that give clear boundaries on the part of all stakeholders.
- When Government policies are in place, the schools should also provide their school policy guided by the state policy; this will facilitate the smooth involvement of parents.
- Teacher Training Colleges to empower student teachers on parental involvement during their course of training.
- Staff development workshops should be conducted for teachers and school heads who are already in the system.

Educational talks should be conducted for parents on parental involvement to clear the mixed understanding on the subject, hence this will widen the knowledge on the concept.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Application for clearance from Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

No 96 Brechin Road

Killarney

Bulawayo

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

P. O. Box 555

Bulawayo

15 June 2017

Re: Request for doing my Research Study on Parents' Experiences with Involvement in the Education Development of Children under six years in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe

I am a lecturer and Head of Department (ECD) at United College of Education. I am doing doctoral studies with the University of Fort Hare in South Africa and my research topic is: **Parents' Experiences with Involvement in the Educational Development of Children below six years in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe.**

I am requesting for permission to collect data in the following schools Lortondale Primary School and Emhlangani Primary. My intention, in line with the proposal, is to interview two heads, four teachers that is two from each school and sixteen parents that is eight from each school.

Your consideration into this matter will be greatly appreciated

Thank you

Sibonginkosi Mhlanga (Mrs)

Appendix B: Clearance letter from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture

All communications should be addressed to
"The Provincial Education Director"
Tele-Fax: 67574
E-mail: matnorth12@gmail.com



Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Matabeleland North Province
P O Box 555
Bulawayo
Zimbabwe

28 June 2017

University of Fort Hare
South Africa

Attention: Mhlanga Sibonginkosi (Mrs)

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRYOUT A RESEARCH PROJECT:
BUBI DISTRICT: MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE

Reference is made to your letter dated 15 June 2017, requesting for permission to carry out a research project entitled: *"Parents' Experience with Involvement in the Education Development of Children under six years"* at Lortondale and Emhlangeni at Primary schools in Bubi District, Matabeleland North Province.

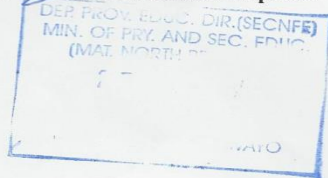
You are hereby granted permission to conduct your research in the above mentioned district. However, your research should not in any way disturb the smooth running of teaching and learning activities in schools.

You will be required to furnish the Province with a copy of your findings after the research.

NB: Before proceeding into schools, please ensure that you pass through the District Schools Inspector – Bubi.

Mphofu J. A. (Mrs.)
A/Provincial Education Director – Matabeleland North.

cc District Schools Inspector - Bubi



Appendix C: Interview Guide for Focused Group Discussion with parents

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS

1. As parents what do you do at home and school to help children with their education and development?
2. Does the school communicate its expectations in relation to parental involvement?
3. Do you feel compelled to be jointly involved with teachers in your children's education and development?
4. Do you sometimes visit the school uninvited to discuss your children's education and development? If so what has been your experience?
5. What are benefits of parental involvement in the children's education and development?
6. What are the barriers to parental involvement in children's involvement? How can we overcome them as parents?
7. Do you think parental involvement is more of a mother's duty than fathers at early childhood level?
8. How would you describe the state of the relationship between parents, teachers and school head?
9. Do you ever have an opportunity to discuss with your children what they would have learned or experienced at school? If so how often?
10. What are the benefits of such discussions?
11. How does your individual situation affect the way you are involved in your child's education and development?
12. What do you think can be done to enable you to participate more in children's education and development?
13. Is there anything important relating to parental involvement which we have not covered?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix D: Interview guide for the head of the school

1. What do you understand by the concept parental involvement in children's education and development?
2. What are the benefits of parental involvement?
3. In your school, in what way are parents involved in their children's education and development?
4. What would you like parents to do to enhance parental involvement?
5. In the context of your school, what are the barriers to parental involvement?
6. What can be done to overcome the barriers you have highlighted?
7. In what ways can you say teachers create barriers to parental involvement?
8. In what ways can you say parents create barriers to their own involvement in their children's education and development?
9. As the head of the school in what ways can you involve parents?
10. During your training to be a teacher did you learn about parental involvement?
11. As a school head have ever attended any workshop on parental involvement?
12. Have you ever organized workshop for teachers and parents on parental involvement?
13. Has the district or provincial education officers ever organized workshops for teachers and parents on parental involvement? If so, how many?
14. Is there a policy on parental involvement? If not, do you think it is desirable?
15. What strategies can be used by (a) teachers, school and (b) government to empower parents to become effectively involved in their children's education and development?
16. Lastly how would you describe the communication that goes on between the school and parents? How can you improve the communication?
17. Is there anything related to parental involvement we have not covered which you deem important?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix E: Interview guide for Teachers

1. What are the benefits of parental involvement?
2. How do the parents of the learners you teach involve themselves in their children's education and development?
3. Do you think these parents are equipped to be meaningfully involved in their children's education and development? If not, elaborate.
4. How do you expect parents to involve themselves in their children's education and development?
5. Are your expectations relating to parental involvement harmonious with those of the parents?
6. Do you ever encourage parents to suggest what they think they can do to help children in their education and development?
7. Do you communicate what you want parents to do or you take it for granted?
8. When would parental involvement constitute interference with your work as a teacher?
9. What do you think parents should not do in the name of parental involvement?
10. Kindly identify barriers to parental involvement in the context of your experience?
11. In what ways are teachers guilty of hindering parental involvement?
12. Finally, while training to become a teacher were you exposed to learning content related to parental involvement?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix F: Interview Schedule for Heads

My name is Mhlanga Sibonginkosi a doctoral research student at the University of Fort Hare. I am doing research on Parents' experiences with Involvement in the Education Development of children under six years in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe. I want to assure you of strict confidentiality, that everything discussed here will not be repeated to anyone. Should you feel uneasy at any juncture of this interview feel free to end the interview. I would like to record this discussion on tape in order to ensure I do not misquote you. Thank you for your willingness to share in this study.

A: Background information

Thank you for accepting to participate in this academic research. Tell me about yourself.

Respondent: Heads of schools

Date of the interview

Time

Venue

Interviewer Mrs S. Mhlanga

1. Your age range.....
2. Gender
3. Your highest academic qualification.....
4. Experience

QUESTIONS

1. **These questions are designed to explore your perspectives as a head on the parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years.**

1.1 What is your understanding of the concept of parental involvement in the early childhood development?

.....

.....

1.2 What programmes are there in your school that involves parents in the early childhood development?

.....
.....
1.3 Describe the role of parents in the development of children under six years.
.....
.....

2. These questions will investigate how parents can get involved in the development of children under six years

2.1 How does your school communicate with parents about their involvement in the school?
.....
.....

2.2 How do you influence parents to participate in the academic development of their children?
.....
.....

2.3 Does your school have any programmes that target parents' involvement? Elaborate. If not, suggest what you would want to see happening.
.....
.....

3. These questions will probe the experiences of heads with parents' involvement in the education of their children under six years

3.1 What is the level of parental involvement in your school?
.....
.....

3.2 Describe the areas in which you would like to see parents more involved.
.....
.....

3.3 How do you involve parents in the early childhood development programme?
.....
.....

4. These questions will explore possible challenges heads face in involving parents with children in the early year

4.1 Are there any strategies used by early childhood development heads to involve parents in the ECD programme?

.....
.....
4.2 What challenges do you face in involving parents in the academic development of their children below six years?
.....
.....

4.3 Suggest any ideas of programmes that could be adopted to enhance more involvement of parents in the early childhood development.
.....
.....

4.4 What do you think can be done to improve the level of parents' participation in the school programmes?
.....
.....

Appendix G: Interview Schedule for educator

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

My name is Sibonginkosi Mhlanga, a doctoral research student at the University of Fort Hare. I am doing research on Parents' experiences with involvement in the educational development of children under six years in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe. I want assure you of strict confidentiality, that everything discussed here will not be repeated to anyone. Should you feel uncomfortable at any juncture of this interview, feel free to end the interview. I would like to record this interview on tape in order to ensure I do not misquote you. Thank you for willingness to share in this study.

A: Background information

Thank you for accepting to participate in this academic research. Tell me about yourself.

Respondent: Educator

Date of interview

Time :

Venue :

Interviewer: Mrs S. Mhlanga

1. Your age range.....
2. Gender
3. Your highest academic qualification.....
4. Experience.....

QUESTIONS

- 1. These questions are designed to explore your perspectives as an educator on parents' experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years.**

1.1 What is your understanding of the concept of parental involvement in the early childhood development?

.....
.....

1.2 Justify briefly why parents should be involved in their children's education

below six years.

.....
.....

1.3 What programmes are there in your centre that involves parents in the Early Childhood Development?

.....
.....

1.4 Describe the role of parents in the development of children in the Early Childhood Development.

.....
.....

2. These questions will investigate how parents can get involved in the education and development of children below six years?

2.1 Are there any programmes that target parents in your calendar of events?

.....
.....

2.2 As an educator how do you communicate with parents about their involvement in the ECD centre?

.....
.....

3. These questions will probe the experiences of educators in involving parents in the education of their children below six years.

3.1 How do you invite parents to participate in the school activities?

.....
.....

3.2 From your experience working with parents, do you think they understand their role in the education and development of their children?

.....
.....

4. These questions will explore possible challenges educators face in involving with children during their early years

4.1 What kinds of strategies are used by the centre to involve parents in the school programme?

.....
.....
4.2 What challenges do you face in involving parents in the academic education of their children?
.....
.....

4.3 In your experience working with parents, what keeps them away from participating in the education of their children?
.....
.....

4.4 What can be done to enhance active participation of parents in the school programmes?
.....
.....

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix H: Interview Schedule for Parents

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

My name is Mhlanga Sibonginkosi a doctoral research student at the University of Fort Hare. I am doing research on Parents' experiences with Involvement in the Education Development of children under six years in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe. I want to assure you of strict confidentiality, that everything discussed here will not be repeated to anyone. Should you feel uneasy at any juncture of this interview feel free to end the interview? I would like to record this discussion on tape in order to ensure I do not misquote you. Thank you for your willingness to share in this study.

A: Background information

Thank you for accepting to participate in this academic research. Tell me about yourself.

Respondent: Parents focused group

Date of the interview

Time

Venue

Interviewer Mrs S. Mhlanga

1. Your age range.....
2. Gender
3. Your highest academic qualification.....
4. Experience

QUESTIONS

1. These questions are designed to explore your perspectives as parents on your experiences with involvement in the education development of children under six years.

1.1 How do you view Early Childhood Development?

.....
.....

1.2 What is your understanding of the concept of parental involvement in the development of your child?

.....
.....

1.1 How do you describe your role as a parent in the development of your child? (Probe further: What kind of activities do you do with your child? If no: give some reasons, or challenges hindering your involvement etc)

.....
.....

1.2 As parents how do you feel you should be more involved?

.....
.....

2. These questions will investigate how parents participate in the development of their children under six years?

2.1 How do you participate in the daily life of your child?

.....
.....

2.2 In the school are there any programmes that allow you as parents to be involved? Specify? If not, what has been your experience?

.....
.....

2.3 As parents in what ways are you actively involved in the education and development of your children? If yes tell me more about it. If no, how would you like to be involved?

.....
.....

3. These questions will probe the experiences of parents' involvement in the Early Childhood Development

3.1 How do you get involved in your child's learning?

.....
.....

3.2 What are your experiences being involved with under six year children in the school?

.....
.....

4 These questions will explore possible challenges parents face in participating with their children in the Early Childhood Development?

4.1 How do you involve yourself as parents in the ECD?

.....
.....

4.2 Do you think more can be done to involve parents in Early Childhood Development programme?

.....
.....

4.3 Suggest any ideas of programmes that can be adopted to improve the involvement of parents with their children at ECD level?

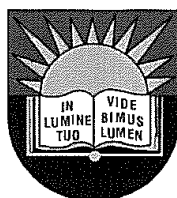
.....
.....

4.4 What challenges do you as parents face in participating with your under six year children?

.....
.....

Thank you for participation.

Appendix I: Ethical Clearance Certificate



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: OKE111SMHL01

Project title: **Parents' experience with involvement in the education development of children under six years in the Bubi District in Zimbabwe.**

Nature of Project: PhD in Education

Principal Researcher: Sibonginkosi Mhlanga

Supervisor: Prof C.I.O Okeke

Co-supervisor: N/A

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:

Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely



Professor Wilson Akpan
Acting Dean of Research

30 March 2017

Appendix J: Editing or Proof reading certificate

EDITING/PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

To whom it may concern

This serves to certify that I, Jabulani Mkhize, have proofread and/or edited Mrs S. Mhlanga's PhD thesis to ensure that the language, grammar, punctuation and spelling are academically sound and appropriate, by rectifying errors, wherever these have been identified, and rephrasing sentences that would possibly make one lose sight of the flow of the argument.

Article Title: "Parents' Experiences with involvement in the Educational development of Children less than six years in the Bubi District of Zimbabwe"

Editor's Name: Jabulani Mkhize

Signature

Date : 13 August 2017

Contact Details: jmkhize@ufh.ac.za

Qualifications: PhD (English)
