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The Teachers', Parents', and Students' Perceptions Of The Meaning Of
Parent Involvement In Education In Two Community Junior Secondary
Schools In Botswana

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Abstract

The research study that I was engaged in attempted to gather, present and analyse the perceptions of teachers, parents and students about the meaning of parent involvement in the education of children in two communities junior secondary schools in Botswana.

The importance of the study was an attempt to make a contribution to an understanding that in policy implementation what matters most is not what policy looks like on paper, but rather the perceptions that those involved with implementation have on policy.

The study attempted to identify areas where the Botswana context converged with the international literature, and also the areas, which appeared to be distinctive to Botswana context. A number of factors, which affected parent involvement in the schools, were identified, and an attempt made to suggest a way to overcome the problems.

The study used the semi-structured interview method. There were twenty-two respondents interviewed in the two schools. The respondents were six parents, ten teachers and six students. The data collected was used to generate themes, which were tested for fit to the international literature and the distinctive local Botswana issues were also highlighted. The interviews were conducted at home and at school.

The conclusions that the study arrived at are that, it is important for all stakeholders to be always taken on board at the initial stage of policy formulation. This will help policy makers, as the perceptions which stakeholders have on the new policy will be taken into account in policy formulation.

The study also concludes that there is no single type of parent involvement. Parents are involved in many different ways in schools. The importance of parent involvement is highly valued by teachers, parents and students.

I would like to note that due to the limited nature of methodology, time, and scope of the study, the conclusions arrived at in this study should not be generalised beyond the

confines of the study as the two schools cannot be representative of all the schools in Botswana.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.1. The Problem

In this study I want to investigate parental involvement in education in Botswana. In the early 1960's parents paid school fees for the education of their children, hence their concern about what was happening in schools was great. In the early 1980's school fees were abolished and in my own opinion the amount of concern parents showed also decreased. In the mid 1980's, Community Junior secondary schools were started as a way of enhancing partnerships between the state and the communities. The communities were expected to provide some of the facilities while government provided others. How this partnership was to operate was not clear except that the parents were asked to pay a levy towards school development. The reason was that the government could no longer afford to pay for everything and parents had to have a role, to enhance community accountability. Different schools ended up doing different things and it appeared no one was sure of what should happen.

1.2. Aims and Research Question

Schools in Botswana are today faced with a demanding task of implementing the recommendations of the New Revised National policy on Education. The New Revised National policy was introduced in 1994 after the Kedikilwe's Commission report of (1993). The commission was set to gather the Nations feelings, aspirations and experiences on how education could be improved in terms of both organisational management, resources, curriculum and funding in order to create a good learning

environment for all learners. Parliament met and came up with a Government White Paper no. 2 of (1994) which sets out recommendations to be implemented and bring about change in the previous education policy. In relation to improving organisational management and bringing about school improvement, the White Paper emphasised that all schools should take initiatives to involve parents in all school activities. While this is an internationally accepted fact that where parents are involved they make a difference, it may not necessarily mean bringing about this change would be easy. Fullan (1992) argues that,

Educational change is technically simple and socially complex. While the simplicity of the technical aspect is no doubt overstated, anyone who has been involved in a major change effort will intuitively grasp the meaning of and concur with the complexity of the social dimension (1992:65).

My standpoint goes with Fullan's work on implementation of change (Fullan, 1992). My understanding of him is that change comes as policy and quite often in attempting to implement policy, the people concerned with implementation do construct meanings which may not necessarily be what the legislators wanted. Fullan (1992) concurs with Marris (1995) who says it does not matter from which standpoint we look at policy, the response is characteristically ambivalent. He argues,

New experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some "familiar, reliable construction of reality", in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to the experiences regardless of how meaningful they might be to others (1992:31).

Fullan (1992) argues that what change means is never clear from the beginning. People have to construct meanings of the change that have to be implemented. He maintains that people will not assimilate change unless they share the meaning. In relation to my study, schools, parents and students have to share the meaning of parental involvement, to effectively implement policy. My study is interested in finding out the subjective reality (according to Fullan 1992) which parents, teachers and students make on parent involvement. The word perceptions, meanings, opinions and views are used inter-changeably in the study. It is the constructed meanings, which determines what comes out during the implementation process. In my research project I look at the policy on parental involvement as a new innovation or change which schools and parents, who are to implement it, will obviously have to construct meanings of it in order to do so. It is the kind of perceptions, which the people who are concerned with implementations attach to the policy which reflect what will take place on the ground. Fullan (1992) writing about parental involvement argues that,

One of the reasons that the role of parents is so confusing is that what is meant by involvement is often not specifically defined, nor is it linked to particular outcomes (1992:228).

As a first step towards the school's understanding policy, formulation of policy on parental involvement and implementing the policy, I set out to investigate School Head's, parents', teachers' and learners' perceptions in order to answer the following questions;

- a) What are their perceptions of the meaning of parental Involvement?
- b) What are the implications of these perceptions for the implementation of policy?

I believe that their perceptions are likely not to necessarily give me only what the parents are doing, but also what they think should be happening. It is from the perceptions that I may be able to find out if there is any significant common meaning of what parental involvement is. These different perceptions are also likely to have some implication on the implementation of the New Revised National Policy on education. The study further develops on the one I conducted (Kolagano, 1999) on the comparison of high achievers' and low achievers' perceptions of their parents' involvement in their learning. I also intend to survey literature on parental involvement and find out how the meanings and activities of parental involvement in the schools are reflected in the literature.

1.3. Importance of the study

The New Revised National Policy (Government Paper no. 1 of, 1994) on education that is currently being implemented contains the following recommendations which government adopted.

Rec. 118 {para. 11.6.3} The commission recommends that Government should intensify the efforts to encourage the establishment of parents-teacher associations in all schools. It is accepted that parent-teachers associations provide an effective forum for schools to keep in close contact with communities that they serve, and therefore ensure that parents take interest in, and contribute to the education of their children. Government will therefore mobilise communities to form PTAs to assist schools.

The parents-teachers associations are to provide a forum for both collective and individual contacts between schools and parents.

Rec. 119 {para. 11.6.6} the commission recommends the establishment of School Boards of Governors in every school in the country.

The role and function of the Boards of Governors should be reviewed regularly in the light of future requirements of schools and the school's ability to serve the community.

For quite some time parents' involvement in education was simply because parents had a democratic right to be involved. The current call for parental involvement is based more on research findings that have shown that parents' involvement is associated with school improvement and learners' academic achievements. Fullan (1992) argues that,

The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement (1992:227).

The observation I make on the New Revised National policy on Education is that what parental involvement is or which activities parents are to be involved in is not defined. My personal experience is that irrespective of these recommendations in the New Revised National Policy on Education and some research findings, some schools still resist parental involvement. Schools argue that most parents are not willing to participate even when they are asked to and that they are not interested in the education of their children, particularly in the rural areas. They think it is a waste of time trying to involve the parents. Schools assume that parents know their roles and not much has been done to educate parents in terms of their expected roles. The policy provides for the school board of governors to be elected in public meetings, but the policy does not provide for how they are to be orientated on what they are expected to

do. The public assumes that whatever the people should do after being elected is between them and the school authorities. At the same time the school assumes that the public has elected people they trust, people who know their duties and would be able to represent them well, and there are no attempts for any orientation of these new members. I have also experienced that there is not much communication taking place between schools and the communities they serve in terms of the kind of programmes the school offers and what is to be the role of parents in the programmes.

Parental involvement is not only a concern for parents and teachers; it is also a central issue for government. In introducing the new Revised National Policy on Education in 1994, the Government of Botswana emphasises the need for intensifying parental involvement on all matters relating to education of children. The issue of parent involvement in school activities has sparked many debates in schools in Botswana. There are many accusations and counter accusations from both parents and teachers. My personal experience is that parents often express that teachers do not want to involve them in any school activities, so they should not interfere with the teacher's work. On the other hand teachers believe that parents do not have an interest in their children's education. They do not give any support to their children's learning process at home or any support to the school in any school activities.

As a researcher I see a huge debate about roles arising from any education reform of the country. The context above suggests that there is potential for conflicts between parents, and parents and staff over which issues parents may have influence in. Parents may wish to participate in the running of the schools in different ways. For many years

in Botswana parents have been seen as having very few roles to play in the education of their children. Parents were in most cases only involved in providing money for school tours, buying their children a uniform and seeing to it that their children went to school clean. This parental involvement is not considered to represent any form of contribution to the child's learning by schools. The education policy did not provide for parental involvement in school activities and the education of their children. Parents have always assumed a passive role as they considered themselves not educated enough to make any contribution. Most believed teaching is for professionals and the work of teaching should be left to teachers.

My earlier investigation (Kolagano 1999) on whether parents involvement is associated with the students' academic results showed that it can be possibly inferred that parental involvement is associated with students' academic results. I established that parents of high achievers are involved individually at home with their children's schoolwork and collectively in other school activities when their help is sought. I also established that some parents of low achievers are not at all involved, while others are involved but not in the same way as parents of high achievers. I believe an investigation of the meaning of parental involvement and roles of parents will suggest possible solutions and enhance working relations between schools and parents.

My personal interest in engaging in this research project is seeing myself as a parent. As a parent I have a child enrolled in a government aided community junior secondary school. At certain times when my child comes home, I look through her books and find her doing things in a way that I consider wrong, and her teachers have marked them as

correct. My child finds it difficult to believe me when I say that she is doing them wrongly because she believes in the word of her teacher, even though she is aware that I am also a teacher. This renders me helpless as a parent, because I do not understand the work of these teachers and I also believe talking to the child under the circumstances would not help her but rather will bring confusion. It becomes very difficult for me to confront my child's teachers because they do not regularly communicate with me about my child's work. The only time I get comments about my child's work is when I get the end of term's examination report or when my child has a serious case of misconduct. I find this worrying, not only for me, but also to many parents in the community. Parents of children who do not perform well at school, but are well behaved only realise at the end of the term that their children are not doing well at school. The question that remains unanswered to me is what is parental involvement, who should initiate parents' involvement and to what extent should parents be involved? When, Where and how should parents be involved?

As a teacher I have always felt that I need support from somebody else outside the school, who could reinforce what I am doing during the day at school. I feel parents should do more than just buy uniform for their children. My main worry is whether parents do understand what I am doing with their children and what I have to do to educate parents who do not understand. I believe children need encouragement from both the school and the home.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The investigation I am engaged in builds on the previous study I conducted (Kolagano, 1999), and therefore I will be drawing on the literature I surveyed for that study. I will go further to expand it, because in this study I am going to look at other aspects, which were not included in the first study. I will be looking at meanings which parents, teachers and students construct about the meaning of parental involvement. As established in my previous study parents have an input on their children's academic results, therefore they have a role to play in their children's education.

Concerns about 'parental involvement' have been raised for a long time. The Plowden report, of 1967, on primary schools in England, for example, led to people beginning to question the role of parental involvement in schools. People started questioning, for example, the white lines, which were painted in some school grounds indicating that parents were not allowed beyond the line. It should be noted that a successful partnership can only be built where parents feel welcome in the school and are recognised for their strengths and potentials (Education Daily, 1994). I locate my study within the perspectives of the international literature and using Fullan, (1992) as my standpoint, I intend investigating the meanings which people construct, and the implication of these meanings on policy implementation. Dimmock, O'Donoghue, and Robb, (1996) reviews research studies on arguments about the need for increased parental involvement and the current situations about parental involvement

internationally, and constructs a comprehensive research agenda focusing on major dimensions of parental involvement in education at school level. The authors suggest that there is need for a qualitative study focusing on ('emic' perspectives) participants' perceptions and evaluations of the educational situations in which they are engaged with regard to parental involvement, hence the focus of my study in two Community Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana.

I have surveyed literature from both Developed and Developing Countries. The literature indicates a growing trend towards increased parental involvement. What remains a concern to most researchers is that, what parental involvement means, and the forms of involvement differ markedly. The literature surveyed attempts to address the following issues,

1. Definition or meaning of parental involvement
2. Forms of involvement
3. Strategies towards enhancing parental participation
4. Ways of overcoming barriers to parental participation.

I will first look at literature from Developed countries and identify how the issues I mentioned above are addressed and later look at literature from the developing countries. Importantly, for my study, I would like to note that due to a number of factors some of these issues may not be applicable to the Developing countries, Botswana in particular. However this qualification will be shown as I present the findings of my surveys.

Section A – Literature from Developed Countries

2.2 Meaning of Parent involvement.

Fullan, (1992) argues that the reason why the role of parents is so confusing is that what is meant by involvement is often not specifically defined nor is it linked to any particular outcome. David, (1993) exploring issues on social justice, particularly social equity and equal opportunities on the grounds of gender, argues that even though parental participation may assume a central role in the era of social democracy, it has always meant different things and has been transformed. Squelch, (1994) argues that parental involvement can mean many things. It is often associated with parents serving on school governing bodies or on parent-teacher associations whose functions are mainly of a fund-raising nature, or help to organise school activities and events. What becomes quite evident in the survey is that it has always been and it will continue to be difficult to define or come up with one single meaning of parental involvement. Meanings are constructed within a social context and will always differ. Maybe one needs to engage first with the question of why parents choose to be involved because I believe whatever role they choose to assume depends on the kind of meaning they construct about parental involvement.

Dempsey-Hoover and Sandler, (1995) present a model which suggests that parents are involved because they construct personal parental roles, which include participation in their children's education, they develop a sense of responsibility in helping their children. The study by Edupol, (1993) argues that parental involvement may mean collaboration and participation. This means parent involvement may be in the form of advisory capacity or having real decision making powers. There are two roles that

parents may assume and these are influenced by the education priorities of individual countries (Edupol,1993).

a) Participation

Edupol, (1993) argues that,

In developed countries there is a particular focus on the involvement of parents in instructional activities, ranging from involvement in school level curriculum development, through support for learning at home to active participation in the classroom as teacher aides or resources.

This indicates that in most developed countries the interest is on improving educational achievement by involving parents and the meaning constructed is that of parents having direct participation in the education of their children.

Squelch, (1994) agrees with the observation above and argues parental involvement is much more than merely serving on the school committees. It is the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school and home-based activities. It is manifested in a variety of activities, from supporting and upholding the ethos of the school to supervising children's homework. Squelch sees parent participation in school activities as necessary for effective schooling. There are many ways in which parents can become involved in the school for example, parents as governors, parent-teachers associations, parents as members of class committees, parents as helpers and parents as classroom aides.

Dempsey-Hoover and Sandler, (1995) in their model suggest that parental involvement influences children's developmental and educational outcomes through such mechanisms as modelling, reinforcement, and instruction, as mediated by the parent's use of developmentally appropriate activities and the school's expectations. The model identifies parental involvement as a process that occurs over time and is dynamic. This further signifies the complex nature of parental involvement, it is not only difficult to define but it also takes time and requires a lot of resources which are likely not possible for Developing countries, Botswana in particular.

The trend shown above indicates that education priorities are ordered in relation to pedagogic efficiency. Barton, (1989 cited in Edupol, 1993) distinguishes between four ways in which parents can be involved, that is informal, formal, mandatory and constitutional. In most Developed countries where the emphasis is on direct participation because of the need to improve pedagogic efficiency, parent involvement is mandatory. The schools are compelled by legislation to co-operate with parents.

b) Collaboration

There is another growing trend towards meaning being attached to the role parents assume through collaborating with the schools. This is where the parents' role is advisory and compensatory to what the school is doing. It is very significant in Developing countries where education priorities are ordered in relation to economic efficiency and political responsiveness. Of great interest here is the provision of additional resources through parental involvement, and giving certain groups a voice in education may be through sharing of power in management. The relations between schools and parents are either informal or formalised in management policy.

Graue, (1993) argues that although most research in educational reform focuses on parental participation because of its importance, not much attention has been given to how people learn to become parents. The study concludes that it is important to think of families and school-based activities in a social context, because parents come to schools with information and resources that shape their actions and relationships. It is important for those who wish to enhance policy on parental involvement to note that where the parents come from, and from where they are operating influences the meaning that parents construct. This means parents will obviously be involved in quite different ways. Squelch, (1994) argues that schools should hold workshops for parents and there should be effective communication between the school and the parents for participation to be enhanced.

David, (1993) argues that what research on parental involvement has never focused on are the definitions of and changing practices of parents, particularly the gendered and racialised notion of parents. This literature is from the Developed Nations with multicultural societies. Race, class and gender are big issues. Race is not an issue in Botswana even though the country is also multicultural. People in Botswana all see themselves as Batswana and colour is not an issue. The definition of parental participation in the context of parents being marginalised according to colour and the call for parental involvement may mean giving these marginalised groups a voice through sharing power.

Fullan, (1992) maintains that there is no question that family background and home situation make a difference. Students from the more wealthier and Middle class families do well at school because of the home condition. Parent involvement may mean attempting to equip parents of low-income groups with skills to be able to assist their children at home and build in them a positive attitude towards education. This evidence shows us that different groups will always attach different meanings to parental involvement, hence in my study the important distinction will be between rural and urban area parents.

Macbeth, (1993) relates the meaning of parental involvement to a twelve point programme in which he argues that no school would honestly argue that it treats its parents professionally as both clients and educational partners unless it initiates something comparable to it. Parental involvement would therefore mean anything schools do which is comparable to the twelve points outlined in the programme, for example consulting parents at least twice a year, implementing parent associations or being a welcoming school to parents at all times. It is not every point that is mentioned which will apply in Botswana, but it is important to find out what meaning people construct about parental involvement in parent-teachers associations, governing bodies and parents meetings.

Macleod, (1989), looking at the effects of parents' attitudes on achievements, found that parental involvement has a causal relationship with students' achievements. He found that parents' positive attitudes have an influence on their children's attitude to schooling. The role of the school is then to raise parents' interest in the education of

their children through educating the parents on their role. Wang and Wildmann, (1995) found that children get low grades in science, because of a lack of parents' commitment towards the education of their children. They found that children in the process of their study at certain ages require parents to show support and be committed to their education. In order for the children to succeed they needed support at home in scientific activities. In Botswana children sometimes are left alone in the rural areas when their parents are in urban areas working or at the farming fields taking care of crops. It would be interesting to find out how this affects parental involvement for the rural parents.

Todd and Higgins, (1998) in the United Kingdom argue that power is both implicit and explicit in relationships between parents and professionals, even in situations where both parties have a common goal in supporting the education of a child or children. They use in their study the notion of powerlessness as a way of understanding much of what happens between schools and parents. They suggest that understanding both the prominence of the dichotomy that parents are powerless and professionals are powerful, and the effects on home-school relations can help explain failure of many attempts to improve parental involvement. Partnership without flexibility will simply reflect the hierarchical power structures that currently prevail and prevent the development of more equitable home-school relationships. It is quite evident that where power is not equally shared, partnership will be affected, as those who hold more power are likely to use it over other partners. It may be this idea of parents seeing themselves as less powerful that one finds that the role they construct is that whatever they do should not interfere with the teacher's work or I will not do anything

until the teachers tells me to do something. It may not be very significant in urban areas in Botswana but it may be a feeling which parents in the rural areas have.

Crozier, (1996) argues that parents involved in the study expressed distrust of teachers' judgement and the state education system, as well as frustrations about getting teachers to engage with them in dialogue about their children's needs. The distrust does not seem to be a result of lack of respect for teachers' professionalism but rather the system they represent. The parents involvement among these parents is informed by their concerns about low expectations of local (State) schools towards Black children; the negative stereotyping of their children by teachers and in some cases feelings of being marginalised from the community of the school. The authors argue that teachers have a notion of black parents as volatile and disinterested in their child's learning, or parents not having educational knowledge to enable them to engage meaningfully with their children's learning. Most parents challenge this perception of teachers and argue that if they have a feeling that teachers have low expectations of their children, they need to counteract it. As I said earlier race is not an issue in Botswana, the applicability of these findings would not hold. However the differences in conditions between rural and urban areas may result in teachers in rural areas having low expectations on rural children as they are more often considered to have less interest in their education. If parents think that teachers have low expectations about their children they may decide to act on behalf of their children to show their distrust of the teachers, hence one would have to find out what schools do to avoid this kind of attitude.

Useem, (1992) in the United Kingdom, concluded that there is a correlation between parents' educational levels and children's placements in mathematics. This can be explained among other factors by the degree of parents' involvement in their children's education, which is in turn is highly influenced by the parent level of education. However it is observed that it is not only parents' education levels, which can explain this high correlation, there were other factors, like the restrictive school policy, and language or cultural barriers. The study highlights that there is a need for schools to develop aggressive parental involvement initiatives, in order to try and reach all parents from different social backgrounds and for education officials to try and look at the curriculum and tracking policies and change them. In Botswana English and Setswana are official languages. English is however the medium of instruction in all subjects except in Setswana as a subject. Most official correspondence, if not all, is done in English. It is important for schools that want to enhance parental participation to deal with issues of language barriers.

2.3 Forms of involvement.

There are two forms of involvement and these are participation and collaboration and Edupol, (1993) notes that,

Developing and developed countries face the challenge of educating people in quite different ways and for different purposes.

This implies that the forms of parental involvement might differ between countries because of the influence of different education priorities.

Fullan, (1992) in his review of research on parental involvement comes up with two forms of involvement, which is instructional and non-instructional involvement. Instructional involvement refers to the type of involvement where parents are used as volunteers or assistants in the classroom, and where parents are involved with their children's school work at home. The two divisions made by Fullan, (1992) are very important for my study. For purposes of my study I will refer to instructional form of involvement as meaning direct participation and non-instructional as meaning collaboration. The forms of involvement may not necessarily be the same but the two broad categories will guide my identification of the forms of involvement in the schools in Botswana. I may not necessarily come up with similar themes; I may come up with completely new ones or some additional ones to add to what Fullan, (1992) has identified.

2.3.1 Instructional Involvement

2.3.1.1 Parents as assistants or volunteers in the classroom

Educational policy in industrialised countries seems to be concerned more with the student performance in this environment of rapid technological progress (Edupol, 1993). To measure the level of parental involvement one has to look at the effects it has on the student performance. This means parents have to play a direct participatory role in education. The education priorities seem to be on pedagogic effectiveness.

Michael, (1990) maintains that schools should recruit volunteers from the community to enlist with them. The parent-teachers association can provide volunteers who may help in instructional support or in any other activity where the school needs the services of these volunteers. He argues that a lot of studies have shown positive effects

on student achievement and motivation through the use of volunteers as tutors. The main challenge is how to draw more volunteers in schools in minority and low-income areas. Important to my study is to find how schools try to draw more participation in rural areas and how schools in urban areas try to draw parents participation from those living in locations.

Griffith, (1996) in his study in the United Kingdom found that parent participation was important for effective learning and teaching. Teachers were asked to rate the frequency of parent participation in school activities and their perception on the quality of parental-students relationships. He argues that his finding supports the contention that parental involvement is an important element in student academic performance. He also contends that parental involvement was significantly and positively related to competence. He suggests that in order to increase parent attendance at school activities, schools might co-ordinate with the parent-teachers associations to provide transportation and day-care services during school events. School staff and parent volunteers might conduct follow-up of parents to determine reasons for non-attendance. Griffith, (1996) and Michael, (1990) both agrees in their findings, that for parental participation to be enhanced, parents should be determined to volunteer their services in school activities, for example providing day care service. I would like to note that in Botswana these ideas, even though they sound good and have proved to be successful, may not apply because a lot of young, able people will be out in urban areas searching for jobs. The elderly people will always be at the cattleposts or farming fields trying to earn a living. The ideas may require that volunteers be rewarded in the form of cash which is quite impossible, taking into account that the money that the

government provides at the moment is not enough to provide all the facilities the school requires for effective learning. However in some instances there may be some individuals who once in a while may be determined to volunteer their services. This would be one important aspect, which is worth exploring in the study.

As I have said earlier, there are a number of issues of concern relating to the applicability of some of the ideas from the literature in Botswana. They are from a different community in terms of both resources and level of economic development, which ultimately translates into institutional development. The applicability of some of the ideas may face financial resource problems and manpower capabilities.

2.3.1.2 Parent involvement with learning activities at home

Vincent, (1996) argues that even though parental involvement has been endorsed, in theory it still doesn't exist in practice because teachers resist it. Most teachers appear to be satisfied when parents help in all other activities other than coming into the classroom. However it has been found that if teachers expose parents to their teaching methods, parents will be able to help children at home; for example, with reading or mathematical problems.

Henderson, and Berla, (1994) in the United States maintain that families play an important role in helping their children both at home and at school. They argue family involvement enhances better attendance at school, completion of homework, positive attitude towards schooling and discipline. Parents encourage positive attitudes in their children towards schoolwork; children understand better the importance of education

and enhance self-discipline in their children. The parents always have high expectations of their children; hence they enhance aspirations of high standard performance in their children. The parents are always well informed about the performance of their children and supervise their activities after school. The parents who are involved also build a lot of confidence in what they do and have a greater sense of worth. They learn more about schools and what the schools are doing. They provide a check on the teachers and also encourage them to always work hard through the support they give them. Parents should make it a habit to always visit schools rather than to wait to be called by teachers to tell them how their children are performing. Parents, who can, should always check whether the homework given to their children makes sense and if what the children do at school is approached in the appropriate manner. If parents have doubts they should check with teachers and discuss the problems they find. These findings are very important for my study, there may be differences as a result of community status in Botswana, but the activities mentioned are worth considering and finding out how the schools are grappling with them.

Barton, and Coley, (1992) in the United States, using data from The National Assessment of Educational Progress, suggest three areas where parents can exercise authority if they are involved. They can exercise authority in absenteeism by checking whether the student arrives at school everyday. They can check on the relevance of the reading material that a child uses at home to ensure that it is related to schoolwork. They can regulate the times, which the student spent on watching television, the programmes that the student watches on television and check if schoolwork is completed before watching television. Absenteeism is one major problem facing

schools in Botswana and it is important to find out the role parents play in attempting to solve the problem.

The U.S. Department of Education, (1990) found that parents play an important role in monitoring how their children use their leisure time. It was found that a mother or father who keeps on phoning an elderly person who is with the child at home will be able to know what the child is doing at any particular time. The parent will be able to know if the child uses her or his leisure time efficiently. Monitoring the use of time also helps the student in that there will be no idle time and time will be used fruitfully. The child will only use time in activities, which give learning experiences. Some of the children stay alone at home while their parents are working in towns or they stay at the cattle posts. The literature brings an important aspect into my study on how parents monitor student school activities.

Fehrmann, Keith, and Reimers, (1987) in the United Kingdom carried out a study that tried to examine the direct and indirect effects of parental involvement on students' grades. They identified variables in their study that could be controlled by teachers, parents, and students, and found parental involvement and social lives as variables that have an influence on students' academic achievements. The study focused on finding the level of support, guidance, appreciation, and reinforcement and student perception on the level of their parents' influence on what they do after school. It is also important to find out how parents give support to schools and their individual children in view of the fact that some children do stay alone as mentioned earlier.

Mann, (1998) in the United Kingdom argues that girls reported a lot of differences in the level of communication they shared with their mothers and fathers. For most of the girls, it was their mothers who had a lot of influence on their lives. The relationship between mother and daughter seemed to favour girls' achievement in three main ways, i.e. by emphasising independence, by providing emotional support and by influencing girls' values in the light of current social change. The author concludes that mothers might not become involved in the formal aspect of schooling, however their relationship with their daughters will influence their academic experiences. There are single parent families in Botswana and it would be interesting to find out if there is an influence on how parents are involved.

Watkins, (1998) in the United Kingdom argues that although the term parental involvement is usually used to describe the teacher's attempt to involve parents in on going classroom or school activities, it can also refer to parents' involvement in learning activities at home. It is argued that parents' home involvement with their children's learning can have important effects on children's achievements. Many parents reported that they would be more involved in helping their children at home if teachers communicated more with them or requested their co-operation. Reports such as these indicate that home involvement is an under-used educational resource. Parents were also asked to rate, for example, teacher communication and their involvement with their children's learning at home. It was found that teacher communication could increase many forms of parental involvement. It was also found that parents were likely to be involved when their children displayed low achievements. Communication is an important aspect of my study. One finds that sometimes the kind of relationships which

exist do affect how parents get involved because it determines how far parents understand what is to be done.

2.3.2 Non-instructional forms of involvement

2.3.2.1 Home-School relationships

The relationship between school and home may also differ between individual countries. Barton, (1989 cited in Edupol, 1993) distinguishes the forms of involvement in four ways in which parents are involved in schools and central to his definition of form is the issue of accountability, that is;

a) Informal

Most relations between teachers and parents are of an informal kind.

b) Formal

One step up from this level is a formalisation of certain aspects of parent involvement into management policy. This form rests on accountability being dependent on the initiative coming from school authority.

c) Mandatory

Mandatory accountability is where the education authorities compel schools to co-operate with parents.

d) Constitutional

Constitutional procedures are those that legislate accountability on the part of the school and have consequent legal sanctions for ensuring compliance. Underlying constitutional procedures is a political contract between the education authority and the electorate (Edupol, 1993:7).

There is a growing tendency in some of the developed nations to integrate parental involvement constitutionally. Britain's "parent charter is quoted as being a prime example of constitutionally effective parental involvement in education (EDUPOL 1993).

Becker, Nakagawa, and Corwin, (1996) in the United States analyse data from the survey of California's charter schools and comparison schools in the same communities, and also examined the parent contracts used at the charter schools. They found that charter schools do have greater levels of parent involvement, but that this involvement may be due to selectivity in the kinds of families participating in charter schools. Macbeth, (1993) speaks of the same forms which suggests that parents should commit themselves to full participation through making a declaration. What the authors bring out here is a way in which parents could commit themselves to participation through a form, which the school has and is completed by parents. In Botswana schools, the forms are available and parents complete them as the student enrolls in the school. They commit themselves to ensuring that their children abide by all school rules and that they will participate in all the activities of the school to help the school in educating their child. However these forms cannot be legally used to

exclude a child whose parent is not willing to participate. One would have to check on the perceptions of the degree of parental involvement in order to see if parents really abide by the declaration they make and if not what are the schools doing to ensure compliance from parents.

Elam, Lowell, and Gallup, (1994) argue that while the majority of parents would want to be involved, they sometimes find themselves left out because they do not understand what the school is doing. The parents complain that the teachers use jargon and speak a language they do not understand. Sometimes the kind of teacher attitude and reception which parents get at schools may make parents feel unwelcome. This sometimes gives parents a feeling that teachers are not approachable, they do not take parents seriously and they exercise too much authority and power in schools. The teachers should be able to detect if parents feel unwelcome. Communication should always be simple and clear between teachers and parents. On the other hand some teachers express feelings of needing more support from parents (Peter D. Hart, 1994). Parents have to show more commitment and determination to be involved. As I mentioned earlier that communication is an important aspect of my study, it is worth investigating the forms of communications that exist between parents and schools. Effective communication is what can bring parents into schools. In Botswana rural parents take time to understand and most parents do not speak English, the language that school uses when communicating with parents may influence the relationship schools have with parents.

Goodson, Swartz, and Millsap, (1991) suggest that schools should take initiatives to make school visits a lot easier by informing parents of suitable times for visits and if the need arises and if transport is available, provide transport to those who need it to visit schools to participate. The language of communication during the visit should suit every member involved in the visit. They also suggest that some people may be used as parent liaisons to make personal contact with people who are far to reach and encourage them to participate. They also argue that a successful partnership uses a variety of strategies to try and enhance the partnership. It will require schools to make all efforts whatever it would take to enhance the partnership between schools and parents. It is important that strategies should be in place to enhance parental involvement. It should not be assumed that if parents do not attend meetings they do not want to be involved, there may be other ways in which they could be involved.

Edwards, (1993) in the United States suggests that educators must examine whether African-American parents feel invited or uninvited. She argues that from the evidence she got, all parents regardless of their economic or social status felt welcome to come to school. She maintains that schools should look back at their history in order to determine if past policies and practices are the ones that make African-Americans feel invited or uninvited. She observes that the key to successful parent-involvement programmes is to know parents as individuals, with varying experiences, situations, and backgrounds. They differ in their relationships with their own children and in their feelings about school. Some have high regard for education and for others their children's schooling is a relived struggle, because they always have more pressing issues to attend to. She concludes that for schools to establish a good home-school

communication and a more successful involvement, they need to recognise the wide range of dispositions, backgrounds, experiences and strengths among Africa-American families. As I said race is not an issue in Botswana, but what is worth investigating is how much schools recognise the strengths, experiences and backgrounds of rural parents or parents from locations.

Eccles, and Harold, (1993) in the United States conclude that the relationship between parents and teachers seem to be decreasing rather than increasing as children move into the adolescent years. The only way to reverse this downward trend is to increase family, community and school co-operation through increased involvement. This is very important for my study in that the schools involved in the study enrol mostly this target population of learners. As in these countries, they have also proved to be a difficult group to handle at this stage. It is worth finding out which programmes schools have which help them deal with this group of learners.

Barrell, (1991) in the United States concludes that most teachers, parents and children highly valued regular opportunities to be involved in target settings. Most of the children were very keen for their parents to be involved in their education and parents are most likely to be involved when they are approached correctly, and their time is used effectively. In most instances parental involvement fails in that those who are involved never evaluate it. Schools just assume that parents do not want to be involved without checking whether what they have, meets the need of the parents.

Shatrand, Krieder, and Erickson-Warfield M, (in press) argue that sometimes some schools or education systems do not have programmes which train teachers to work with parents. They argue that there should be programmes offered to teachers that will enable them to work with parents and tolerate their different lifestyles. They need to understand the importance of involving parents and the barriers to parental involvement. They should know how to enhance communication between the school and the home. Schools should take initiatives to train their staff on dealing with parents and enhancing parental involvement. Home-School relationship is an important aspect of the study. The way the teacher relates to parents determines how much the parents will feel welcomed in the schools. The development or preparation of teachers matters most when it comes to dealing with parents. The important thing to find from teachers in the schools is how much they think they have been prepared to work with parents.

Mara, (1998) conducted a study for New Zealand's ministry of education to evaluate models that could enhance programmes for developing liaisons between schools and Pacific Island's parents and Communities. Data was collected from 38 schools. There were initial and return visits to schools in order to gather people's perceptions. Interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and school management. Interviews were also conducted with eight liaison people for these schools. The findings show high parental involvement of parents and teachers and give many examples of effective and successful involvement. These findings also form an important aspect that is worth considering in introducing parental involvement. Some people may be difficult to reach and something must be put in place to reach those who are far away. In Botswana the parent-teacher's association is a liaison committee between parents and teachers. The

activities of the committee are worth investigating and how much the committee has been able to bring parents and teachers together.

Olmscheid, (1999) conducted a review of research on parental involvement. The review findings show that parental involvement is seen as a necessity in education. Schools, which work well with parents, show, improved teacher/staff moral and higher ratings of teachers by parents. In view of the findings it is recommended that schools should start a parent involvement programme if it does not exist. The programme should try to meet the needs of all those involved especially parents and teachers and administrators should be trained to work with parents. The conclusion in this study agrees with what the authors of the above study have, observed, that training improves how partners in involvement can work together and this will apply to any country that wants to initiate parental involvement.

On the other hand Dauber, and Episten, (1992) argue that encouraging parents to participate in their children's education is more important than the family characteristics which could be assumed to be associated with non-involvement like socio-economic background, family size, marital status and parent education. Sometimes a negative impression about the school is created because the parent only first comes into contact when his or her child is in trouble. The parents then become suspect of their being called to the school. It is hoped that the use of neutral settings and sometimes meetings off the school grounds by both teachers and parents can enhance parents' participation (Lewis, 1994). An important point which schools have to note is whether parents feel that their efforts and strengths are recognised. Parents will feel unwelcome if they think

that schools only recognise none participation and they are never complemented when they have participated. The kinds of strategy schools have in place to reward and recognise parents efforts are worth investigating and applicable to the Botswana situation.

2.3.2.2 Parent involvement in Governance

Bustos, (1991), Fagerlind, and Sjostedt, (1991) cited in Edupol, (1993) notes that,

Globally there has been a recognised trend in education governance towards social participation as a result of which grassroots bodies and organisations has a greater say in decisions concerning them (1993:4).

Parental involvement forming part of social participation varies among countries because of the influence by education priorities. There is a tendency for educational governance to be centralised in developed countries and parental involvement is a component of decentralised governance (Edupol 1993).

Weiler, (1991) cited in Edupol, (1993) notes that,

The mechanisms for meeting educational priorities engenders a debate about modes of governance- the degree to which the governance system should be centralised or decentralised. Arguments for decentralisation tend to fall into three camps, namely the "culture of learning", "efficiency" and "redistribution" argument (1993:5)

The implication is as parental involvement is a component of decentralised governance one will have to understand the issues involved in the three camps above in order to evaluate it as a mode of governance. The debate on governance has important implications on the forms of parental involvement in schools. The literature seems to imply that pedagogic effectiveness is a criteria to measure parental involvement in some developed countries, while economic efficiency and political responsiveness and relevance is used in some developed and mostly developing countries.

Reay, (1998) in the United Kingdom argues that while all the mothers helped children with schoolwork and talked to teachers, it was only the middle-class mothers who had the power and resources to act effectively to shape the curriculum offered to their children. The study asserts that a market system of education provides the middle-classes with a competitive edge which they take advantage of. This implies that the decentralisation of educational governance may have negative consequences on certain groups of people, in particular working class mothers. Important to my study is the distinction between parents in rural areas and urban areas.

Golby, (1992) writing about the situation in the United Kingdom, argues that the new role of school governor poses questions about the proper conduct of these new authorities with regard to professional work of schools. He maintains that schools have unique purposes, and there are no explicit answers about how governors should conduct themselves in the legislation. He notes that schools need to account for their use of public funds and as such they need to respect the popular will, hence this does

not mean the hand-over of all professional functions to governors, hence this study will try to find out what is happening in Botswana schools.

2.4 Parent intervention Program

Lockett, (1999) presented a paper at a conference for the study of small rural schools. The paper discusses parent involvement focusing on the national standards for parent/family involvement programmes. There is emphasis on the importance of communication between home and school, promoting parenting skills, the parent's role in student learning, parents as volunteers and parents as full partners in decision making. The paper focuses on what a successful program should look like. Seven steps suggested for implementing standards in a program are creating an action team, examining current practice, developing an improvement plan, developing a written parent/family involvement policy, securing support, providing training for project/program staff, and evaluating and revising the plan. The ideas of these programmes are good and will be worth considering if parental involvement is to be enhanced, but for a developing country like Botswana that lacks resources; they may prove to be too costly and not applicable.

The National Commission on Time and Learning, (1994) also found that schools have the responsibility to bridge the gap that exists between schools and family by carrying out mini researches on their local communities to find out what their needs and opinion they hold about the school. It gives the example of the surveys carried by The Linda Vista and California schools on school improvement. The survey was conducted in a number of languages in order to reach every member of the local community. The

findings of the research, helps schools to assess further changes needed. The schools will also learn about family's work schedules that will in turn help schools to schedule their activities to suit the times of parents. It is important for schools to always take into account the needs of the communities they are serving and surveys are one tool that could be used to identify these needs. In introducing the school management program that is aimed at providing advisory capacity to the School Heads on how to better manage their schools, there was an emphasis on action research in the schools. How far the schools had gone to look at themselves and identify their weakness.

Lee and Croninger, (1994) maintain that schools need to make an effort to help low-income parents become involved in school activities because they often do not take initiatives to be involved unless the school asks them to. They also quite often have difficulties in helping their children with their academic work particular those in secondary schools. One interesting thing is that not everyone will always be involved and how the schools and those who are involved try to bring those who are not involved on board is worth investigating. In Botswana it may not be on the basis of class but rather urban and rural areas.

Wragg, (1989) argues that even though legislation gives parents the right to be involved in the structures of education of their children most parents remain helpless because they do not know what to do. It is then the duty of teachers to expose parents to their teaching methods and so raise their interest as it has been found that parents' attitudes strongly influence their children's progress in school. The school should come up with activities that will educate the parents on their involvement, such as, parents'

evenings or curriculum evenings. It is not only teachers who require training on how to work with parents, the parents also need training on how they could work with teachers and how they can be involved with their children's work at home. It is a task for which schools will require money to come up with such programmes, however one would like to find out what schools in Botswana are doing to prepare parents to be able to check children's books as they would want them to.

Friedlaender, (1999) studied some initiatives of an Urban Middle school to involve parents in the school's functioning through employing two parents' representatives. These two parents staffed the school set aside a classroom as a parent centre. One parent was American and one was Latina. Seven parents and four administrators were interviewed, and field notes were made from observations of parent meetings. There were signs of good interaction between parents and teachers at this school. However it was found that parents were not supported in gaining participation skills or opportunities to organise their own efforts. The conclusion reached was that parents' involvement in urban communities needed scaffolded support. Hiring parent representatives will not be applicable in Botswana as it is in the United States because of shortage of money. However the important thing to investigate is the way schools in Botswana give parents scaffolded support they need in order to be involved.

✓ Funkhouser, and Gonzales, (1997) in The United States suggest seven steps as a guideline towards effective partnership and these are;

There is no "one size fits all" approach to partnerships; school should not think that there is one single correct way towards building partnership, they should work with what proves to be working for their schools in their context and gradually attempt to improve on it. They should know the parent, their needs, strengths and attempt to respond to them.

Training and staff development are an essential investment; both parents and the school staff must be trained on the partnership. They must have skills to work with each other and be able to work with the larger communities where the school is located.

Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships; both schools and parents should talk to each other and learn about their lifestyles, work schedules and any other issue that needs to be considered in the partnership.

Flexibility and diversity are key; it should be realised that parents involvement takes many forms. Parents may not be involved in meetings but still be involved with the child's learning activities in some way at home. What is to be of prime interest should be an emphasis that parents have to be involved with the child's learning.

Projects need to take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools; schools should take advantage of any external training that may be offered by external agencies in the local communities if there are any. Funding from external sources can help increase the resources available to the schools to use to enhance parental involvement.

Changes take time; developing school-parent partnership cannot be done just overnight, it requires more time and effort from both parents and staff. It also requires the involvement of all those involved with the development of a child. As Fullan (1992) argues it also requires all those involved sharing the meaning of the partnership.

Projects need to regularly assess the effects of the partnership using multiple indicators; the staff, students and parents should evaluate the success of the partnership programmes. There should be a tool to be used to measure how the success of the partnership can be related to school activities. It is not all of these which would apply to the Botswana situation, but it will be important to find out in this study how much schools are aware of the fact that change takes time, importance of communication, training and staff development in relation to parental participation.

2.5 Ways of overcoming barriers towards parental involvement

Funkhouser, and Gonzales, (1997) in the United States suggest five ways to overcome barriers towards parental involvement and these are,

Overcoming time and resource constraints; partnership requires time for partners to know each other, plan their work together to achieve their purpose. They also need resources to be used to achieve and realise their purpose.

Providing information and training to parents and school staff; information should be made available to both the parents and teachers. Communication should be clear and

simple to understand. All documents that contain information about the school should be made available to all partners.

Restructuring schools to support family involvement; schools need to be more welcoming to parents if they are to get parents involved. Everyone in the school should be involved in attempts to enhance parental involvement. Steps should be taken to create an environment for parents that appear to be welcoming, more personal and less hierarchical.

Bridging school-family differences, if differences in the level of education, and power the partners have, surfaces in communication between them, it might be difficult for families particularly those with less education to be involved. Communication should always be very simple; language accessible to all partners should be used.

Tapping external support for partnership; enhancing partnership between schools and parents should also get support from other organisations which are willing to be brought into this collaboration effort. Business may for example help through sponsoring refreshments for parents meetings. Colleges may also be involved through providing education to both parents and teachers on the partnership.

It is also important that in coming up with parental involvement policies schools should, be tapping on experiences from other countries that may be applicable to Botswana. I intend finding out in this study the experiences from the literature survey that the schools in Botswana have tapped from in coming up with their policies.

Section B - Developing Countries' literature

Much of the literature from the developing countries show that parents are involved in a collaborative role because education priorities are ordered in relation to economic efficiency which focuses on provision, and political responsiveness and relevance. The political responsiveness focuses on giving parents say in education provision, while relevance focuses on meeting the demands of the labour market both Nationally and Internationally. There is an idea constructed that in order to improve schools and increase provision parents have to be involved in governance. There is however differences on how parents are involved in governance between countries. Most of the researches were conducted on Parent-Teachers associations and School Governing Bodies. The findings and conclusions will apply to Botswana in some way because the two structures are already in place in Botswana.

The study by Edupol, (1993) arose from a shared concern about the role which parents currently play in South African education and the possibilities for increased parental involvement in future. It was observed that the imposition of Apartheid education required the allocation of enormous power to the central state. On the other hand the struggle against the system involved ~~massive~~ involved the formation of a massive alliance of interest groups under the banner of the Mass Democratic Movement. The voices of millions of parents tended to be muted, even though each of the two groups claimed to be representing the interest of the parents. The study sees the role of parents currently being limited to fundraising and legitimisation of official governance processes, although there are some notable exceptions. The study explores four key questions,

1. What is the nature of parental involvement currently?
2. What concerns are raised by different constituencies with regard to the topic?
3. Is there a need for parental involvement in education policy in South Africa during and after this transitional period?
4. Is there a specific parental constituency in South Africa today and is there a need for one to look at parental rights in education?

In an attempt to address these questions the study deals with the findings under the following headings,

Who is a parent?

A problem of definition of a parent is encountered in the study of parent involvement. There are always different views advanced, some people arguing that parents are either biological or legal guardians. There are those who would argue that a school belongs to the community and therefore all residents in the community have a right to say on how schools are run. In a Botswana context where an extended family system prevails, a definitional problem like this would be an area of interest in a study of parent involvement. One would however be interested to see how this definitional problem unfolds in the activities which parents are involved in at parent-teachers association and school boards of governor level.

Which parents?

The question raised here is whether the role parents play in education is gendered. In both rural and urban communities where a bulk of African parents are either working class or peasantry, most men do not take an active role in day to day problems of the

school. One of the reasons observed is a cultural norm, which associates the role with women and also migration of men seeking employment. In the context of Botswana the cultural norm which is associated with the division of roles may have a major influence. Men are always in town working and families live back in the rural areas. They are also sometimes at the cattlepost taking care of livestock. In this era where there are more single parent families, a lot of mothers are often out in towns working, and elderly women attend to the day to day problems of schools. This is what might account for non-involvement which is further complicated by the fact that even these elderly women also sometimes stay at the farming field at certain times of the year leaving children alone at home.

What do we mean by parental involvement?

There is a need for clarity of what it means in view of the questions already raised above. There is need for clarity about the structures in which parents operate, the amount of powers they will have and their relationship with other bodies. The current situation of Botswana calls for establishment of parent-teachers association and school boards of governors in schools. It would be interesting to look at the composition of each, and how democracy and accountability are expressed in their operations.

The study concludes parents, as the primary stakeholders should have say, in education policy. What is not agreed upon is the nature of the say and the levels at which parents should be represented. It is found that concern about parental involvement is about collaborative involvement in governance. Parents need to be trained in exercising their right in participatory democracy so as to constitute an organised group. The necessary

condition for effective parent involvement is that it should be mandated to overcome organisational resistance. Policy on parent involvement should be specific and prescriptive. There is need for evaluation, monitoring and support should be provided to assist implementation. The conclusions reached here are common to most developing countries, Botswana in particular because of the young nature of democracy, illiteracy and lack of resources.

Buckland, and Hofmeyer, (1992) review debates on educational governance in South Africa. Two important analysts ground the discussions they make in a number of working definitions of centralisation and decentralisation.

Centralisation

Winkler, (1989) cited in Buckland, and Hofmeyer, (1992) argues that,

Centralisation-decentralisation can be viewed as a spectrum ranging from a unitary governmental system where the central government has most power or decision-making authority to a governmental system, where local government and community organisations exercise large amounts of power. The ultimate centralised system is one in which all decisions are made in the nation's capital (1992:235).

The definition used above explains policies adopted by most developing countries which are faced with addressing problems of illiteracy, past imbalances and current need for technological advancement in a global world. Central government has much power over decisions concerning curriculum formulation and implementation.

Botswana has a centralised system based on a national curriculum; hence parents have limited powers in influencing curriculum offered to their children.

Decentralisation

Rondinelli, et al (1987) cited in Buckland, and Hofmeyer, (1992) describes the five forms of decentralisation, but for the purposes of my study I will only use two of the forms,

Delegation

This involves...the transfer or creation of broad authority to plan and implement decisions concerning specific activity...or a variety of activities within specified territorial boundaries...to a semi-autonomous public or private organisation that is technically and administratively capable of carrying them out (1992:236).

Deconcentration

In its weakest sense decentralisation simply means relocating administrative offices of central government to regions or smaller communities. This at least has the effect of putting the officials administering the system within reach of more members of the community, but does not imply real decentralisation since decision-making power remains in the central authority (1992:236).

The decentralisation of education policy administration has been an issue of concern in Botswana. The country was divided into five regions and regional headquarters were established. In order to bring administration and implementation closer to the local communities, some senior officials were put in these regional offices for administrative purposes, however the major decisions on policy still remained at head office. Some

activities were delegated to the communities through the school boards of governors, but they do not have the autonomy to do everything they wish to do without consulting with authorities.

Christie, and Potterton, (1997) conducted research that aimed at building a South African knowledge of schools operating in difficult circumstances as a contribution both to research and to policies for school quality enhancement and school development. They found that in most black schools involving parents in governance presented a lot of difficulties. Parents' interests were not constant nor could they be sustained. Parents saw the school as having the responsibility for their children and running it. Some attempts to involve parents were seen as showing the school's failure in its responsibility. In some schools parents' involvement was seen as something that warrants payment. Some schools wanted to have working relationships with the community so that they could be protected from theft and vandalism. The community for example used some schools as Seaparankwe for church service, and in return the community provided protection of buildings. Parental involvement was found to be minimal irrespective of schools acknowledging its importance. Parents' involvement was seen as a backstop in discipline. Parents were not involved in the day to day issues of the school, and played very little role in decision-making. In few instances parents were used in activities such as fund-raising and governance.

Karlson, Pampallis, and Sithole, (1996) conducted an in-depth study with the aim of making a contribution to the then ongoing policy debates and restructuring process in South Africa. The focus of the study was on educational governance at school level.

Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders, for example political parties, teacher organisation and Model C schools. They conclude in their findings that all schools should have governing bodies composed of parents, teachers and students. They also conclude that more power should be devolved to governing bodies in the schools except for Model C schools who already had more power. The provincial education departments should play a role of providing training programmes for governing body members. The governing bodies were expected to be fully involved in developing their schools and in ensuring that they remain effective educational institutions.

Makhubu, (1993) surveyed PTSA in 3 schools in an attempt to answer the following questions;

- a) How does each PTSA exercise accountability?
- b) To who is each PTSA accountable?

He found that schools were under pressure to establish PTSAs. This was because of different and specific factors that militated in favour of the establishment of PTSAs at school level for example principal leadership style, racism, ethnicity and corruption. It was found that PTSAs were involved in hiring and firing teachers and non-teaching staff, fund-raising, discipline, liaising with DET, control funds, crisis management and conflict resolution and formulation of school policy. Some of the reasons that were found to be impacting negatively on the role of PTSAs were political affiliation, power relations and stakeholder role within PTSAs.

Overett, (1996) conducted a study that aimed at looking at parent-teacher intervention programme that aimed at promoting positive reading attitude and improving reading skills. Six sessions reading programme for parents was conducted on a Saturday afternoon lasting 1 hour. Parents were expected to attend together with their children. It was found that parents did not attend although the prime aim of the sessions was to enhance parent participation. Interviews were also conducted and very few of the children indicated that they had books at home.

Harber, and Davis, (1997) writing about external relations in schools in African countries, argue that Parent-teachers associations have been there all along and parents have been involved in paying fees. They also suggest that parents be expected to contribute towards buildings and basic facilities through parent-teachers' associations. They argue that parents are involved because they also expect a favour in return from the school. They give an example of a Community junior secondary school in Botswana where the School Head had to provide a classroom for people to sleep in during the agricultural show. The school also had a tarpaulin that was loaned out for funerals and weddings.

Samah, in Shaeffer, (1991) in Malaysia argues that community participation in schools has been there since the 1970s through parent-teachers' associations. They are helping to forge greater co-operation between schools, parents and the private sector. They contribute in buildings and they are not to interfere with the pedagogical methods and program content. Sometimes they are asked to act as mediators where disciplines among staff or pupils are a problem.

Thin, in Shaeffer, (1991) in Vietnam argues that parent associations can contribute to qualitative improvement of basic education. The parents' associations are expected to build good relations between schools and families, between teachers and parents. They are also expected to assist in improving quality of education. The activities of the parents' association are pupil oriented activities like helping both parents and students on improving study patterns, and teacher oriented activities like requesting local authorities to sell land or building materials to teachers at reduced prices. The parents' association is also involved with construction of school buildings.

The books that I reviewed to date show that there has been considerable amount of work done on issues of parental involvement. The role of parents in the education of their children has become very important and most schools would be failing in their endeavours without parental support. In all the literature surveyed there is an emphasis on involving parents in school activities as opposed to their exclusion. These reviews have important implications for my study, and give it a focus. There is not much research done on parental involvement in Botswana, hence I will relate my research findings to the literature surveyed. The findings from the literature review and the research may provide a base for building school policies on parental involvement in these schools and all other schools with similar conditions.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

My research project is a qualitative study. Bogdan, and Biklen, (1992) argue that,

We use qualitative research as an umbrella term to refer to several strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected have been termed soft that is rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. The questions are not framed by operationalising variables; rather they are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context (1992:2).

I have chosen this research approach because I am interested in depth and not quantity in my studies. I believe that it will help me understand the schools as a whole through open-ended interviews with School Heads, teachers, students and parents. A qualitative study is designed to discover what can be learned about some social phenomenon of interest, particularly social phenomena where people are participants (Maykut, and Morehouse, 1994). The intention of my study is not to generalise the outcomes, but to rather have a deep understanding of perceptions of meaning of parental involvement from the perspectives of the participants selected for the study. Important to my study is the participants' perceptions and I believe in order to understand them fully. I need an approach that will allow me to have contact with the participants where they normally spend their time. My approach of collecting data should allow the participants to say whatever they want to say from their own frame of

reference not necessarily governed by my predetermined ideas about what I am investigating. Maykut, and Morehouse, (1994) argue that,

A qualitative study has a focus but that focus is initially broad and open-ended; allowing for important meanings to be discovered (1994:43).

A qualitative study has eight characteristics, that is an exploratory and descriptive focus, emergent design, a purposive sample, data collection in a natural setting, emphasis on human-as-instrument, qualitative methods of data collection, early and ongoing inductive data analysis, and a case study approach to reporting outcomes. Important to my study is an exploratory and descriptive focus, data collection in a natural setting, purposive sampling, and an emphasis on human-as-instrument, qualitative methods of data collection, and early and ongoing inductive data analysis. Bogdan, and Biklen, (1992) argue that,

The best known representatives of qualitative research and those that most embody the characteristics we just touched upon are participants' observation and in-depth interviewing (1992:2).

I have decided to use in-depth interviews as an instrument for collecting data in my study. In order to have a variety of perspectives I surveyed international literature.

3.2 Preparatory/Practical Arrangements

I applied for access to doing the research through applying for a research permit from the Office of the State President. I also made contact with the schools through letters

and telephoned to ask for permission to conduct the research. Once the office of the State President granted the permit, another letter was written to the schools with a copy of the research permit. Some parents were not comfortable with the use of English, so the questions decided upon were translated into Setswana language. The first week of the commencement of the study was used to go around the schools to introduce myself. Each school was then allocated 2 weeks for the study. The last week was used to go back to the schools, to get feedback from the respondents and to find if there are some opinions about the way that the study was conducted.

3.3. Participants

There are two community junior secondary schools involved in the study. Maykut, and Morehouse, (1994) argue that,

In qualitative research, participants (or settings, such as schools or organisations) are carefully selected for inclusion, based on the possibility that each participant (or setting) will expand the variability of the sample (1994:45).

I used purposive sampling in my study because of the small sample that I am dealing with, and I already had in mind those who could give variability of perceptions in the study. The topic addresses issues that affect the schools, teachers, parents and learners. I believe that my participants' selection was based on those who are likely to be affected by the issue being investigated.

The schools were selected on the basis of their location. They are one rural school, and one urban school. From each school I selected participants for interviews. There were

twenty-two selected participants. The participants were the School Head, two teachers, three students, School Board chairperson, Parents-Teachers association chairperson, two teacher representatives on the school board and parents-teacher association, and one parent. The teachers were selected from the list of teachers in the school on the basis of their teaching experience. The students were selected on the basis of their academic performance; one student will be a high achiever, one average achiever and one a low achiever. The parents selected were parents with students currently enrolled at the school.

3.4 Data Collection

Maykut, and morehouse, (1994) argues that,

The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour (1994:46).

The method used to gather data from the selected participants was in-depth interviews.

Ackroyd, and Hughes, (1983 cited in May, 1993) define an interview as;

An encounter between a researcher and a respondent in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research (1993:91).

May, (1993) argues that there are four types of interview, the structured, semi-structured, group and unstructured interviews. Cohen, and Manion, (1994) mention four kinds of interviews, that is structured, unstructured, non-directive and focused

interviews. As opposed to quantitative inquiry that uses more formal standardised examples like surveys, qualitative inquiry that requires depth uses less formal examples like semi-structured, which allows the respondents to answer without feeling constrained by pre-formulated ideas of the researcher. Hammersley, and Atkinson, (1989 cited in O'Connell, and Layder, 1994) argue that,

The main difference between the way in which ethnographers and survey interviews ask questions is not as is sometimes suggested, that one form of interviewing is 'structured' and the other is 'unstructured'...The important distinction to be made is between standardised and reflexive interviewing (1994:120).

The subject of my research study is the perceptions that the participants have on the meaning of parental involvement and the implications of these perceptions on implementation of policy. I believe that interviews helped me gather a rich source of data and allowed participants to speak freely about their experiences, opinions, aspirations and feelings. The interviews were semi-structured and the questions were open-ended [see appendix A, B, and C for questions]. May, (1994) argues that;

Semi-structured interviews are therefore said to allow people to answer more on their own terms than the standardised interviews permit, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over focused interviews (1994:93).

I had questions designed before hand, but using the semi-structured interview approach I could also modify their order depending on what appeared most appropriate in the context of my conversation with participants. I was also able to probe and seek

During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomenon as reflected in the data. While various questions are asked, the key question is the one, 'What is this piece of data an example of?' (1998:212)

I will look at the responses, compare them and I will identify what I consider to be the most outstanding responses common to respondents, which could be used to describe parental involvement. The responses I find to have the same meaning will be grouped together to generate category and themes. The themes will be supported by extracts carefully picked from the data and the extracts will have to be representative of a particular theme. I will also test the international themes for "fit" with the Botswana context and also highlight the distinctive local aspects in my presentation of findings.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

This is one aspect to which, this study had to give careful consideration. Miles, and Huberman, (1994) argue that,

We cannot focus only on the quality of the knowledge we are producing, as if its truth were all that counts. We must also consider the rightness and wrongness of our actions as qualitative researchers in relation to the people whose lives we are studying, to our colleagues, and to those who sponsor our work (1994:288).

In engaging in this research project I had to ask myself a number of questions relating to ethical questions. Some of the things to consider were whether the study was worth doing; do participants understand what they are getting into? Privacy of the

participants and whether the participants and sponsors will have access to the report of the study are also important issues. After careful considerations of the questions I came up with the following specific ethical issues that needed consideration before, during and after the study.

a) Access and acceptance

The laid down procedure for acquiring access and acceptance to do research in both the country and the schools were followed (refer to page 52 last paragraph).

b) Informed consent

The research procedure was clearly explained to the participants before the research commenced and the respondents were assured that where they feel that they are being misinterpreted they will be listened to. I explained to the participants that they are not obliged to participate if they are not willing to do so.

c) Anonymity

The respondents were assured that the name of the participating schools and the names of the respondents were not going to be revealed in the study. However as I was dealing with only two schools, respondents were made aware that it might be easy for some people to speculate who could have been involved and this is why it was important that those who were involved should have volunteered to do so.

d) Honesty and Trust

The respondents were assured that their opinions and views were going to be presented as they have given them without any alterations. If there was anything that required to be changed, permission will have to be sought with the concerned respondents first.

e) Ownership of data and conclusions

The schools and the sponsors played an important role in the study, so they will both get a copy each, of the research report. The schools provided access towards getting into their premises to get respondents' perceptions. The ministry of Education provided funds to be used to buy stationary and travel to the schools. The office of The State President will also get a copy of the report for giving permission to conduct the research in the country.

3.7: The question of validity

Triangulation will be used in this study in order to reduce the possibility of error, and triangulation is described as a process of using different methods to study a phenomenon. Flick, (1992) cited in Stake, (1998) argues that,

Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. But, acknowledging that no observation or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen (1998:97).

Robson, (1993:383) also argues that “triangulation provides a means to test one source of information against other sources, and if the information corresponds, it validates the research findings”. In my attempt of understanding these cases I will be using and comparing not three but four sources of information in each school. Evidence from the documents will be added to that obtained from three different interview sources.

3.8 Limitations

It should also be noted that case studies share a lot of people's personal views and circumstances, so some people feel that they are going to be exposed and embarrassed, hence they will not freely participate in the interviews. It is also not possible to understand everything about a particular case and as such another person who may engage in an investigation after me may understand other things, which I may not have understood. Great care must be taken not to generalise the findings, as parent involvement is a complex concept and may be interpreted and understood differently by different people. There is no one true answer to the problems of parental involvement.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I am going to present my research findings on the basis of data collected from two Community Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana. Perhaps one needs to give first a brief historical background of the Botswana case as far as parental involvement is concerned. I will then later give a brief historical background of the schools involved in the study.

In the mid 1980s there was a serious concern regarding access to secondary education in Botswana. Many pupils completed their primary education and could not get a place in secondary schools. Government at the same time was committed to giving every young Motswana nine years basic education. This implied a number of changes in the education system. There was a transition from three years junior secondary certificate to two years junior secondary in order to create more space for pupils to come into junior secondary schools. The government also went on a massive expansion through building community junior secondary schools throughout the country.

The community junior secondary schools were established through partnership between government and the community (National policy on Education, Government paper no. 1 of 1977). In order for a community junior secondary school to be established in an area, the people had to group themselves and contribute money. This resulted in villages coming together and agreeing that each family had to contribute a

cow towards the building of a school. There was agreement between the government and the community that, while government provided all other facilities and money for running the schools, the community would contribute towards building 50% of the teachers' housing.

A school board of governors was established and was responsible for registering the school. The school board was also responsible for recruiting the school's support staff. Some of the community junior secondary schools managed to sustain themselves, while some particularly those in the rural areas could not manage, hence they continued to be faced with a number of problems like shortage of teachers' accommodation. In the early 1990s government committed itself to the provision of 75% of the teachers' houses, while the community provided 25%. Still there was a problem that some boards could not raise enough funds to build houses as it was revealed during the Kedikilwe commission report of 1993. However I would like to note that much was achieved in relation to access into secondary education. Previously pupils had to sit for a primary school leaving examination and the results were used to select those who should go into secondary schools. It was only those who got grade A and B who got places in secondary schools. In the early 1990s pupils still sat for primary school leaving examinations but it was no longer used for selection purposes because everyone who completed primary education got a place in a secondary school.

The first National policy on Education was introduced in 1977 by a government paper no. 1 of 1977, which was approved by parliament. A commission of enquiry was set by the then President of Botswana in 1975, under section 2 of the "commission of

enquiries act” (cap. 05: 02). This national policy was known as the Education for Kagisano, because it was built on the four National principles of, social harmony or peace, development, self-reliance and unity. It was then agreed that in addition to mid-term reviews, which may take place, there would be a major review of the national policy taken in consultation with people whenever need arises.

In 1992 a commission of enquiry was set to make a major review on the national policy on education and called the Kedikilwe commission. It reported back in 1993 and government came up with a government paper no. 2 of 1994. The recommendations contained in government paper no.2 of 1994 were given to the ministry of education to implement. In order to give the work of the commission an international flavour and experience, there were three external members from Germany, Malaysia and Singapore.

The government paper no. 2 of 1994 contained recommendations, which were to be implemented in order to improve the system. One of the things people complained about was related to standards, that the three years junior secondary was better than the two years. Government agreed upon a transition to a three years junior certificate. Government committed itself to a 100% provision of teachers' houses. There was also a strong recommendation towards the involvement of parents in all decisions the school should take. The relations between schools and parents were to be strengthened through a call for the establishment of parent-teacher associations in all schools. School boards of governors were also to be established in all schools. In the same government paper no. 2 of 1994, there was a call for decentralisation of education

policy implementation and administration to the regions in order to bring services closer to the local communities. Certain powers were to be decentralised to the regional education offices and the school boards of governors were given power over some management issues.

As previously described, I carried out my research in two schools, which are referred to as school A and B. The description of each school in terms of brief historical background, location and size is as follows.

a) School A

This is a school that is found in one of the towns in Eastern Botswana. The school has 15 classes, that is five streams of each form. The school started operating in 1996. It has a full complement of teachers, some of who are untrained teachers. It also has a full complement of support staff.

The school is located in one of the locations (poor areas) in town. Most of the pupils come from the location and some from the suburbs of the town. The school has the same problems, which face most of the schools in the country. The school lacks money to carry out some of its activities. However being located in town it is able to get most of its supplies locally and only has to go to the regional office outside the town for authority on some policy matters.

The school does not have boarding facilities; the students stay with their parents or relatives in town. There is a problem of absenteeism as some students sometimes leave home and never arrive at school. It is very difficult to trace some of the problems

explanation where necessary. The ordering of questions was also not governed by my pre-formulated ideas. Cohen, and Manion, (1994) argue that,

Although the research purposes govern the questions asked, their content, sequence and wording are entirely in the hands of the interviewer (1994:273).

The interviews were conducted at the schools for both teachers and students and at home for the parents. This was done basically because I wanted to get the participants' experiences in context and I felt the schools were the appropriate place for teachers and students, and the home for parents. I would have loved to interview parents at the school, but my problem was that I could not find parents at school during the interview period. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. This allowed me to concentrate on the conversation, listening to the words carefully and also to observe the participants' actions as they say the words. I was also able to go back to the tapes and listen to them again. I also surveyed the school board of governors meeting minutes and parent-teacher association meeting minutes for the past two years, identified references to parents and parent participation and made notes.

3.5 Data Analysis

A constant comparative method of data analysis, which involves open coding and inductive reasoning, was used. The data was analysed in relation to categories and themes that correspond with the broad scope of the research question. Corbin, and Strauss, (in Punch, 1998) argues that,

because it is difficult to trace the parents. Close to the school in the location are various shebeens, which create a lot of noise, and appear to be hiding places for some students who abscond from school. These shebeens also create problems for those who stay in the location, as it is very difficult for students to study under such conditions.

The infrastructure is well developed, the school is on the telephone, 24-hour electricity and water is not a problem. The school results have not been bad for all the past years and teachers are working tirelessly to improve them every year. The school is successful in sporting activities.

The school is interested in involving parents as indicated in the school's prospectus. The school prospectus in item 7 reads as follows, "to ensure co-operation of staff, parents and all stakeholders of the school and its pupils".

b) School B

The school is located in a rural area in the Eastern Botswana. The school has 12 classes, that is four streams of each form. The school started operating since 1989. It has a full complement of teachers, some of who are untrained teachers. It also has a full complement of support staff.

The school is located in a rural village and most of the students come from the two feeder primary schools in the village. Some other students come on transfer from other schools to come and stay with their parents who are either teaching in the school, local primary school, working at the clinic, customary court, post office or shops. The

school faces most of the problems faced by other schools in the country. The school lacks some money to carry out some of its activities. The school is located in a rural village where there are no big shops to supply the school with its needs. In order to get some supplies the school authorities have to drive out about 70 kilometres to the nearest town to purchase supplies.

The school is on a single line telephone that is more often offline. The line is serviced from the nearest town, which is 70 kilometres away, and it sometimes takes a long time for the line to be restored. The tarmac was completed at the end of 1999 and before then they had to drive on gravel roads. The school runs electricity through a generator that is switched off at certain times during the day and at night in order to preserve fuel.

The school does not have boarding facilities, therefore students stay at home. Some of the students stay alone because their parents are working in towns or they are staying at the cattlepost or farming fields. Some students abscond from school because there is no one at home who can tell them to go to school. The school results are however good and it is the aim of the school to keep them that way.

The school is very much interested in involving parents in its school activities as shown in the prospectus. The aims of the school in the school's prospectus read as follows; "it is very important that students are respectful towards the parents, members of the parent-teachers association (PTA) and the School Board of Governors (BOG). Parents

are our partners in the provision and development of our education" (item 15.0, school prospectus).

4.2 Field finding and discussions

The selected participants were interviewed individually and asked a number of open-ended questions. In transcribing and analysing the data collected, the names of the schools, and the respondents are not used as anonymity was promised. A total of ten teachers, six parents and six students were interviewed from the two schools. The following table shows the letter symbol used to represent schools and their location, teachers', parents' and students' responses in the study. The letter symbols are also used to identify the respondents according to the schools and whether they are in a management position, the parent-teachers association or school board of governors

Identification and Location	No./Rank	Letter
School- Urban		A
School – Rural		B
Teachers	1- 10	T
Parents	1 - 6	P
Students	1 - 6	S
PTAs		C
BOGs		D
Management Positions		M

The perceptions of teachers, parents and students show that they all agree that it is

important to involve parents in school activities. The responses show that in a number of factors on parental involvement, there is convergence of the Botswana's context and the international literature. There are also other factors about parental involvement unique to a Botswana context, which are not shown in the international literature. My research findings will be presented in two sections, one presenting themes where convergence is shown in both Botswana context and international literature. The next section will present themes, which attempts to distinguish what I found to be distinctive to Botswana as opposed to what is shared internationally.

Section A

4.2.1 Perceptions on importance and meaning of parental involvement

The perceptions show that there are different meanings constructed and they show involvement of parents in activities, which aim at improving the student performance and those activities which aim at supporting the school in funding, resources and management. Teacher AT1M said,

In simple terms it would mean that parents should play a positive role towards the education of their children. Well basically I would like to see them getting involved in academic learning of the children, that is showing concern about the learner's performance and achievement by visiting the school, to come and share the academic concerns with teachers, and not only that, it should also go into discipline of our students.¹

Parent BP4D said,

As the board it means we should be involved in the development of the school. We should know which infrastructural facilities need renovations and which additional facilities the school requires.²

Parent BP5C said,

We have an understanding that as parents we need to be involved in school activities so that we can help teachers in things like discipline because the teacher alone cannot manage disciplining our children. We also have to share the responsibility of educating our children so that even at home we can always encourage our children to do schoolwork.³

Fullan, (1992) argues that in policy implementation what matters most are the subjective realities of the people. The kind of activities parents choose to be involved in, imply the meanings parents construct about parent involvement. Dempsey-Hoover and Sandler, (1995) also suggest that parents construct personal parental roles and develop a sense of responsibility to help their children achieve in education. They then choose to become involved and once involved their involvement has positive educational outcomes. It is from the kind of roles, which parents assume, that one can identify the kind of meaning implied by parental involvement in any given social context. The meanings constructed here imply both participation and collaboration as the meaning of parent involvement.

a) Participation

I found that both parents and teachers thought that parents have a role to play in education, but different activities would signify different roles, parents construct for themselves. The teachers' perceptions show that parents should be involved with children's work at home and supervise learning activities at home. The education priority here is the improvement of the student performance through parents taking initiatives to be involved with the child's work at home, and consulting with teachers about the child's performance.

b) Collaboration

There is a growing trend from the responses that parents have to share responsibility with the school, either through providing money for renovation of facilities, provision of additional facilities, payment for school trips, attendance of sporting activities and occasional school visits. The education priority here is that government cannot afford to provide money for everything the school needs, parents have to be involved in order to improve provision.

Discussion

The important conclusion that one comes to from the responses is that there is no single type of parental involvement. Parental involvement can mean different things and may be transformed from time to time. The meaning of parental involvement is constructed within a social context and is influenced by educational priorities. As Sqelch, (1994) notes, it is manifested in a variety of activities, from supporting and upholding the ethos of the school to supervising children's homework. It may also be

associated with parents serving on school governing bodies, or on parent-teacher associations whose functions are mainly of a fundraising nature for additional facilities as noted by parent BP4D. It may also be associated with parents' involvement in instructional activities and non-instructional activities as noted by Fullan, (1992). The key measure for parental involvement in the two schools as observed from the responses of teacher AT4 below, and parent BP4D above is its effect on the student performance, and increasing efficiency in the use of resources. It is also its effect on supporting the school in management, for example discipline as noted by parent BP5C above. Teacher AT4 sums it up by saying,

My understanding is that education of the child is a partnership between the parent and the school. The child spends time at school and then leaves to go home. In both places the child should be able to learn and somebody must make sure that learning takes place. At school is the teacher and at home is the parent. So parental involvement means he parent should see to it that the child is learning at school by checking the child's performance and at home by providing a good learning environment and supervising the learning process.⁴

4.3 Forms of involvement

As perceptions show that meaning constructed show attempts towards improving academic performance, supporting schools with funding and management, two forms of involvement are implied. Fullan, (1992) shows that there are two broad categories of involvement, which may either be related to direct participation of parents in student learning activities, hence referred to as the instructional type of involvement, while the other is related to involvement of parents in activities, which are non-instructional.

4.3.1 Instructional involvement

4.3.1.2 Direct participation with student learning activities at home

Perceptions of teachers in the two schools show that teachers use different methods to encourage parents to be involved with their children's learning activities at home.

Teacher AT2 said,

First I will talk to the learners themselves because they should be made aware that for them to succeed their parents have to be involved with their learning and after giving them work, I will tell them that their parents will check whether they have the work or not. The following day I will check whether their parents have checked by checking whether the parent has appended the signature.⁵

The teacher has adopted a method of her own, which is not standard for every teacher in the school but has proved a worthwhile exercise. In this way a teacher is able to check whether parents are involved with the child's work at home and possibly the parent may come and consult with the teacher if they do not understand, or if the child is performing badly. Henderson, and Berla, (1994) argue that family involvement can enhance better attendance at school, completion of homework, positive attitude towards schooling and discipline. However one should note that the method used by teacher 2 could be subject to abuse if children are not trustworthy, they could easily sign on behalf of their parents. It is important that this should not be the only way to check parental involvement with the children's activities at home. It is important for parents to understand what you want them to do, so that they can feel confident

enough to be involved with their children's work at home. Teacher BT10D, offering a practical subject, approaches it in another way, she said,

As a Home Economics teacher, I always ask my students to go and ask their parents to teach them weaving and preparing traditional food.⁶

A good attempt is taken to involve parents in the children's practical work. However it can further be made more meaningful, if it is coupled with appropriate information to parents, explaining the requested parent activity and may be a discussion with parents on how the issue can be best addressed. This may even encourage parents to volunteer to come and do it in class so that all other students will benefit.

Parent BP6 said,

Personally as a parent I have decided to have extra lessons for my child at home on what I can do to assist my child to succeed.⁷

The parent can also monitor the child's performance by checking the child's books and giving additional help where necessary. The parent can also monitor the reading materials, which the child uses at home to ensure that they are relevant to schoolwork. For the child to have maximum benefit from this monitoring there has to be ongoing discussions between the teacher and the parent, so that they can both come up with what they think could be best for that particular student.

Parent AP3 said,

Yes I always try to have a place for him where he will not be disturbed when doing his work. I ask his elder brothers to help him and if they are not there I will tell him to go and ask neighbours who have better education than me. I do not however keep time and supervise the study. Even though I am not able to help him with his schoolwork, I however check as to whether he is performing well at school from his exercise books. I take his books and check for a tick or a cross. I know a cross means wrong, a tick means correct.⁸

While parents try to provide places for children to study, they should also see to it that time given to study is used valuably and on things, which are related to schoolwork. There is a tendency that if children's study is not supervised at home children spend more time watching television and playing with friends than doing schoolwork.

Student BS6 said,

She sometimes looks at my exercise books. She always encourage me to work hard in order to succeed. My grandmother does not know English, so she is not able to help me in my schoolwork. I wish I were staying with my mother because she was going to be able to help me with my schoolwork.⁹

Discussion

The respondents have highlighted different ways in which parents get involved with the children's learning activities at home ranging from provision of working place through

to checking if work is done, asking for help from neighbours and emphasising that schoolwork has to be done.

Direct participation with the child's work is an important role played by parents. Where parents are directly involved it implies that education priorities are ordered in relation to pedagogic effectiveness (Edupol, 1993), and this is a common feature in developed countries. The resources they have limit developing countries like Botswana in an attempt to come up with programmes for direct participation of parents. This may be due to the high need to reduce illiteracy, increase provision and improve on quality to meet the growing demands of modern technology in the labour market. Teacher BT9 said,

Most parents are illiterate and I do not think they understand what teachers want them to do.¹⁰

However one should be able to note that from the responses, the effects of direct parent participation on students' achievement is valued and schools will have to work within their capacities to enhance it. Edupol, (1993 citing Fullan, 1991, Mortimore and Colleagues 1988) notes that there is an increasing need for parent and community involvement for classroom and school improvement purposes.

4.3.2 Non-instructional Involvement

4.3.2.1 Relationships between the school, parents, teachers and Students

This is the form of involvement, which implies collaboration, as the focus is on relationships that exist between stakeholders. The response from the data implies both informal and formal relations in the schools. Recommendation 118 and 119 in the New

Revised Policy on Education formalises the relation through including some forms of parental involvement in the management policy in the school. However the issue of accountability is being dependent on the initiatives coming from the school authority. The school that is willing to enhance their relationship with parents takes initiatives to invite parents to school for different activities. Teacher AT1M said,

We do try to invite parents for meetings so that during the discussions we can sell the school and see if there will be any difference. Not only that, we do have ceremonies where we invite parents and talk to them. We invite parents to collect the examination report. What we have resorted to doing when form 1 students come to school for the first time at the beginning of the year we have an orientation for them and each student is accompanied by a parent. It is during the orientation that we try to sell the school to parents as teachers to show them that the school is not a place for the educated only. They also sign declaration forms committing themselves to involvement in their children's education at all times.¹¹

The perceptions show an emphasis by teachers, parents and students on parents having a closer relationship with each other. Closer relationships would enable teachers an opportunity to discuss with parents their children's schoolwork and behaviour. If parents feel welcomed they will be able to feel free to consult on all issues which affect their children's performance at school. The schools are also likely to get voluntary service from parents if they feel that the school belongs to them. Closer relations between parents and student may also enable parents to be able to discuss a lot of issues, which may affect the life of the student.

Discussion

As Eccles, and Harold, (1993) observes, relationships between teachers and parents seem to be decreasing rather than increasing, particularly at the time when children are at the age of entering into secondary school education. It is the duty of the school to take appropriate initiatives to build the relationship. As Olmscheid, (1999) notes, schools, which work well with parents, show improved teacher moral and high ratings of teachers by parents. I would however note that in these two schools, parents are involved in different ways as shown by the responses from all the respondents. It is not every parent who is involved, but quite a number of parents are involved.

4.3.2.2 Parent Involvement in Governance

In developing countries like Botswana while there is concern on improving quality, much more concern is on reaching the target of universal literacy, increasing efficiency in the use of resources, expanding coverage and reducing inequalities of access to education. Parental involvement is measured by its effect on both economic efficiency and political responsiveness. Parent involvement in governance is seen as a component of decentralised governance. The first major issue why parents are involved is funding. Parent AP1D said,

The activities of the board of governors is to see to it whether in school there is accommodation for teachers, we build teachers' houses and this is the main activity. We see to it that students have dining halls.¹²

The Botswana Government alone could not afford to pay for all the basic educational needs. Similarly this was also observed in other countries like South Africa (Edupol,

1993). Parents are expected to release additional resources in the community. Harber, and Davis, (1997) note that there is a spirit of families pledging a cow towards the building of community junior secondary schools in Botswana. The school boards of governors are allowed to charge a development levy of P60 – 00 per child enrolled at the school every year towards the development of the school. This is the money school boards use for the provision of additional resources, renovation of the existing facilities and also funding of school ceremonies like prize giving day. The school boards of governors can also request for donations from donor companies to finance projects. This seems one way in which resources could be expanded; however it becomes unacceptable if government now hand-over the burden of a service provision completely to the communities. The state has a responsibility for its people and one of these is to educate its people. In its list of priorities of provision of services the government of Botswana has health and education as the immediate priorities.

The school board of governors is involved in the hiring of support staff and supervising them through the School Head who is the secretary of the board of governors. As I said earlier, parent involvement forms part of decentralised governance in education, the school boards are given certain duties to perform on behalf of the community and education authorities.

The parent-teacher association is also involved in raising funds for other school activities for example ceremonies like the completing classes party. They use different methods to raise funds, for example teacher AT3C said,

You know we are a new committee, which has just started this year. All these years committees were elected but have never done anything or met. We have just started from scratch but we are already engaged in fundraising campaigns. We run a tuckshop here at school. We want to raise money for the prize giving day and completing classes farewell party.¹³

The responses show that both the school governing bodies and the parent-teachers association are trying their best in fundraising activities in the two schools. Even though it is not everybody who pays the development levy and responds to all fundraising activities, teacher AT2 giving an example of the 'civilian day' activity said,

Well I will say the response is positive. If I take an example of the civilian day activity, most students are able to contribute the money we ask them to contribute, so we just feel that they do so because their parents support them.¹⁴

The other reason why parents are involved concerns the crisis of management. The schools rely on parents and the community for fulfilling policies. The parent-teachers association supports the school on discipline problems. Parents understand that they have a role to play in discipline at schools. This was confirmed by words of parent BP5P mentioned earlier in relation to what parental involvement means in the parent-teachers association context. The parent-teacher association also provides a liaison link between the school, teachers, students, parents and the larger community.

Discussion

The involvement of parents in governance is as equally important as the other forms of involvement in the education of the children. There is also a need for it to be enhanced as it can both strengthen the links between the school and the parents, as well as expand provision in education through fundraising activities. They can also enhance nation building through emphasising principles of democracy and equity in education. The school boards of governors have to be strengthened and given training. The PTAs have to be encouraged and given more powers.

Thinh, (1991) and Samah, (1991) note that if managed properly the parent-teacher association can help improve quality of learning through checking on teachers and also enhance the welfare of teachers through negotiating discounted prices with the retailers on behalf of teachers.

4.4 Strategies towards enhancing parent participation in schools

4.4.1 Communication

Schools communicate with parents in different ways for example sending the school prospectus to parents at the beginning of the year. Teacher BT7 said,

At the beginning of the year, the school sends letters and prospectus to the parents outlining the activities and requirements of the school. This is an attempt to keep parents informed as much as possible so that they will know what is happening in school at any given time.¹⁵

The other way schools keep parents informed about their activities is through asking parents to come and collect examination reports at the end of every term. Teacher BT6M said,

We call parents to come and collect examination reports at the end of every school term, and most of them come. This gives us the opportunity to talk to them about what we do, the problems we encounter, the kind of help we need from them, the importance of their participation and how their children are performing.¹⁶

4.4.2 School ceremonies

Parents are also invited for different ceremonies like prize giving days, so that they can always urge their children at home to work hard and aspire for prizes in the following year. The school also provides food and refreshments during these ceremonies. Parent AP2C said,

Yes the school invites us for ceremonies and parents like them very much because the school feeds us during the ceremonies. Parents come in large numbers.¹⁷

4.4.3 Parents meetings

Parents are invited to meetings at schools by the parent-teachers association to inform them on what was discussed by the executive committee and also give them a chance to raise any other issue they have. Parent BP5C said,

We talk to parents in meetings; we tell them that the school belongs to them. They have to know what is happening in the school and they cannot know unless they visit the school to consult with teachers.¹⁸

4.4.4 Student orientation seminars

At the beginning of the year, schools conduct orientation seminars for beginning students. Parents are asked to accompany their children, and the school uses this opportunity to talk to parents to show them the importance of their participation. The teachers also introduce parents to the basic things they can do to check on how the students are performing at school for example checking the child's exercise book. Parent AP3 said,

When we were with teachers during the orientation seminars they worked with us nicely. They explained to us a lot of things we did not understand like the checking of my child's work, that I am using, I learned from the teachers.¹⁹

Discussion

As already confirmed by the responses, teachers, parents and students value parent involvement, because of the impact it has on students' learning. The major problem which some parents face is that they sometimes remain helpless even if they wanted to be involved because they do not understand what to do. It is the responsibility of the schools to train them, keep them informed and understand that change cannot take place overnight and appreciate attempts made by parents. Funds and support should be made available for the training of these parents.

Section B

As I said earlier, there are perceptions that also show that there are other factors that are considered to be affecting attempts of parent involvement. The following themes

are generated from the data as implying these factors and they are the disintegration of the spirit of volunteerism, Kgotla, fears of parents to expose themselves to the school environment, unstable families, politics and culture.

4.5 Volunteerism

Unlike in the developed world where parents have a better standard of living and understand that in their lives they are expected to sometimes volunteer their services when it is needed, local communities seem not to be sharing the same ideas. For many parents in the developed world volunteering their services to the school is something, which they understand and do at all times. In Botswana people are poor, lack resources and are always looking forward to exchanging the service they provide for a reward that can give them a means to survive. TeacherAT1M said,

You see I would say parents do understand, because education is not new to Botswana. It is an old thing, but I believe that the most disturbing factor is politics. The idea of self-reliance is no longer there and everyone expects to be paid for whatever work they are involved in.²⁰

It is this kind of problem that impacts much on the lives of the people and influences them on how they plan to use their time. They would give priority to using their time selling as hawkers, providing casual labour where they will get paid for their services if they are not on full time employment. This means working throughout the week, even on weekends, hence leaving them with no time to do anything else. Student AS1 said this about her mother,

My mother has not finished standard 7. She lives on selling goods in town (hawker). My mother lately, she has been busy selling goods and she does not have much time, but she used to voluntarily come to school.²¹

The statement above shows that what matters most at the moment is how the family is going to survive. This is the priority at the moment and it has to be given as much time as possible. This also sometimes affects on how the income raised is spent, parents give priority to more survival needs, other than things like contributing towards an educational tour. However most parents will always be trying their best to offer their services and support the school. Teacher BT6M said,

We call meetings of parents at school and a lot come. They also pay development levy and we have even made an agreement that it should even be followed after somebody has finished schooling if they still owe some money...To me parents are trying their best because I do not normally expect more than this particularly in a rural area. Again they cannot at once all respond positively.²²

Discussion

The idea of volunteerism seems to no longer exist among communities. It is important that parents should understand that even if the state could afford to provide everything required for the education of their children, some form of voluntary service on their part would still be required and can have positive effects on children's achievement and motivation (Michael, 1990).

4.6 Politics

There are perceptions, which show that some political figures have different views about what the schools are doing, about the education policy, and argue against involving parents in certain things in order to advance their political gain. This has not just affected the way parents look at things but also their response when they are asked to participate, for example the way they react to their children's learning activities, fundraising and voluntary activities.

4.6.1 Children's learning activities

Some politicians see the government as having a commitment to provide every child with good education and the government does so through establishing a sound education policy, efficient learning activities and monitoring the service to ensure success. If the children fail, the politicians interpret it to mean that teachers are not doing their job properly. The parents have nothing to do with the learning of their children, if schools cannot produce results, it shows failure on the part of the government. Teacher AT1M said,

However I find that there is sometime a negative attitude created by political figures because you find that they tell parents that teaching children is the work of the teachers and if children fail it means teachers are not doing their job and government is failing in its policies.²³

4.6.2 Fundraising

Schools raise funds through different ways in order to fund school activities and resources, which are not paid for by the government. One of the common sources is for schools to charge a development levy, which is used by the school boards of governors to renovate existing structures and provide additional ones. Each child enrolled at the school has to contribute P60-00 towards the school development every year.

In the mid 1980's government abolished payment of school fees in both primary and secondary schools. As I said earlier when community junior secondary schools were established, there was an agreement that communities will provide part of the facilities required.

The interpretation that the development levy gets from the politicians is that it is a form of school fees, so parents are being cheated if they pay. Teacher ATIM said,

Like I said politics sometimes play an influential role because some parents are told that they should not be paying any money to the school because there is no school fee.²⁴

I would like to note that under such circumstances schools have a long way to go in order to get full support from parents, particularly in urban areas where the influence of opposition parties is much felt. The perceptions shown above are not always felt in the rural areas where a party in government enjoys respect, because people accept that the government is theirs and they have to co-operate with it.

Discussion

The attitude shown by some political figures does not only show political immaturity, but works against nation building. The state is accountable to the nation and on the other hand the state survives because of the support it gets from the citizens. If politics influence parents negatively, this will have negative effects on education as parents' positive attitude is found to have an influence on children's attitude towards schooling (Macleod, 1989).

4.7 Disintegration of the Kgotla as a public meeting place

The Kgotla is a highly respected traditional public meeting place particularly in the rural areas where facilities like council chambers; recreational halls and conference centres are not available. The community meets in the Kgotla to discuss issues of concern or public interest. They are found in both rural and urban areas. The urban communities however also enjoy the availability of other resources, where people with matters of common interest can always meet and discuss. In rural areas, the Kgotla may also be used as a place of recruiting workers for employment if there is going to be any project built in a village, so people turn up when they are called at the Kgotla. In the urban areas, as I said, there other facilities and people can search for jobs from factories and firms, hence there seems little reason to go to the Kgotla.

The community elects the school boards of governors in the Kgotla and they are accountable to the community. Parent AP1D said,

The working relationship between the board of governors and the community is low. It is low because Batswana nowadays no longer attend Kgotla meetings. They only come

when there is going to be an election of something. But where you try to take a report to them on what you are representing them on, that is problems you are faced with or tell them about progress, they do not come.²⁵

The perception here shows us that it is not only parent involvement, which is affected, but also the whole idea of democratic participation in matters relating to education. The non-attendance of parents or the community means they cannot exercise their right to democratic participation. Parents cannot take part in decisions made about the education of their children. Parent AP1D goes further to make this observation,

At any rate we sometime succeed through requesting parents to come to school, but only parents with children at school do come, not all parents in the community. The appropriate thing would be for the whole community to attend, but instead only parents with children come and those are the ones we report back to.²⁶

On the contrary, perceptions in a school in the rural areas show that people attend meetings called at the Kgotla because of the respect people have on it as a public meeting place. Parent BP4D said,

The board of governors calls parents at the Kgotla to consult with them on the mandate they have given them. The parents give their suggestions, which we take to the board of governors meeting to discuss and the board also brings to the attention of parents any issues that needs their attention, for example the payment of the development levy.²⁷

Discussion

Democratic participation is an attempt to empower communities to participate in shared decision making processes. Non-attendance at public meetings does not only show ignorance but also denies parents to exercise their rights. Parents lack organising structures outside the school; hence they are always at mercy of the school authority to call them to participate. Parents need training on how to exercise their democratic right. Parents need to be helped to become involved, particularly for low income and rural parents as they often have difficulties in helping their children (Lee, and Croninger, 1994).

4.8 Disintegrating family structures

There are perceptions which shows that the unstable nature of families due to a number of factors affects parent involvement in school. The factors identified are seasonal movement of family members, migrant labour, separation of married couples and extended family system.

4.8.1 Seasonal Movement

A large population of Batswana depends on subsistence farming as a source of income. This involves the keeping of livestock and growing of crops. As a result of this kind of lifestyle, families have three different places where they stay at different times of the year. Some family members, particularly fathers, will stay at the cattlepost to take care of livestock, mothers will be at the farming fields ploughing and taking care of crops during the ploughing season. Children who are attending school will be staying at the village and only visiting their parents over the weekend and school vacations. When

they visit their parents they are expected to provide a helping hand in farming. Teacher BT9 said,

Most of the students from this village stay alone, most of the time parents are at the fields and some are working in towns. How would they know about the progress of their children's learning while they are not staying with them? Who is taking care of these children? Just comfort and care from parents can contribute positively to the child's learning. Where do those who are staying alone get that? These children are those who re absenting themselves from school, which is the contributing, factor to their failure.²⁸

These perceptions show us that the type of lifestyle and the unstable nature of the family, due to movement, do affect parent involvement. Parents do not spend time with their children, so they cannot help them with schoolwork or build a positive attitude towards schooling. Most attempts of parent involvement by the schools fail because parents do not spend time with their children. Teacher BT10D said,

You talk to the parent now it does not help because the parent will leave and go back to the cattle-post or farming-fields. Some do not even have time to come and collect the examination reports.²⁹

One of the reasons why schools invite parents for meetings and any other discussions are, that parents should be able to discuss with their children at home. This is an attempt to enhance parent participation, which seems to be failing, particularly in rural areas where the main source of income is subsistence farming.

4.8.2 Migrant Labour

The movement of people between areas, searching for a job is a common thing in the country, particularly people from the rural to the urban areas. Some people even move across the border to work in the South African mines. The main reason is that there are no jobs in the rural areas and due to the semi-arid nature of some parts of the country and many years of drought experienced, farming is increasingly proving to be no longer profitable. Teacher BT8C said,

Most of our students stay alone or with grandparents who cannot help them much in their schoolwork. Some parents are illiterate and those who are literate move to the urban areas to look for jobs.³⁰

Parents who migrate to look for jobs leave their families behind in the rural areas sometimes because there is not enough accommodation for the whole family in the town or the mother is involved in farming. Sometimes it takes long before these parents visit their families back in the rural areas; hence children only grow up under guidance of one parent. Mothers are left alone to raise the children and meet all the needs of the family while the father is away. This impacts much on the time of the mother such that sometimes she hardly has any other time to spare to attend to the child's work. Student AS1 said,

My father stays in Masunga and he is working there. He has not visited us for many years, but I sometime visit him...My mother lately has been busy selling goods and she did not have much time.³¹

4.8.3 Separation of married couples

Sometimes husbands and wives are separated from each other by transfer systems, which prevails in the country; hence they stay apart and are not even able to visit each other over the weekends because of distance between them. The unavailability of jobs for a spouse in places where another spouse is working has also contributed to this separation. The effect of this has been that spouses end up involving themselves in other relationships outside the marriage. Ultimately a man or a woman comes into the family because of this new relationship, and may not be interested in the education of the children. This will affect parent involvement in the schools, as much more attention would be given to this new relationship. Student AS3 said,

My father does not attend any school activity. He is not interested in my schoolwork...I do not have school uniform at the moment and when I tell him he does not respond. I do not look like other students and this affect me. I stay far away from school. I asked him to buy me a bicycle he refused. He also does not give me money for a taxi...I come late too often not purposely but because I stay far. At home there is not much space to do schoolwork, because my father has another woman with children staying with us. He is only interested in the children of this woman. I even wanted to leave school but my brother encouraged me to stay.³²

These kinds of relationships affect the children's concentration at school and their relationship with their parents. When children realise these and question them, they are regarded as disobedient to their parents and they are usually reprimanded for that. Sometimes even when mothers are told about them they are afraid to ask their husbands because they know the husband will be angry with them and the child. Student AS3 further said,

He never talk to me about anything, only my mother when she visit us. I even told her about this other woman, that immediately she leaves this woman moves in with my father, but she is afraid of telling my father about my problems.³³

4.8.4 Extended family system

Batswana families are large because of a number of children each family has and the number of relatives, staying in one family. This kind of family structures has an impact on parent involvement. Mothers and fathers leave their children in rural areas because they know relatives can take care of them and they go to live in towns. This sometimes leaves children with relatives who are not interested in the education of these children, or they are illiterate and have very little to say concerning schoolwork. Student BS6 said,

I stay with my grandmother and my mother is a teacher in Francistown. My grandmother collects my examination report from school and when she gets home she tells me what teachers say about the examination report. She does not have much to say about my schoolwork. She does not speak English and cannot understand what is written in the report. What she normally tells me is to ask teachers where I do not understand.³⁴

One has to understand that lack of accommodation in places where mothers and fathers work may account for this. However perception show that where mothers and fathers are staying together with their children, learners show a positive attitude towards schooling regardless of whether they are in a rural or urban area. Student BS4 said,

I stay with my mother and father. My mother and father are teachers...My parents checks my schoolbooks once a week. My parents provide me with all that I need for my schooling. They buy me uniform, pay my development fund and buy me any stationery I need for my learning. They pay for my educational-tours. I am satisfied that my parents are doing everything that I need for my education. However I sometimes meet some other students who tell me that their parents are refusing to buy them uniform.³⁵

One has to note that a few examples like this one show positive effects and need to be exploited and used fruitfully to enhance parent participation. The extended family system has also had negative effects in urban areas. Large families who cannot find enough accommodation end up in slums or squatter areas. There is overcrowding and a lot of noise. While parents attempt to ensure regular attendance at school, some children spend the day hiding in shebeens in the overcrowded areas. Parent AP2C said,

We also have to check whether children arrive at school because some of our children have problems especially in this location of Botshabelo. Some of our children drink alcohol at an earlier age and some of them never arrive at school. Once we met with teachers and found that some children leave home in the morning and spend the whole day in a shebeen. Some go to school and sneak and go to the shebeen.³⁶

The shebeens do not only provide a hiding place for students, they are noisy and do not provide a good learning environment as observed by teacher AT1M as he said,

That is where the problem is because some students stay next to the shebeens, where there is no electricity and it becomes very difficult for them to study at home.³⁷

The other way, in which extended family systems impact on parent involvement, is that, it creates definitional problems about who is a parent, and operating under what structures? Traditionally everyone who is your relative is your parent. Constitutionally in Botswana, children at the age of 15 years and below are regarded as minors and they cannot make decisions about themselves on their own. If there are any decisions to be made concerning their education it is only their parents who can make decisions on their behalf. It is only the biological or legal guardian who constitutionally can make those decisions on behalf of the students. Perceptions show that when parents are invited to schools to collect examination reports, some parents ask their children or relatives to go on their behalf. Teacher AT1M said,

Some parents send their children or relatives to collect the examination reports on their behalf. We normally send them back because we do not believe they can talk to the students, as parents would do. We insist on the biological parent or any legal elderly person taking responsibility over the student, that is, someone responsible for buying uniform and paying the development levy.³⁸

Discussion

Children in their schooling need support and reinforcement from parents. If students stay alone, away from parents, they have difficulties of who to confide in and who to get appropriate support from. Parents have authority over how students use their time and can check on regular attendance at school. It is very difficult for parents not staying with their children to monitor their studies. It is important that parents should be closer to their children during their entire period of their education, as they are

found to have authority over many things related to their children's education, for example, the use of time.

4.9 Culture

As I said earlier, people's lifestyles have an impact on attempts of parent involvement. This manifests itself as one looks at roles for mothers and fathers in education, as well as discussions between parents and their children.

4.9.1 Roles of mothers and fathers in education of their children

Traditionally the role of parents in their children's education in the family has been associated with the mothers. Fathers could provide money if ^{it} is needed, but anything else has to be attended to by mothers. Fathers have tended to show no interest in educational activities as shown by their lower attendance in parents meetings and what they mostly needed was to be told that the child has passed the examination. Student AS1 said,

My father is the one who seems not interested in school activities. Even when he was around, he used to ask my mother to go to parents meetings. He only looks at the examination report and always says how happy he is when it is good. He rewards me when I do well.³⁹

The picture created here is that men understand the importance of education but believe the role of involvement in education is for women and their wives can do it. This explains a low turn-up of men in meetings and school activities as observed by the student above and some parents in both schools. The complicated part is when the

mother is not staying with the child. The non-attendance of parents in school activities affects children negatively. Student AS3 said,

No one attends; this is not nice for me. I always tell my father that there is a meeting and he never attends. When I ask him he always say he does not have time to come and attend.⁴⁰

4.9.2 Discussion between parents and their children

Traditionally, not much discussion takes place between children and their parents. Children are not allowed to question their parents on certain things because it is regarded as being rude, for example the experience which student AS3 has with the behaviour of his father. The student cannot tell his father that you are cheating on my mother and I do not like it. If there are any discussions that have to take place, they are normally between children and their mothers, and they have to be on certain topics and not others. It is some of these traditions which impact on attempts of parent involvement. Teacher AT2 said,

I will also like to see parents providing guidance and counselling to their children, because nowadays we live in a world where there are many social problems. Even though we do provide some guidance and counselling here at school, we do not spend much time with students. Most of the time, they are at home with their parents and that's the time when parents need to talk to their children especially on issues of HIV/AIDS and STDs.⁴¹

The important role parents can play in the education of their children is to help them to change their attitude about certain things and build positive attitudes about schooling.

One of the things they can talk to their children about is to change their attitude about sexuality. Traditionally parents cannot talk to children about sex and they are not supposed to know about their children's love relations, even worse, their, children's sexual relations. This has led to children becoming victims of unplanned pregnancies because no one had ever spoken to them about unprotected sex. Cases of HIV/AIDS are growing all the time and it is the youth that are mostly affected. Parent BP5C said,

We speak a lot against pregnancy for example. We encourage parents to talk to their children about pregnancy, parents are afraid to do it. But both the student and the parent suffer. The child falls pregnant and loses school; the parent has an additional person to feed. The child is also likely to get dangerous diseases.⁴²

Difference in age causes parents to be afraid to discuss certain issues with their children. For the same reason some students spend much of their time quiet in class, and not because they do not know the answer. They are simply afraid of participating in the discussions, unless they are asked to. Parents would only want to discuss with their children about things, which they think would benefit the whole family in future, for example, future jobs, and later in their lives, things like marriage.

4.9.3 Alienation

Communities in Botswana have cultural activities, which they value and if schools alienate themselves from these cultural events, they risk being rejected by communities. People in the communities come together during funerals and during Independence Day celebrations. Schools as part of the community should be seen to be playing an active role through attending the activities, allowing the community to use their

resources, releasing teachers to be in preparation committees and releasing school clubs to go and provide entertainment to guests during celebrations. The schools will in turn get support from the community if there are ceremonies taking place and the community is invited to them. Teacher AT2 said,

Whenever a student has a problem at home they will tell their form-teacher. The form-teacher will then tell other teachers for example in a case of loss of a parent or relative, the teachers will make an effort to attend a funeral. I remember there was once a funeral where more than ten members of staff attended here in Botshabelo. We could actually tell that parents were happy.⁴³

Parents have a high regard of schools, which do not alienate themselves from the community. They are always willing to give them support and they expect to get similar support from the schools.

4.9.4 Corporal punishment

Traditionally in some communities parents still believe that if a child does not perform well in school, they should receive corporal punishment to make them work harder. Parents still go to schools and ask teachers to beat their children very hard because they are playful and do not take their schoolwork seriously. Student AS1 said,

I would want them to talk to their children about the importance of education. They should not beat their children because it might even make them afraid or too stubborn.⁴⁴

Students are not likely to encourage their parents to be involved in their education if they know that they will end up receiving corporal punishment should parents be involved. Parents should learn better ways of dealing with their children's problems. Corporal punishment does not make the child learn more but rather inflicts pain and makes the child more afraid.

Discussion

There are cultural barriers, which affect parent involvement, and it is important for schools to be aware of these barriers in order to enhance parent participation. Cultural practices, past history, language and other cultural activities may affect parent involvement. The schools past history and practices may affect parent involvement (Edwards 1993, Useem, 1992).

4.10 funding of parent involvement programmes

There are perceptions, which show that schools are faced with problems of funding parent involvement activities because there is no provision for that in the grant provided by government. In order for parents to engage in any activity, which requires money, they have to rely on the sympathy of the school to allow them to borrow some money or start digging from their pockets. AT3C said,

They are willing to volunteer their services where they are needed. The school administration supports us up to now. They loaned us some money to start the tuckshop. We have already returned the money. I do not know, it is okay up to now, anyway the committee has just been newly formed.⁴⁵

There are perceptions, which also show that parents turn up in large numbers to school ceremonies because they know after the activities of the day, there are meals offered as observed by respondent AP2C in item 4.4.2. However I found that the money that is used for provision of meals are from fundraising efforts of the school, parent-teachers association and the school board of governors. There is nothing provided by government for funding these ceremonies. If fundraising efforts are not successful, schools will not be able to conduct the ceremonies. BT6M said,

It is really important to involve parents and it helps on improving the school. I understand government provides some money for refreshment when there are parents meetings in senior secondary schools, I would suggest that the same should happen for community schools.⁴⁶

The other factor related to funding of parent involvement activities is the payment of seating allowances for meetings, which are attended by executive members of the school board of governors. The school board of governor members are paid an allowance for 4 meetings attended in a year; on the other hand, members of the executive committee of the parent-teachers association are not paid any allowances. AP1D said,

We sometimes in a year hold 4 meetings, the regulation says we should have at least 1 meeting in a term, but we sometime have 2 in a term which are paid allowance and we sometime have other voluntary meetings with PTA and VDC which increases the number of meetings.⁴⁷

However perceptions from parents in the parent-teacher association show that there is a feeling that it is only the board of governor members who are recognised because they are paid allowances for meetings. The members express a lot of interest in supporting the school, but their efforts are hampered by the fact that they have no financial base to start from, other than getting the co-operation of the school to loan them some money. BP5C said,

The first activity as the parent-teachers association, we were involved in making arrangements for the sale of tracksuit to the students. If the school board of governors can loan us some money, we will buy the tracksuits and sell them to students. The profits from the sale will then go to the parent-teachers association fund. Our main problem is we start from nothing, there is no money for parent-teacher association activities other than the money raised through fundraising efforts. We also made arrangements for the sale of tunic to students. We invited tenders from the tailors around so that we can choose the material we want, and choose one or two tailors who we would inform parents to buy school uniform from, so that our children would put on the same material.⁴⁸

Discussion

Parents as new actors in attempts for participatory democracy need to be encouraged to participate. Parent involvement activities requires money and support from the government. While it important to understand that government faces problems of finance, hence there is a need to have collective efforts from both parents and government in relation to funding of schools, the funding of parent involvement activities should not be solely left in the hands of parents.

4.11 Identifying parents and community needs or expectations about the school

It is no doubt that schools are there to serve the parents and communities in which they are located. It is important that schools in their daily activities should take into account the needs of the parents and the communities. It is also important for schools to know from time to time the opinions or views of parents about the way the schools conduct their day to day activities. However from the way the agenda of parents' meetings is generated, one could tell that in most meetings if not all discussions are on what the school authorities and the parent-teachers association executive have met and agreed upon. BP5C said,

We first meet as the parent-teacher association executive. The members will bring out the issues they want discussed. We will discuss the issues and after the meeting it is then that we call the parents for a meeting to inform them on what we discussed as the parent-teachers association executive. The parents will also be given a chance to raise whatever issues they have.⁴⁹

The implication of what is said above is that parents are given time to raise any issues towards the end if there is any time. I would like to note that this is a major problem because most parents do not have any other organising structure outside school. It is difficult for parents to come together outside school and discuss issues relating to education of their children.

Discussion

It is important for parents to be helped to form organising structures outside school, where they can always meet and engage in policy debates. The structure would also help them to raise issues and engage with education authorities on the issues. The structure will be able to enhance involvement and help parents exercise their democratic rights.

4.12 Fears of parents to expose themselves to the school environment

Parents more often have high regards for schools as places for educated people, hence they need not to associate with them because of the little knowledge they have and fear to expose their ignorance. Most parents would not attempt to be involved unless they are invited. Even when they are invited they will only respond when the teacher tells them what to do, not what they think they can or have to do, which will help their children. It is this kind of perception which parents have about themselves and sometimes teachers that makes attempts of parent involvement fail. This is a common thing particularly in rural areas where a majority of parents are illiterate. Teacher BT7 said,

We have not tried using parents as volunteers in the classroom. But I believe that subjects like Setswana and Social Studies have a lot of things and topics, which relates to culture. Parents can be invited to come and talk to students about them. However I am not sure whether parents will be brave enough to come and talk to the children.⁵⁰

It is true that parents may perceive themselves as not trained for a teaching job, hence they may not be brave enough to enter the classrooms, and participate in the learning

process. This means that it will be difficult to have parents in classrooms. It is also true that it may be teachers who perceive parents as not educated enough to participate in classroom activities, hence they will never invite parents into the classroom. It should be noted that perceptions show some parents are always willing to know more about their children's education, hence they do not have any fears. Teacher AT1M said,

Parents here in towns are mostly well read and these are the people who show concern and want to know more about their children...Unfortunately I have never heard of a situation where a teacher has called a parent to come and be an assistant in the learning process. I do not know the reason why, maybe as teachers we assume that parents are not trained for the job so they will not manage or we maybe afraid that parents will soon say we want them to do our job for us.⁵¹

These kinds of perceptions will not enhance parent involvement, they need to be researched and solutions come up so that no assumptions are made. If teachers have low expectations about parents, the reception they give parents will be negative, and parents will always feel unwelcome. They will be afraid to approach teachers even when they have problems. ParentBP6 said,

Personally as a parent I have decided to have extra lessons for my child at home on whatever I can do to assist my child to succeed. However I sometimes find that I do not agree with the way the teachers approaches some of the work as I look through my child's exercise books. Some things will be marked correct when I can see they are wrong. But I never feel free to go to school and talk to the teachers because I am not sure whether the teacher is approachable. They never call us individually; we do not have individual contact with them.⁵²

As I said earlier, teachers are highly regarded especially in the rural areas where they are among the few, who are working for the government and have a university qualification. Lots of parents treat them with respect and never want to associate with them unless the teachers open up to the parents. Teacher BT9 said,

Teachers can also try and build a good relationship with parents so that parents may always feel free to ask about their children's learning progress. Some parents are still afraid of talking to teachers. They take teachers as very important persons that one should not casually talk to.⁵³

If teachers appear to be inaccessible to parents, they will never get the co-operation they need from parents. Most parents will always feel unwelcome in schools. If teachers build good relations with parents, they will not only have parents' respect but also their co-operation. It is true that, some parents may not have the confidence of coming into the classroom, to participate. However, there are those parents, who can build that confidence, if they are encouraged, particularly in urban areas where more parents have better education and have a better understanding of their democratic rights. Teacher BT8C made this observation

I meet with parents on several occasions and I have discovered that my relationship with them is good especially that I sometime visit them at home when I find that their children have problems. When I walk around the village most of the parents know me and usually respond positively when I ask them.⁵⁴

Discussion

Schools should work harder to create a good reputation in order to win the community's support. Communication and the following up of information between schools and the parents should be enhanced. Schools should be made more welcoming and parents' participation should be acknowledged as schools, which work well with parents, are highly regarded by parents (Olmscheid, 1991).

4.13 Power

There are perceptions, which show that while parents respect teachers as having more power over children's learning because of their professional expertise, parents have a feeling that more power should be devolved to them at the level of management. Parents have a feeling that school authorities have more power than they do; for example policy does not empower them to have any say on the teaching staff. The school has the right to use the government grant without consulting them and they can only do certain duties and not others. Parent BP4D said,

My wish as a board of governors member is that a policy on the powers of the board of governors should empower us to be able to dismiss non-teaching staff employees as we are also responsible for recruiting them. What happens at the moment is we can only conduct a disciplinary hearing and take any other disciplinary action other than dismissal. We can only recommend to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education. The permanent Secretary will then assess our case and either endorse or refuse our recommendation.⁵⁵

For democratic control and participation to be enhanced, parents have to feel empowered to participate in meaningful decisions. They have to see themselves in a situation where power is equally shared between authorities and parents, if they have to operate in partnerships. At the moment perceptions show that parents feel disempowered, for example in one school a member of the school board has resigned a long time ago and the board has no authority to replace the member. It is only the District Commissioner in the area with the power to call a Kgotla meeting to replace the member. The parents on their own cannot decide that they want a new school board of governors and go ahead and elect it. The names of the members elected by the community still have to be approved by the Minister of Education. It is for this reason that some school boards can sometimes continue to operate even after their term of office has expired. The school boards of governors now tend to be accountable to the authorities rather than the parents, where the policy says they are accountable to the communities they represent.

Perceptions also show that parent-teachers associations operate without guidelines of their own except the guidance they get from school authority. They cannot for example take action against a member who has missed a number of meetings without an apology.

Discussion

It is important for parents to be made to feel that they have power in their participation. Parents should be given a voice and have a say on all decisions being taken. They should not only be consulted in areas where they will be expected to make a contribution particularly where money is involved. It is found that communities'

commitment to providing additional resources is bound to be contingent on a real sharing of power in the decision making process. Parents should be part of the decision making body on all matters which relates to the education of their children. However the idea of sharing power is sometimes is complicated by the fact that while governments are happy to accept the additional resources, they are rarely willing to relinquish control and place themselves in a position where their policies can be undermined and ignored (Edupol, 1993:5).

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CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION

One need to look at what the data says and ask what it is that the data implies about parent Involvement, policy formulation and implementation. It is also important to suggest at the end what should be taken into account in the future when addressing parent involvement.

5.1 Importance of parent Involvement

Fullan, (1992) argues that what matters most in policy implementation is the subjective reality (perceptions) of people at the ground. This study attempted to find out the teachers', parents' and students' perceptions about the meaning of parent involvement.

/ The data collected shows that parents are involved in a variety of activities and there is no single type of parent involvement. However there is no doubt that from the international literature surveyed and the findings from data collected; there is evidence of increasing demand for parent involvement in education. The professionals, the teachers in particular have come to discover that, alone they cannot handle the heavy task of educating children. They need support and they can only get this support if parents are involved. As Fullan, (1992) puts it, parents, teachers and students realise that, "the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement". The students are sad when they seem to notice that their parents seem not to take interest in their schoolwork. They get worried if their parents seem not to do what other parents are doing for their children at school, for example buying them uniforms and paying the development fund. Parents

get worried when schools seem not to recognise that they exist, and point fingers to teachers when their children do not do well at school.

I would like to note that the data shows to some extent the Botswana context agrees with the findings in the international literature on the following;

5.2 Meaning of parent Involvement

This study has established that parent involvement can mean different things in different contexts, and that parents are involved in many different ways in schools. Parents are involved in both instructional and non-instructional activities.

a) Instructional activities

Parents are involved with helping their children, with doing their homework after school, and checking their children's exercise books to see if they are performing well. Parents also try to arrange a place for their children to study at home and buy them the stationery they require to study.

b) Non-instructional

Parents are involved in activities that support the school in governance. They are involved in fundraising activities to raise money for provision of additional resources and school ceremonies. Parents also support the school in management activities such as discipline and recruitment of support staff.

Parents also try to keep links with schools through visiting schools to consult teachers on the children's performances and any other issue, which relates to the child's performance.

c) Strategies towards enhancing parent involvement

Schools are making attempts to have good communication with parents. They send school prospectus to parents at the beginning of every year. They ask parents to come and collect examination reports at the end of every term in order to know how their children are performing. They ask parents to accompany their children to beginning students' orientation seminars, so that they can consult with parents and help them on how they can check their children's work at home.

5.3 Parent Involvement, Policy Implementation and Local Botswana Issues

There are some distinctive local factors, which affect parent involvement policy implementation in schools. The findings show that teacher, students and parents call for implementation of policy on parent involvement. However attempts to do so are faced with a number of problems, which are discussed below.

5.3.1 Politics

Parent involvement is highly politicised, with politicians using it to make political gains. It is very difficult to handle a situation like this in a democratic country where the constitution give people rights and freedom to political activity. I, however belief that if people exercise their rights properly, politicians should be able to assess the current

economic situation in the country. They should rationalise it and understand that it is not proper for them to make people believe that the state can provide everything the people need without any support from the people in order to win votes.

5.3.2 Training of Stakeholders

Perceptions show us that all those who are involved with implementation have not been given any training on what to do. Teachers and Administrators are not trained on how to work with parents. Parents are not trained on their expected duties and how to help their students at home. Parents still need to be empowered to understand how to exercise their democratic rights and take responsibility for their actions. It is lack of skills, knowledge and understanding, which affects implementation.

5.3.3 Funding

The implementation of parent involvement programmes requires funds, and perceptions indicate that there are no provisions from government. Schools are not able to buy refreshments for parents meetings. Perceptions show that the school board members are paid an allowance for attending four meetings in a year and all other extra meetings are not paid for. The parent-teachers association's executive on the other hand, hold meetings and there is no allowance paid. This could be a source of conflict between the two structures and may undermine effective parents' participation.

5.3.4 Parents' needs

There are no clear guidelines on how parents' needs are identified by schools in implementing parent involvement programmes. In most instances the school identifies

its needs and calls the two structures to meetings and discusses the needs. The members of the two structures are then expected to inform parents on what was agreed upon. There are no clear procedures of how researches on parents' needs are conducted.

In view of the observations made in the study I therefore conclude that the observation made by Fullan, (1992) that, what matters is the subjective realities of the people involved in implementation has been confirmed in this study. It is necessary for policy formulators to always take those who are going to be involved in policy implementation on board as what matters most is their perceptions on policy that is to be implemented. Important for any policy formulation is the involvement of all stakeholders from the initial stage. The teachers, parents and students should be involved in policy formulation, because implementation is going to directly affect them. The stakeholders should be brought together to clarify meanings constructed on any items to be put in policy. The policy will then come up with clear definition of all the terms used. If people are left to make meaning of every term used, implementation might be too far from what was intended. Teachers through their organising structures and parents through theirs should be brought together into the context of policy initiation. The voice of the students should be heard, as they are also part of the stakeholders.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of the observations made during the study I intend making the following recommendations, which need to be taken into account in formulation of both future

parent involvement policy by government and schools, as well as future research on parent involvement in education. The recommendations are based on the observations made on areas discussed in item 5.2 above.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy

a) All stakeholders should be taken on board in policy formulation. Teachers, Parents, and Students should be helped to have organising structures in which they could be able to critically engage with policy and have their voice heard.

b) There is need for training of all stakeholders so that they can be assisted on how they could be involved. They need to build confidence on what they are doing and take responsibility of their actions. Stakeholder should not mean parents of children enrolled at school; it should be government authorities, politicians and members of the community.

c) There is no doubt that governments face huge crisis of funding; hence there is no money to fund some activities. Parent involvement programmes require funding and government should provide funds for parent activities if parent participation is to be enhanced.

d) Schools in the areas, which need parents' support should take initiatives to enhance it. Schools have to always try to take parents on board; they have to identify parents' needs through carrying out minor researches among the communities.

e) Future policy should be clear and unambiguous, so that school authorities do not become suspect of bad intentions in their attempt to develop and implement policy on parent involvement. What parent involvement means should be clearly defined.

5.4.2 Recommendations for future research

a) The observation made in the study is that the training of all stakeholders is important for parent involvement to be enhanced. The stakeholders need to be educated on democratic participation and methods of education. It would be important for future research to focus on the area of identifying areas, problems and possible solutions to stakeholder training on parent involvement.

b) This study was mainly conducted in two community junior secondary schools in Botswana. There are other types of secondary schools in the country, for example private secondary schools; government aided senior secondary schools, public senior secondary schools and international secondary schools. It is important that future research on the topic of parent involvement should include different types of schools as this may give a variety of perceptions in different contexts.

c) Botswana is a vast and predominantly rural country and there are usually huge distances between the home and school for some people. This will obviously affect attempts to support parent involvement activities in schools by education authorities. Future research may focus on how distance and remoteness of some areas affect parent involvement and come up with possible solutions.

d) Due to economic crisis facing most developing countries, Botswana in particular, government is not able to provide money for parent involvement activities. The government has only been able to release money for the payment of sitting allowance for some meetings attended by members of the school board of governors. Government should provide training of parents so that they could be better involved. Parents in communities should also understand that it is their duty to volunteer their services for the education of their children. Future research may focus on finding out if the funding crisis of parent involvement activities does undermine effective participation of parents.

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Appendix A - Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What are your perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement?
2. What is your perception of the degree of parental involvement in school?
3. If parent involvement is about building partnership between the parents and the school, who should initiate the partnership?
4. Do you think parents understand what you want them to do?
5. What is the school doing to ensure that the activities of the school are carried forward through working with those who show interest but at the same time trying to bring those who do not show interest on board?
6. What is your general assessment of the relationship between the school and the parents?
7. What is your assessment of the typical learning environment at home?
8. Are parents used in any instructional activities?
9. What strategies does the school intend employing in order to enhance parental Involvement?
10. What are the school board of governors and parent-teachers association involved in at this school?

Appendix B – Interview Questions for Parents

1. What are your perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement?
2. Do you ever visit the school where your child is attending and why?
3. Do you attend Parents-teachers association meetings?
4. Have you arranged a place for your child at home where he/she could study and do their homework?
5. Does the school ever invite you for ceremonies?
6. What is your assessment of the relationship between the school, parents, parent-teachers association and the school Board of Governors?
7. Do you ever discuss with your child at home anything related to his/her schooling?

Appendix C – Interview Questions for Students

1. Where and who do you stay with?
2. Do your parents attend parents meetings called at school?
3. Does your parent ever discuss with you what was discussed in the meetings?
4. Which other activities does your parent attend at school?
5. When you are home does your parent normally discuss with you anything related to your schoolwork?
6. Does your parents ever talk to you about anything else related to your schooling?
7. Does your teacher ever invite parents to talk to you in class and how would you feel if your parent is invited?
8. What else is your parent doing or would you want to see them doing to help you in your education?

Appendix D - Interviews

The selected participants were interviewed individually and asked a number of open-ended questions. In transcribing and analysing the data collected, the names of the schools and the respondents are not used as anonymity was promised. A total of ten teachers, six parents and six students were interviewed from the two schools. The following table shows the letter symbol used to represent schools and their location, teachers', parents' and students' responses in the study. The letter symbols are also used to identify the respondents according to the schools and whether they are in a management position, the parent-teachers association or school board of governors.

Identification and Location	No Rank □./	Letter □
School- Urban		A
School – Rural		B
Teachers	1 – 10	T
Parents	1 – 6	P
Students	1 - 6	S
PTAs		C
BOGs		D
Management Positions □		M

AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A

BP4D – interviewed on; 26 / 04 / 2000, at home

BP5C – interviewed on; 27 / 04 / 2000, at home

AT4 – interviewed on; 22 / 04 / 2000, at school A

AT2 – interviewed on; 18 / 05 / 2000, at school A

BT10D – interviewed on; 16 / 05 / 2000, at school B

BP6 – interviewed on; 28 / 04 / 2000, at home

AP3 – interviewed on; 26 / 05 / 2000, at home

BS6 – interviewed on; 12 / 05 / 2000, at school B

BT9 – interviewed on; 15 / 05 / 2000, at school B

AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A

AP1D – interviewed on; 24 / 05 / 2000, at home

AT3C – interviewed on; 19 / 05 / 2000, at school A

AT2 – interviewed on; 18 / 05 / 2000, at school A

BT7 – interviewed on; 11 / 05 / 2000, at school B

BT6M – interviewed on; 10 / 05 / 2000, at school B

AP2C – interviewed on; 25 / 05 / 2000, at home

BP5C – interviewed on; 27 / 04 / 2000, at home

AP3 – interviewed on; 26 / 05 / 2000, at home

AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A
AS1 – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, at school A
BT6M – interviewed on; 10 / 05 / 2000, at school B
AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A
AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A
AP1D – interviewed on; 24 / 05 / 2000, at home
AP1D – interviewed on; 24 / 05 / 2000, at home
BP4D – interviewed on; 26 / 04 / 2000, at home
BT9 – interviewed on; 15 / 05 / 2000, at school B
BT10D – interviewed on; 16 / 05 / 2000, at school B
BT8C – interviewed on; 12 / 05 / 2000, at school B
AS1 – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, at school A
AS3 – interviewed on; 19 / 05 / 2000, at school A
AS3 – interviewed on; 19 / 05 / 2000, at school A
BS6 – interviewed on; 12 / 05 / 2000, at school B
BS4 – interviewed on 10 / 05 / 2000, at school B
AP2C – interviewed on; 25 / 05 / 2000, at home
AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A
AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A
AS1 – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, at school A
AS3 – interviewed on; 19 / 05 / 2000, at school A
AT2 – interviewed on; 18 / 05 / 2000, at school A
BP5C – interviewed on; 27 / 04 / 2000, at home
AT2 – interviewed on; 18 / 05 / 2000, at school A
AS1 – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, at school A
AT3C – interviewed on; 19 / 05 / 2000, at school A
BT6M – interviewed on; 10 / 05 / 2000, at school B
AP1D – interviewed on; 24 / 05 / 2000, at home
BP5C – interviewed on; 27 / 04 / 2000, at home
BP5C – interviewed on; 27 / 04 / 2000, at home
BT7 – interviewed on; 11 / 05 / 2000, at school B
AT1M – interviewed on; 17 / 05 / 2000, school A

BP6 – interviewed on; 28 / 05 / 2000, at home

BT9 – interviewed on; 15 / 05 / 2000, at school B

BT8C – interviewed on; 12 / 05 / 2000, at school B

BP4D – interviewed on; 26 / 04 / 2000, at home

Interviews with AT1M – 17 / 05 / 2000

In simple terms it would mean that parents should play a positive role towards the education of their children. Well, basically I would like to see them getting involved in academic learning of the children, that is showing concern about the learner's performance and achievement by visiting the school to come and share the academic concerns with teachers and not only that, it should also go into discipline of our students. Discipline should not be left in the hands of the teachers alone, they should also play a role. Even in sports I believe that parents should be involved. They should be seen to be playing a positive or active role in sports by way of coming to see what sporting activities are taking place in school.

Well parents are trying to be involved, but I would say not to the level of our expectations. We for example call parents to collect some examination reports forms from school at the end of the term so that we could have chance to talk to the parents but not all reports are collected. We still have to post some of them and we are never sure as to whether they reach the parents because we never get feedback. Some parents send their children or relatives to collect reports on their behalf. We normally send them back because we do not believe they can talk to the students, as the parents would do. We insist on the biological parent or any legal elderly person taking responsibility over the student, that someone responsible for buying uniform and paying development levy. The other thing is when it comes to making decisions about the education of the children, our students are legally minors, so they cannot make decisions. It is their parents who can take decisions on their behalf. Some do not even attend the parents meetings called at the school.

Well basically like they say charity begins at home, we as the school, I mean we as the burdened teachers together with the school board of governors, we are the people who

are supposed to take the initiatives to educate them about involvement and encourage them to be involved, and once the board knows what they are supposed to do they are the people who are supposed to call the community for a meeting and show them the importance of their involvement.

It is common that parents have some fears coming to school, but I mean having taught in the rural areas before this question you have just asked is common problem and is what happens in the rural areas, but here I find there is some difference. Parents here in towns are mostly well read and these are the people who show concern and want to know more about their children. However staying in the location like we are in Botshabelo, the place is like a slump and the majority of our children stay in this location. Some parents seem not interested in education, not that we isolate ourselves as the school, we do try to invite parents for meetings so that during the discussions we can sell the school and see if there will be any difference. Not only that, we do have ceremonies where we invite parents and we talk to them. We invite parents to collect the examination report letters and we also talk to them. What we have resorted to doing and when the form 1 students come to school for the first time at the beginning of the year we have an orientation for them and each of the students is accompanied by a parent. It is during the orientation that we try to sell the school to parents as teachers to show them that the school is not a place for the educated only. They also sign declaration forms, committing themselves to involvement in their children's education at all times. However I find that there is sometime a negative attitude created by political figures because you find that they tell parents that teaching children is the work of the teachers and if children fail it means teachers are not doing their job and government is failing in its policies. Like I said we call meetings, we have formed the parent-teachers association, it is limping but these are the people we are using to work towards involving the parents.

To me the relationship between the school and those who are showing interest is smooth. On the contrary we have no issues where we have been accused by the community or issues of power struggle between the teachers and parents. As teachers we always try to be very simple so that parents will understand and feel welcomed.

That is where the problem is because some students stay next to the shebeens where there is no electricity and it becomes very difficult for them to study at home. It is also noisy.

There are a number of subjects for example setswana and home economics.

Unfortunately I have not heard of a situation where a teacher has called a parent to come and be an assistant in the learning process. I do not know the reason why, maybe as teachers we assume that parents are not trained for the job so they will not manage or we maybe afraid that parents will soon say we want them to do our job for us.

We will keep on calling them for meetings and explaining the need for them to be involved. We will continue using the school board of governors and the parent-teachers association to continue selling the school to the community. If we had enough money we would continue calling them and providing refreshments in our meetings.

You see I would say parents do understand, because education is not new to Botswana. It is an old thing, but I believe that the most disturbing factor is politics. The idea of self-reliance is no longer there and everyone expects to be paid for whatever work they are involved in.

We try by all means to consult with parents, even in our yearly development plans. We raise funds through a development levy of P60- 00 per student per year but parents are not paying well. Like I said politics sometimes play an influential role because some parents are told that they should not be paying any money to the school because there is no school fees. Parents have to buy children uniform but some of them do not care. Some of the parents even refuse when they are advised to go and see the social workers for their children to be identified as needy students

We expect parents to come and enquire about their children's progress at school, learn about the school and know what the school does.

The policy should define what parental involvement means so that parents should not think teachers want to make them work for them when they are not being paid. It

should be clear to parents that the government will not be able to provide enough money for all that is needed for the education of the children, so parents should be prepared to contribute when they are asked to. Government should also try to provide money for entertaining parents when they are called at school.

The School Board of Governors is involved in the provision of additional infrastructural facilities for example they have just provided a dining hall. They are a liaison body between the community and the school. The Parent-Teachers Association is responsible for raising money for activities like the prize giving day. They are also concerned with school uniform. They are currently running a tuckshop at school. They are involved in school trips and are a liaison body between the school and the parents.

Interviews with AT2 – 18 / 05 / 2000

Parent involvement to me means consulting parents on all the activities, which involves all activities, which the school engages in. There are times when the school has to undertake trips, parents have to know how the trip is going to be financed and what the students are expected to learn from the trip.

First I will talk to the learners themselves because they should be made aware that for them to succeed their parents have to be involved with their learning and after giving them work, I will tell them that their parents will check whether they have done the work or not. The following day I will check whether their parents have checked by checking whether the parent has appended the signature. I have done this many times before.

Well I understand that some parents are illiterate but the fact that they make an effort of looking at their children's exercise books will show the students that they have to do something extra, especially that some are able to differentiate a good mark from a bad mark.

I will also like to see parents providing guidance and counselling because nowadays we are living in a world where there are many social problems. Even though we do

provide some guidance and counselling here at school, we do not spend much time with the students. Most of the time, they are at home with their parents and that's the time when parents need to talk to their children especially on issues of HIV/AIDS and STD's.

We as teachers also need to know our children, once you are given a class to teach you have to know your children, you have to know their backgrounds, who they are staying with, their guardians, their economic status and so on. By so doing you are in a better position to identify the needy students and also give them sometime to talk to you individually and see whether they have any support. And by knowing your students you can just tell even without talking to the student how they live. When parents are called for a meeting, when they come to talk to teachers you can raise the issue for discussion. If I happen to find a needy student in my class the parent have to be called to the school so that we can discuss the issue. If it is really a genuine case of needy student the matter will be referred to the welfare officers.

These ideas I am saying I have never shared with my colleagues formally in a meeting but I have discussed with certain individuals some students especially if they are students who seem to be having social problems. Sometimes if I have interpreted a situation I always ask my colleagues how they see that particular student. And in most cases they will even come up with cases I had not realised.

No, not in this school. I remember where I used to teach previously, we had cases of students who were reported to visit bars and who used to roam the village at night and we sat down as a school and we felt that since they disturb the peace of the village the most appropriate person to invite is the chief and we invited the chief to the school. He addressed them in the morning assembly, I think the students did take him seriously because it was the first visit in the history of the school.

I will say no, no in the sense that with us here when the school was first opened, the board of governors was elected and it addressed the parents. The parents were told that they were expected to be involved in all school activities especially that the school

does not belong to any other person other than the community. In that way they felt more welcomed. We have also had situations where parents came here on their own especially if their children do not come to school as the child is supposed to, so they come and ask why, whether there are some problems. At first parents would have fears but once they get to school and find that they are welcomed that remove all fears.

We made our own school report when we ran short of the standard government report. We make an effort to explain the contents of the report to parents especially when they have come to collect the report. We also try to explain to parents what we do with them at school during school open days.

In 1996 I would say the relationship was initially sour because there were some things which parents did not understand about the school or procedures of the Ministry of Education. Then after we spoke to them they actually changed completely. It is a fair relationship because of the involvement of the community and members of the board of governors because of their duties they are able to take the school to the community. We try to consult parents during meetings and if they do not turn up it becomes a problem. We sometime write parents letters and they never respond.

We rely on form teachers and those are the teachers who meet students on a regular basis. Whenever a student has a problem at home they will tell their form teacher. The form teacher will then tell other teachers for example in a case of loss of a parent or relative, the teachers will make an effort to attend a funeral. I remember there was once a funeral where more than ten members of staff attended here in Botshabelo. We could actually tell that parents were happy.

Well I will say the response is positive. If I take an example of the civilian day activity, most students are able to contribute the money we ask them to contribute, so we just feel that they do so because their parents support them. Parents do try to meet our expectations as teachers.

We ask parents to collect the reports at the end of the term and if they do not come we send the report. We call parents to form-one orientation seminars and invite them for meeting. We communicate with them through the parent-teachers association and the board of governors.

They go to the reception where they meet the secretary who will ask them what they are looking for and direct them to the relevant people. The parents can come at any time but as teachers we advice them to come in the afternoon when they want to see us because we do not teach in the afternoon.

I would say it is not that bad, however I would say not 100%. If I may give an example last term when we called parents to and collect reports, not all the reports were collected, we had to post some of them. We wanted them to come and collect them because we wanted to discuss the child's performance so that no one would point a finger at the other when the child does not succeed.

Interviews with AT3C – 19 / 05 / 2000

To me it means a parent has to have a say and play a leading role in all the activities which relates to the education of his or her child, be it at school or at home.

You know we are a new committee, which has just started this year. All these years committees were elected but have never done anything or met. We have just started from scratch but we are already engaged in fundraising campaigns. We run a tuckshop here at school. We want to raise money for the prize giving day and the completing classes farewell party. We also discuss issues related to school uniform that is we see to it that we encourage parents to buy uniform for their children.

We do not go into classes to see how learning goes on or how teaching is done, but in our meetings we encourage parents to come to school and learn about what their children are doing. Parents should know whether their children are doing well or have problems at school. They should know whether their children attend school regularly.

I have never heard of that since I came to this school and I have never heard anyone mention it in the executive committee. Anyway it is new as I said maybe is some of the thing that may come out in our meeting and will be worth discussing. As a teacher I would love it very much if any parent would ask for permission from me to be in class.

I have not yet had that experience, but what I know is with most parents I have come across, they like knowing more about the school and are never afraid to come and ask. I also believe that as teachers we should try to reach-out for parents and show them that their contribution is valuable so that they would not have any fears.

Some parents do understand and for those who do not understand it is our duty as teachers to explain to them so that they understand. The only disadvantage is that they sometime not come when they are called.

I really enjoy working with parents I have met so far. We do not have problems. We met at school and sometime during local events in town. They care about the school even though there are still those who are lagging behind. With more time and a lot of initiatives from our side as teachers everyone will be finally carried on board. We discuss issues and take decisions together. Parents know that the school belongs to the community and they have an important role to play in the education of their children.

They are willing to volunteer their services where they are needed. The school administration supports us up to now. They loaned us some money to start the tuckshop. We have already returned the money. I do not know, it is okay up to now, anyway the committee has just been newly formed.

We as teachers must not only meet parents during parents meetings. We must make follow-up if we call them and they do not come. This is what I do but I do not know of other teachers. Parents need to be encouraged. We must also try to see them as individuals. We must visit them at their homes if need arises.

Yes parents here do, our tuckshop is making profit and I believe the money the students use to buy, they get from parents. Even though not everyone does but the response is encouraging.

We write letters, send verbal messages through the students and come together in meetings. We call parents for meetings here at school and consult with them on what we want to do as the committee. They also raise issues they would want to raise. We also have a school prospectus, which we send to parents when the child is admitted. However I would like to note that the procedure is that when we communicate externally we have to always do it through the school administration.

I am not sure of the correct procedure, but if parents come to me for help and I am able to help them I do so. If I am not I refer them to other people.

I would say the response is positive even if it is not everyone. It is normal we cannot expect everyone to respond positively. For those who are responding it is encouraging.

There are only two teachers and the rest are parents. We wanted to give parents a chance to be involved in school activities because teachers are already involved in all school activities. This is the reason why we have more parents than teachers in the executive committee.

Interviews with AT4 – 22 / 05 / 2000

My understanding is that education of the child is a partnership between the parent and the school. The child spends time at school and then leaves to go home. In both places the child should be able to learn and somebody must make sure that learning takes place. At school is the teacher and at home is the parent. So parental involvement means the parent should see to it that the child is learning at school and at home by providing the child with a good learning environment. Since I joined this school in 1998 I came into contact with parents only once in a meeting. We were discussing how parents could support the children's learning and how their children were performing at school. To me the response to the discussions was positive. We advised parents that on monthly basis we give students some tests and parents should make an effort to see

how the children performed. We also informed parents that we give students some work to do at home and parents should see to it that children do the work. Parents told us that students do not show them any work. Some parents even said ever since my child came to this school I have never seen the report or the exercise book. We have resorted as teachers to asking parents to come and collect the examination report from school. Parents of children at this school I would say show a positive attitude towards their children's education. Some parents even voluntarily come to school to show concern about their children's academic performance or achievement.

As I said above they have to check exercise books, see to it that children do their home works and come to school to check on their children's academic performance.

No, I have never seen that happen, but I think it is worth exploring. It sounds a very good idea. It will boost the parents' confidence in educational matters.

I do not think parents of children at this school have any fears of coming here. They feel welcomed at the school and this is why they show support.

I am sure they do understand and some are able to help their children with homework and reinforce the teacher's work.

From what I observed since I came here, the relationship between the school and the parents is going to be a good one if things continue the way they have been so far. Parents work together with us.

If there are serious problems we sometime follow children home for example if they do not attend regularly. We meet in churches and local ceremonies.

The response towards fundraising activities is positive and good because the parent-teachers association already runs a tuckshop at school.

We meet in parents meetings and send examination reports about the performance of the child. If there are serious discipline problems the parent is called to school.

The secretary or any teacher close-by directs them to where they could be helped.

Like I have said it is good to me because parents do come, participate in the discussion and contribute positively to the discussions. What remains is to keep on encouraging those who do not turn up when called.

Interviews with AT5D – 23 / 05 / 2000

It means parents should be involved in the running of the school like seeing to it that students have uniform, they dress properly, they behave and always help the school when they are asked to help.

Like I said they should be involved in the running of the school. They should see to it that money is used properly. They should maintain school facilities like teachers' houses and provide additional facilities. They have built a dining hall and also employ the non-teaching staff.

I have never seen that happen at this school, but I think it is worth considering.

It is possible that some parents may have some fears even though they have not said it openly in this school. Some parents never come when they are called to come. We never investigate why.

To me the board members seem to know what the school is doing and they often help teachers to explain to the parents. We as teachers also try to explain to them. The School Head is the secretary of the board and explains all that relates to policy matters.

The relationship is a good one because some parents respond well to all the calls by the school. However what I observed is that some parents when they are called at the kgotla they do not attend. There is a feeling among some parents that the board's term of office has expired and a new one has to be elected.

Not much unless we are invited to a particular ceremony we attend like Independence Day celebrations activities. Otherwise we meet parents individually sometime when we walk around town.

Some students do not pay the development levy and it is unfortunate that there is nothing the school can do if they do not pay. The school can not exclude them for not paying. The school can not withhold their certificates or examination reports.

The BOG calls meetings at the kgotla and reports back to the community the school activities. They also sometime ask the School Head to write letters if they want to inform parents on any agent matter, which cannot wait for a meeting. The problem is that some parents do not attend.

The secretary and any other school employee who is available attend to parents who come and direct them to where they could be helped. There is no strict policy of what should happen. As teachers we have never sat down to discuss what should happen, even the students are not sure of what is to happen. If it is their parents they take them to their class teachers.

Some parents are really involved, some are not. They need to be encouraged to play a role and policy should give powers to the BOG to take steps to parents who purposely stay way from school activities they are invited to.

It has three members elected by the community and two by the minister. The problem is that ex-officio member never attend board meetings.

Interviews with AP1D – 24 / 05 / 2000

The board is elected by the community through the permission from the District Commissioner who oversees its election. The elections take place at the kgotla. The District Commissioner invites the community to the kgotla. During the election 3 people are elected as representatives of the community. After electing the three people there are two additional members who are nominated by the minister. There is also one

member nominated by the Member of Parliament to be his or her representative. The other member is the School Head who is the secretary of the board of governors, from there is a representative of the District Commissioner's office, Council office representative, a representative of the Tribal Authority, representative of the education office and other representative of some government departments until the composition of the board of governors is 12. About the three names elected by the community at the kgotla they are sent to the Minister of Education for approval.

The term of office for the board is 3years and for the Chairperson and the vice Chairperson they are elected annually.

The working relationship between the board of governors and the community is low. It is low because Batswana nowadays no longer attend kgotla meetings. They only come when there is going to be an election of something. But where you try to take a report to them on what you are representing them on, that is a problems you are faced with or tell them about progress, they do not come. At any rate we sometime succeed through requesting parents to come to school, but only parents with children at school do come, not all parents in the community. The appropriate thing would be for the whole community to attend but instead only parents with children come and those are the ones we report back to.

The activities of the Board of governors is to see to it whether in school there is accommodation for teachers, we build teachers' houses and this is the main activity. We see to it that students have halls, they are looked after properly and many other activities and collecting fund. The activities given to the board are carried out, we can say 55% of the activities are carried out. The problem why we do not have 100% activities carried out is the parents as I have said the parents' participation is sometime weak. We sometimes in a year hold 4 meetings, the regulation says we should have at least 1 meeting in a term, but we sometime have 2 in a term which are paid allowance and we sometime have other voluntary meetings with PTA and VDC which increases the number of meetings. All members of the board of governors attend meetings. Those who do not attend are people like the District Commissioner's office because of

some commitments. We tried to find out why, we even went to the regional meetings to enquire but found that it was not only a problem of this school alone, it was a regional wide problem. All schools were affected in the same way. The education officials wrote the District Administration to urge them to attend meetings. The letter was written this year, so we are waiting to see if there is going to be any improvement.

There is where we sometimes talk about academic work of the students even though I have not mentioned it among the activities we do. We sometime call parents for meetings where we urge them to always come and look at the work of their children at school. We normally come and teachers inform and discuss with us the performance of the children. We do not however go deep into how children are taught in the classroom. We only depend on teachers informing us as a group of parents. Observation of teaching in the classroom is a difficult task, some people can manage it but others will lack confidence, I may personally have confidence to go into the classroom to observe teaching going on because I will understand, but some of the elected members will lack confidence because they are not educated enough.

There is a smooth working relationship. The problem is some of the parents sometime think that the school is a place for the educated. I have observed that when parents are called to collect examination reports, they would rather send young people because they are afraid to come themselves. We however always try to encourage parents by insisting that when we call parents it should always be parents who have children in the school. We urge them to always come to school and consult with teachers about the academic achievements of their children, so that they can always encourage their children at home. I would like to personally urge parents and teachers to meet quite often so that they can strengthen the partnership between them and strengthen the academic achievement of the children.

I have also observed that parents when they are called for voluntary activities they always expect to be remunerated.

What we always try to do is to commit ourselves to leading every development that takes place in school because when we talk of developments for example as I mentioned earlier that we are responsible for maintenance of teachers' houses, these are the duties of the board of governors and they are examples of developments. We have just built a dining hall. We meet quite regularly and consult each other about the school developments and discuss other future plans.

Interviews with AP2C – 25 / 05 / 2000

It means that if you are a parent, you must see to it that the child attends school regularly and see to it whether the child is performing well academically at school. In order to see whether the child is performing well academically I must visit the school to see the teachers and ask how the child is performing so that the teachers will discuss the child's performance with me. The teachers will show me his work and advise me in areas where the child needs assistance in order to improve. As I am staying with some that are more educated and are in high classes, I after consulting with teachers ask them to help their younger brother in all areas, which appear difficult for him.

I go there twice a term. I meet teachers and discuss with them. The teachers also sometimes call me to school. They call me when the child has a problem because sometime our children are afraid of their teachers and they do not ask and not learn well.

Yes I do, In our meetings with teachers we discuss the students. We are encouraged to be involved as parents, we must know what the children are learning and support the learning process. We are also encouraged to attend the learning process and know what the learners are doing. We also have to check whether children arrive at school because some of our children have problems especially in this location of Botshabelo. Some of our children drink alcohol at an earlier age and some of them never arrive at school. Once we met with teachers and found that some children leave home in the morning and spend the whole day in the shebeen. Some go to school and sneak out and go to the shebeen. These children have a problem because they do not sleep well and the following day when the teacher teaches they are busy dozing. We met and

discussed these issues and even sent them to the chief and the police. We discussed them and called the shebeen owners so that we could remind them that if they do that they are going against the law. They are actually ruining the country's future leaders because without education they will not be able to develop the country.

Yes I have arranged a place for him to study at home. I have electricity at home and there is no problem.

Yes the school does invite us for ceremonies and parents like them very much because the school feeds us during the ceremonies. Parents come in large numbers.

It is a smooth relationship, which has no problems. We consult each other, we sit and discuss and agree on certain issues. We show each other where we think we are going wrong. The committees represent us well. We have faith in them and they are hard working.

My advice to parents is that I am concerned about the response of some parents to the calls made by the schools because some of them do not come when they are called. I say to them that is not good. Let us all commit ourselves and attend all meetings we are called for, so that we could know of the problems of our children. If parents refuses when they are called, it means they never even bother to go and check how the child is performing. This is not good, we do not send children to school because we want to shift the burden from us and we want to shift the burden to teachers. Let us work together with teachers to develop the child. If we do not we will not speak in one voice.

To teachers I urge them to continue bothering us and keeping us informed. They should not lose hope; it takes time for less educated people like us to realise the importance of our participation in the learning of our children.

I think it is about 8 parents and 2 teachers.

I do not know but we agreed on that after our teachers guided us on the formation of the PTA. It gives us a chance to be involved as parents and play a leading role.

Interviews with AP3 – 26 / 05 / 2000

To me it means that as a parent we should be concerned about the performance of our children at school. We should see to it that children attend school regularly and we should help the school in all the activities which the school invite us for. As a parent you should also see to it that the child is clean every morning when they go to school.

I go to my child's school twice a term, when I get there I discuss with teachers my child's academic performance, as well as his behaviour. The teachers never called me to the school this year since my child started in the school this year. I was only asked to accompany my child to the orientation when he started at the beginning of the year, otherwise after that I was never called.

I am prepared to attend them if they are called, but like I said we have never been called this year. I am not sure as to what should happen if the school does not call us for meetings, but I have a feeling that as parents we have a right to meet and approach the school and ask them why we never meet. We have to show concern about our relationship with the school. So if nothing happens later in the year we will definitely approach the school.

Yes I always try to have a place for him where he will not be disturbed when doing his work. I ask his elder brothers to help him and if they are not there I tell him to go and ask neighbours who have better education than me. I do not however keep time and supervise the study. Even though I am not able to help him with his schoolwork, I however check as to whether he is performing well at school from his exercise books. I take his book and check for a tick or a cross. I know a cross means wrong, and a tick means correct.

We are sometimes invited for ceremonies like the prize giving day ceremony. The school has already informed us that there will be an official opening of the school this year.

I would say the relationship is okay, when we were with teachers during the orientation they worked with us nicely. They explained to us a lot of things we did not understand like the checking of my child's work that I am using I learned from the teachers. We also discussed other issues like problems of pregnancy. I am lucky mine is a boy but who knows he might still lose school through making a girl pregnant in the school. As parents we are prepared to do anything for the school if the school asks.

I would like to urge all parents to encourage children to learn, consult with teachers and build positive attitude in their children about schooling.

Interviews with AS1 – 17 / 05 / 2000

I stay in Botshabelo Location. I stay with my mother and my younger brother and sisters. My father stays in Masunga and he is working there. He has not visited us for many years, but I sometime visit him.

My mother has not finished standard 7. She lives on selling goods in town (hawker). My father is working for the local council at Masunga.

My mother, lately she has been busy selling goods and she did not have much time, but she even sometime voluntarily come to school on her own.

My mother is always happy and proud of me. She tells me teachers say I am the best student. She sometimes tells me about other students who teachers say they are not serious with their schoolwork and are misbehaving. She says she does not want to hear about my bad behaviour, which I do at school, when I never display that behaviour at home.

She collects my examination report and attends the prize giving ceremony.

Yes she does, she encourages me to ask teachers where I do not understand and also to ask our neighbours. She buys me uniform and provides me with all I need to do my schoolwork. She gives me time to do my schoolwork and provides me with a working place.

My father is the one who seems not interested in school activities. Even when he was around, he used to ask my mother to go to parents meetings. He only looks at the examination report and always says how happy he is when it is good. He rewards me when I do well.

Yes about future job, they want me to be a medical doctor so that I can help them when they are ill.

No they do not. I will be happy if she is invited and I will be comfortable that she sees how much I try in class during lessons.

I would want them to talk to their children about the importance of education. They should not beat their children, because it might even make them afraid or too stubborn. They should always collect reports in the presence of their children so that they can talk to teachers about the performance of the child in the presence of the child. They should buy children uniform and pay the development fund.

Interviews with AS2 – 18 / 05 / 2000

I stay in Botshabelo location with my mother. She has completed the primary school that is she has only done standard 7, and she works as a cleaner in the council offices.

My mother attends the meetings, when she comes home from the meetings she tells me that teachers say I am working hard and improving so I must be encouraged to do schoolwork even at home

My mother discusses with me and tells me that they were told that students do not behave, some do not attend classes and some do not put on school uniform. She also tells me that they are advised that they should always check our books and see how we are performing.

She collects my examination report at school; she buys me uniform and pays my development money.

My parent discusses with me schoolwork even though she does not have education. I am happy that she advises me on what to do if I do not understand and keeps on praising and encouraging me when I have performed well.

Yes they want me to be a teacher.

No I have never seen any parent invited to class or talk to the student at assembly.

Some students come to school without uniform because they do not have any uniform, I would like to see parents buying their children uniform because you do not feel well as a student when you do not look like other students in school.

Interview with AS3 – 19 / 05 / 2000

I stay in New Stance location with my father. I do not know what standard he has done, but he works for the mine as an engineer. My mother stays in Gaborone and works for the hospital as a cleaner.

No one attends; this is not nice for me. I always tell my father that there is a meeting and he never attends. When I ask him he always say that he does not have time to come and attend.

He never attends any meetings called at school. He never consults with my teachers. He never asks me of anything happening in school.

My father does not attend any school activity. He is not interested in my schoolwork. It is only my brother who sometime asks me about my work. I do not have school uniform at the moment and when I tell him, he does not respond. I do not look like other students and this affects me. I stay very far from school. I asked him to buy me a bicycle he refused. He also does not give me money for a taxi; I have to walk everyday. I come late too often not purposely but because I stay far. At home there is not much space to do schoolwork, because my father has another woman with children staying with us. He is only interested in the children of this woman. I even wanted to leave school but my brother encouraged me to stay.

My brother tries to help me but I have lost interest in schoolwork because of the problems I have at home.

He never talks to me about anything, only my mother when she visits us. I even told her about this other woman, that immediately she leaves this woman moves in with my father, but she is afraid of telling my father about my problems.

No they never invite parents to class.

I would like to see parents treating their children nicely, encouraging them to learn and providing them with all that is necessary for them to learn. They should pay for children and buy them uniform.

Interview with BT6M – 10 / 05 / 2000

I understand it to mean that parents should have a role to play in all school activities. As a school serving a community we should consult parents on the activities we want to do. They should know what we are doing and we should also give them a chance to play a part. It is not that parents have not been involved before. They have been involved in many different ways. Recommendation 118 and 119 of the revised national policy on education is a rekindling of what has existed before.

It is not that bad, parents are trying their best even though there are some who are not responding at all. We call parents to come and collect examination reports at the end of every term, and most of them come. This gives us the opportunity to talk to them about what we do, the problems we encounter, the kind of help we need from them, the importance of their participation and how their children are performing. We call meetings of parents at school and a lot come. They also pay development levy and we have even made an agreement that it should even be followed after somebody has finished schooling if they still owe some money.

As the school we are responsible for showing parents that we want to work with them and they have to support us. We have to show them how they can support us. This however does not mean that parents should always be waiting for the school to call them when they have more pressing issues.

We as the school have tried to be very simple in every aspect in which we deal with parents. This is to give assurance to parents that the school is not a place where only those with high education fit. This helps alleviate the fears as parents see that we care for them and we value their presence.

We try to use the PTA executive as much as possible to carry out the school activities and continue to call for meetings to encourage parents to be involved. This is a problem here because parents keep on shifting between different areas at different seasons of the year. Some parents stay at their ploughing fields at certain times of the year and some at the cattle posts. So at certain times of the year it is difficult to get parents.

To me parents are trying their best because I do not normally expect more than this particularly in a rural area. Again they cannot at once all respond positively. So for those who do, we have to keep on working with them. I tell you; to me it has been amazing to see the response of parents here. If it goes on like this I am sure we will have valuable results. Parents do come even though is not all of them. We discuss issues and we get results.

Like I said some parents are not at home at certain times of the year, so children stay alone and there is no one to supervise learning at home. It is very difficult to tell whether there is any learning-taking place at home.

Yes there are subjects where parents can be used as volunteers in the classroom. We have not had any volunteer but we always appeal to parents during our meetings with them, but no one has ever shown interest.

We use the board of governors and the parent-teachers association to call meetings where we try to explain to parents how important it is for them to be involved and have a good relation with the school.

I do believe most of the parents understand because we try to be very simple when we speak to them and in explaining the examination report. We encourage them to come and ask where they do not understand.

It is really important to involve parents and it helps on improving the school. I understand government provides some money for refreshment when there are parents meetings in senior secondary schools, I would suggest that the same should happen for community schools.

They are involved in a number of activities. The board of governors is involved in maintenance of teachers' houses. The parent-teachers association is involved with the issues of school uniform, prize giving day and raising money for the farewell party for the completing classes.

Interview with BT7 – 11 / 05 / 2000

Parents involvement is all about getting parents to help the school in its activities like students discipline, fundraising, encouraging children to go to school and to work hard in their school work. The parents' stay with the children at home they must see to it that they do their schoolwork at home, they come to school clean and on uniform. The

parents have to contribute to the development of the school. In order for these parents to know their role and what we expect from them as teachers we have to meet with them and consult with them. The main problem facing us as teachers is that not all the parents will always respond when they are called. Some come and others do not. In this village some parents stay at the ploughing fields taking care of their crops and it is very difficult get them to attend meetings.

We communicate with parents in various ways. We issue out examination reports at the end of every term; this is one form of communication in which we inform parents about their children's academic performance. We invite parents for parents meetings. At the beginning of the year the school sends letters and school prospectus to the parents outlining the activities and requirements of the school. This is an attempt to keep parents informed as much as possible so that they will know what is happening in school at any given time. When there is any development taking place in the school we inform parents on it. When there are parents meetings we tell parents our successes and make parents aware of our problems.

There are those parents who understand what the school is doing and those who do not understand. They are those who understand their role in education and those who think education of the children is the duty of teachers and they have nothing to do with it. They only think they have to buy uniform for their children and what their children do at school is the duty of the teacher.

When parents come here it all depends on who they find, they will tell the person what they are looking for and the person will try to help them if not direct them to the person who can help them. Mostly they find the secretary at the reception and she helps them. We try to help parents as much as possible when they come, but in our meetings we urge parents to come and see us in the afternoon because in the afternoon we do not have lessons and we will have ample time to see them.

We have not tried using parents as volunteers in the classroom. But I believe that subjects like Setwana and Social Studies have a lot of things and topics, which relates

to culture. Parents can be invited to come and talk to students about them. However I am not sure whether parents will be brave enough to come and talk to the children.

The relationship between the school and the parents is not very bad but not very smooth also. Like I said some parents are always willing to participate and others are not. Those who do not participate always blame the school when their children are not doing well. We have individual contacts with parents when they come to collect the examination report and maybe when the child has serious problems at school particularly discipline. Otherwise we do not have much contact, as individual teachers we sometimes meet some parents in the funerals in the village.

Some parents do respond well to fundraising activities and contribute money if they are asked to and again is only those who understand why they have to contribute money who do so. I personally feel that parents take time to understand and it is our duty as the school to keep on encouraging parents until we win their support. They can not all respond positively at a go some will still take time to respond.

Interview with BT8C – 12 / 05 / 2000

It means parents helping their children to succeed at school by way of getting involved with their schoolwork. When I give a student homework I expect the student to do it and the parent to check if the student does it and in a correct way. I expect my student to come to school clean and on uniform, and the parent should check that every morning.

The input of parents is minimal in all school activities. The home does not create a conducive learning environment. This is a big problem. Most of our students stay alone or with grandparents who can not help them much in their schoolwork. Some parents are illiterate and those who are literate move to the urban areas to look for jobs. We try in our meetings to educate parents on what they should do to check students' work. We for example tell them to look for a cross or a tick. The cross will show that the student is getting things wrong and a tick means the student is getting them correct. The problem is some parents never come for these meetings and some of those

who come they immediately leave for the farming fields after the meeting so the student will still have no one to check their work. I have observed that parents do not voluntarily come to school to consult, they only come when they are called. As teachers we also never call parents to school unless it is for parents meetings or the child has a serious problem which warrants a parent to be called.

We call parents to collect school examination reports, we used to mail them, but I am sure many parents did not get them because the student check the mail and they are likely not to show them to the parents if they have performed badly. This is the main reason why we decide that parents should come to collect them. The problem is some parents still send their children to come and collect them on their behalf or send relatives. This means that parents will still not understand the contents of the examination report. The other reason why we called them to come and collect them was that we wanted to explain the contents of the report.

The relationship with the parents who do come is good. I meet with parents on several occasions and I have discovered that my relationship with them is good, especially that I sometime visit them at home when I find that their children have problems. When I walk around the village most of the parents know me and usually respond positively when I ask them. We also meet parents in celebrations in the village like the Independence Day celebrations and we meet in funerals.

The parent-teachers association is trying its best to do its activities even though it is slow in carrying out its activities. One issue will be discussed in a number of meetings before action can be taken. Sometimes after we agreed on something in a meeting everything is left on the teachers to do, parents do not come up to volunteer their services if it is something that requires labour for example unless they are called to do so.

Parents need to be more involved if we have to succeed with our work. The parent-teachers association has been dealing with the issue of uniform. We met and decided on the colour, type of material and the supplier. It is also concerned with fundraising

for the prize giving day and the completors' ball. The executive committee needs support from the parents. The parents should not leave everything to the executive committee. The executive committee is made up of 10 members and there are 2 teachers only. Obviously this is so because parents have to be given a chance to be involved in school activities and all that relates to education of their children. Parents are never used in the classroom but they're many topics where they could be used. In guidance and counselling they can play a big role in talking to their children especially that they spend a lot of time with them at home.

Interview with BT9 – 15 / 05 / 2000

Parents' involvement may mean many things, which relates to how a school tries to bring parents into its day to day activities. There are many ways in which the school may want to involve parents in its activities. Teachers may involve parents through parent-teachers associations meetings. Parents may be invited to participate in prize giving days. They may be asked to come and collect examination reports. They may be called to discuss the children's performance. As teachers we may also involve parents by giving children home work which requires the help of their parents for example finding out what was the medium of exchange before money was used or to go and ask from those who have small business how they started their business. The school could have parents' days where parents could be asked to exhibit some cultural material.

Parents' involvement in this school is not satisfactory. In some cases parents are called for meetings to discuss things like discipline and academic progress of their children, but only a few would turn up. At times as teachers we call some parents when we are not satisfied with particular pupils' academic work but those parents would never come. To me this is a sign of ignorance as well as negligence.

Most of the students from this village stay alone, most of the time parents are at the fields and some are working in towns. How would they know about the progress of their children's learning while they are not staying with them? Who is taking care of these children? Just comfort and care from parents can contribute positively to a child's learning. Where do those who are staying alone get that? These children are

those who are absenting themselves from school, which is the contributing factor to their failure.

Ends of every term parents are called to come to collect their children's progress reports. Some never turned up. Even now the school is still keeping some of these reports.

The schools are trying to involve parents but this can only be successful when the parents can change their attitude. Some parents do not care about their children's learning. As long as they see them going to school everyday, how they are learning they do not care.

Teachers can also try and build a good relationship with parents so that parents may always feel free to ask about their children's learning progress. Some parents are still afraid of talking to teachers. They take teachers as very important persons that one should not casually talk to.

Parents can only hear about the progress of the child at the end of the term when they collect the progress report. They never visit the school on their own. They never take initiatives to find out how the child is performing.

Most parents are illiterate and I do not think they understand what the teachers want them to do. I also think the progress report design does not provide enough information to parents for example there is a portion where we have to show the median, which even some of us teachers do not understand why we use it. We need something that will give parents enough information. I do not know whether the school has ever thought of designing its own report before I came but it is an issue worth considering.

The relationship with some parents is okay except that we never have enough opportunity to meet parents and discuss with them only a few parents come when we call them.

We never invite parents to come and be assistants in the classroom, but like I said there are some subjects and topics in various subjects where information from parents could be used.

I am not sure of any strategy the school is trying to use to involve parents. I also find that most of us teachers have not been fully prepared to work with parents. The kind of reception which we sometimes give parents may also prevent them from coming to school. I think one of the strategies may be that during the parents' days we have sessions with parents for academic discussions. We also need to keep on educating parents on the importance of education and the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

Interview with BT10D – 16 / 05 / 2000

It means that parents should play a leading role in all matters relating to education of their children. The School head as the secretary of the board of governors briefs the meeting of the board on the school performance as far as academics are concerned. The board gives us moral support. They are the ones who help in the buying of prizes for students who do well in their examinations. As a staff representative I would go to them with staff requests of the learning materials and any other need from the teachers. The board has always been helpful for example they bought water-tanks for teachers' houses.

The response of parents to the calls made by the board is promising even though not all people come. The board meetings are called at the kgotla. I have realised that many people want to run away from responsibility. They feel that there are certain people who should always be in the lead. They seem to be reluctant as far as the development of the school is concerned. The people who are elected members of the board of governors time and again are the only ones who are always determined to support the school.

We invite parents to come and collect the progress reports. The parent will be here, the teacher will be here, and the child will be here. We will discuss the performance of the

child. The parent will say their views of how they see the child. The teacher will tell the parent the problems of the child and the child will say his/her problems.

The problems I find with parents here is that they stay either at the farming fields or at the cattlepost. Some are working in towns. The children stay alone. You talk to the parent now it does not help because the parent will leave and go back to the cattle post or farming fields. Some do not even have time to come and take the examination reports.

As a school we have never used parents as assistants in the classroom. But as a teacher I feel there are subjects where parents could be used as assistants. As a Home Economics teacher, I always ask my students to go and ask their parents to teach them weaving and preparing traditional food. I will love it one day if a parent could ask me to come into class when I am teaching because sometime when the students fail, parents say teachers at the school do not teach.

I have asked that the yearly home economics exhibition be held in our school this year so that I could invite parents to see what we do in the exhibition.

The board of governors is trying to meet our expectations even though it is slow. We currently have problems with the teachers' houses. They need to be renovated but it is taking too long. Teachers have been waiting for a long time.

We just work together nicely. There is no one who looks down on the other. We share ideas and they respond to our requests as teachers for example the water problem we had. We no longer have problems because we store water.

We have to keep on encouraging parents to be involved. They should not be afraid of meeting teachers. They should always consult teachers on their children's progress. They should not leave their children to stay alone. The board of governors is composed of both elected members and those nominated by the minister. There are also some ex-officio members who are supposed to attend meetings who never attend. The board of governors meets regularly and all members attend.

Interview with BP4D – 26 / 04 / 2000

As the board it means we should be involved in the development of the school. We should know which infrastructural facilities need renovations and which additional facilities the school requires.

The board is responsible for the employment of non-teaching staff. It also has the responsibility of addressing issues related to shortage of accommodation facilities, school dining hall and poultry units. For example I remember that when we met last year there was a report on shortage of water in the teachers houses. We agreed to buy small water tanks for each house, so that teachers could store water when available. We are currently working on the project of renovating teachers' houses.

The board also helps in preparations and arrangements for prize giving days and open days ceremonies. The board of governors has a fund, which we take care of. We are not however responsible for the government grant. We are not consulted on how that money is used. We are only consulted on the use of the board of governors' fund.

The school has more authority than we as the board of governors do. They consult us only in events, which they think we need to be consulted. We have nothing to do with the teaching staff; they are under the school administration.

The board of governors meets and discusses the issues, the School Head who is the secretary of the board is then advises us on policy issues and then he is assigned to take action on the issues.

The board of governors calls parents at the Kgotla to consult with them from time on the mandate they have given them. The parents give their suggestions, which we take to the board of governors meetings to discuss and the board also brings to the

attention of the parents any issues, which needs their attention, for example the payment of the development levy.

My wish as a board of governors member is that the policy on the powers of the board of governors should empower us to be able to dismiss non-teaching staff employees as we are also responsible for recruiting them. What happens at the moment is we can only conduct a disciplinary hearing and take any other disciplinary action other than dismissal. We can only recommend to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education that a certain employee has to be dismissed. The Permanent Secretary will then assess our case and either endorse or refuse our recommendations.

There is a difference because I have observed that some projects have taken off the ground. Some are already complete and others are about to be complete. So I can see a lot of differences from the time we assumed office.

We have some problems when the board is supposed to meet, some ex-officio members do not attend our meetings, and for example the Local Councillor and the District Commissioner do not attend. This worries us because these are the people who are supposed to advise us on policy matters but its like they do not make any effort to attend, particularly the Local Councillor because he is always close to us here. We have tried to raise the issue many times but we found that it is not only us who are faced with the problem it is a national problem. The other problem is that one member has since resigned from the board of governors but has not been replaced. It is very difficult because the District Commissioner is the only person who can call a Kgotla meeting for election of a new member to replace the one who have resigned. If the District Commissioner does not attend meetings, how will he be able to call a kgotla meeting?

The board members do understand their roles because they are very keen about the education of their children. They do attend when a meeting is called even though they sometime do not keep time.

Parents should also show interest in the education of their children and turn turn-up for meetings when they are called. They should buy their children uniforms and pay the development levy.

We raise funds through charging a development levy on each student enrolled at the school. The levy is P60- 00 in an academic year, which adds up to P180- 00 in three years.

Interview with BP5C – 27 / 04 / 2000

I started becoming a chairperson of the parent-teachers association in 1998 and there after I was elected again in the subsequent years. The executive committee has 10 members. There are 8 parents and 2 teachers.

We have an understanding that as parents we need to be involved in school activities so that we can help teachers in things like discipline because the teacher alone cannot manage disciplining our children. We also have to share the responsibility of educating our children so that even at home we can always encourage our children to do schoolwork.

We have some problems in holding our meetings; there are some members who do not attend regularly. We do not have any regulations we use in the committee particularly about what should happen if one does not attend regularly. We just talk to each other and try to show each other the need for regular attendance. The other problem is there are no incentives in attending the executive committee meetings. We are not given seating allowance like the members of the board of governors. Our efforts are just voluntary and this may be the reason why some people give priority to other things rather than parent-teacher executive meetings.

We have a smooth working relationship in the committee and also with the board of governors and the teachers. We consult each other and there have been no problems.

We first meet as the parent-teacher association executive. The members will bring out the issues they want discussed. We will discuss the issues and after the meeting it is then that we call the parents for a meeting to inform them on what we discussed as the parent-teachers association executive. The parents will also be given a chance to raise whatever issues they have.

The first activity as the parent-teachers association, we were involved in making arrangements for the sale of tracksuit to the students. If the school board of governors can loan us some money, we will buy the tracksuits and sell them to students. The profit from the sale will then go to the parent-teachers association fund. Our main problem is we start from nothing, there is no money for parent-teacher association activities other than the money raised through fundraising efforts. We also made arrangements for the sale of tunic to students. We invited tenders from the tailors around so that we can choose the material we want, and choose one or two tailors who we would inform parents to buy school uniform from, so that our children would put on the same material.

It is us who choose the activities that we want to do for example the issue of uniform; the school has nothing to do with the sale of uniform. The school however also consults with us if they have anything they want us to help them in or do. For example the school has a problem of students who leave school due to pregnancy. We called parents and encouraged them to talk to children at home. It is a problem because some parents are afraid to talk to their children about sex. We have not met to consider what else we should do but there is always a lot to do. The school has not yet asked us to do anything but we are prepared to help as the parent-teachers association.

We meet with teachers and they explain to us matters relating to academic work of the students. They show us what parents need to do at home to help their children learn. The parent-teacher association also tries to encourage parents to show interest in their children's work. We encourage them to get into partnership with the teachers because our children spend a lot of time with us at home. We need to show them the proper way of studying and behaving.

There are no rifts, teachers and parents works together. The school consults us on issues which they know will require parents to be involved or otherwise they us when they think is time to consult us. As the parent-teachers association we believe that the school gives us the freedom to do our work freely. We consult with them and we do not see them as dictating any terms to us. The regulations of the Ministry of Education do not prohibit us on doing our work. The school advises us on our work and we always operate within the regulations of the Ministry of Education. In our partnership with teachers we discuss a number of things for example discipline and we speak in one voice so that no one would accuse the other. We speak a lot against pregnancy for example. We encourage parents to talk to their children about pregnancy, parents are afraid to do it. But both the student and the parent suffer. The child falls pregnant and loses school; the parent has an additional person to feed. The child is also likely to get dangerous diseases.

We talk to parents in meetings; we tell them that the school belongs to them. They have to know what is happening in the school and they cannot know unless they visit the school to consult with teachers.

Interview with BP6 – 28 / 04 / 2000

As a parent I understand that it is my role to assist my child with her schoolwork at home and check with the teachers on how she is performing at school. I have to know how she behaves, her problems at school and also tell the teachers the problems I can identify at home. To me this is what it is meant by involvement.

Yes I do all these. I try to find out if she is performing well at school, if she writes properly and whether what is written make sense and whether she understand it. Sometimes when I check her books I find that she is not performing well in some areas. I normally ask her why she is not performing well. I also try to contact the teacher to try and tell her the child's problem. The problem is that teachers will never call you during the course of the term when the child experiences some problems. They will only wait for the end of the term when you are asked to come and collect the

examination report. So if you are not able to go and collect the examination report, and you also never check your child's books you will never know whether your child has some problems. This is a very serious problem because some of us parents are working and if you cannot be released to attend a meeting because their meetings are held during working hours you will never be able to know what is happening in school. I have only attended one meeting last year. This year they have not yet called us. In meetings we discuss behaviour, fundraising, uniform, school trips and many others relating to child's schooling.

I am prepared to do any activity if time allows me. I have to help my child with home work, I have to make sure she reads, I have to encourage her to be involved in sports and keeping clean all the times. Above all I have to be ready to do any other activity which the school invites me for.

I do not visit school because I do not have time, I am working, not that I do not find it necessary but because the time when I could be going is when I am at work. I believe it is necessary for parents to always visit schools where their children are so that they can consult with the teachers and know what is happening in the school. It is also important for teachers to always call us not only for meetings but also as individuals immediately your child starts experiencing problems. When they call us as individuals it will show us as parents that teachers are more accessible and we will not be afraid to contact or approach when we have queries. The other problem I have observed is that the parent-teachers association executive committee does much of the work. The school calls the executive committee and informs them, and thinks that when they have informed them they have involved all parents.

The relationship is okay, but I feel it needs to be improved. The school should consider our time schedules as parents. If you are unable to go to school at the time they have called us for example to collect reports there should be an allowance for an alternative time, perhaps after working hours or during the weekend. If we do not come to check our children's work teachers should follow us up and find out what the problem could be. The teachers only call us for collecting the examination reports and not for

checking the students' work during the course of the term. It is only when you collect the examination report that you learn about the child's behaviour and the performance at school. Personally as a parent I have decided to have extra lessons for my child at home on whatever I can do to assist my child to succeed. However I sometimes find that I do not agree with the way the teacher approaches some of the work as I look through my child's exercise books. Some things will be marked correct when I can see they are wrong. But I never feel free to go to school and talk to the teachers because I am not sure whether the teacher is approachable. They never call us individually; we do not have individual contact with them. I am not sure whether the teacher will think I am questioning her authority. I am afraid that teachers may soon think that I think I am better than other parents are and victimise my child. I think as parents we should show interest in the work of our children, learn what problems are there and come together and discuss them with teachers. The problem is that some parents do not show interest in the work of their children.

I would like to see other parents encourage their children to work hard. When they come home ask for their books and look through them to see how the children are doing their work. We should also always go to school to see teachers, discuss with them and learn how our children are performing so that we can help them at home.

Interview with BS4 – 10 / 05 / 2000

I stay with my father and mother. My father and mother are teachers. Both my parents attend meetings called at school. They always discuss with me at home about what was discussed in the meeting. We also discuss discipline and my schoolwork.

My parents collect my examination report from school. We discuss it at home. They show me my weak areas and my strengths. My parents check my exercise books and encourage me to always to ask my teachers where I do not understand. After discussing with some teachers my father tells me the observations teachers make on my schoolwork. My parents are able to help me on some of the other subjects at home.

My parents always encourage me to work hard so that I can do a much better job than theirs in future. My parents have never been invited to my class during teaching. I would like it if they are invited, but I will also not be comfortable if I were unable to answer during their presence.

My parents check my schoolbooks once a week. My parents provide me with all that I need for my schooling. They buy me uniform, pay my development fund and buy me any stationery I need for learning. They pay for my educational-tours. I am satisfied that my parents are doing everything that I need for my education. However I sometimes meet some other student who tell me that their parents are refusing to buy them uniform. I would like to urge those parents to provide their children with what they need for their learning. It is not nice when you are a student and you are the only one who is not putting on uniform. It really disturbs someone and you always feel that you do not look like other students. Parents should give children time at home to do their schoolwork. They should make efforts to help them or find someone to help their children if they cannot do it themselves. They should pay their development levy and make their children feel comfortable at school. They should show interest in their children's schoolwork. Some children complain that when they get home their parents always shout at them and ask them to leave books and do some home chores. I am happy I am staying with my parents and they both understand the need for me to study and succeed at school.

Interviews with BS5 – 11 / 05 / 2000

I stay with my sister, she is not working. She attends meetings called at school and discusses with me what was said in the meeting. She always talks to me about discipline. She tells me teachers say that some students are not well behaved, they are always seen at bars and they smoke. She also said that teachers say some students do not put on uniform.

My sister collect my examination report, she tells me that teachers said I need to work hard to improve my work. She also attends prize giving day ceremonies. She encourages me to work hard so that I could find a job in future. My sister also looks at

my books and keeps on encouraging me to work hard. She tries to help me in my homework, but she cannot manage in some of the subjects.

I would like to be a policeman when I finish and help my parents with money. I also want to help my younger brothers and sister to give them education. My sister always asks my parents to buy me uniform and pay my development fund. They are trying to provide me with everything I need for my learning. I wish my sister were more educated because she would be able to give me extra lessons after school. My neighbours are also not educated, so I have problems with doing my home works because I have no one to ask.

I would not mind if parents were invited to the class during lessons. They will be able to learn about how we are taught. I just hope that they are not going to laugh at us if we do not know the answers. I would like to see parents showing interest in their children's work. They should not just stay at the farming fields. Parents have to help in enforcing discipline in their children and ensure that children attend school regularly. Parents should buy us school uniform and encourage us to be clean at all times. They should pay the development fund.

Interview with BS6 – 12 / 05 / 2000

I stay with my grandmother and my mother is a teacher in Francistown. My grandmother attends all meetings called at school. She always tells me that teachers, say we are not studying hard we are playful. She also said teachers say we are not well behaved.

My grandmother attends prize giving day ceremonies. She buys me uniform and pays my development levy. She sometimes looks at my exercise books. She always encourage me to work hard in order to succeed. My grandmother does not know English so she is not able to help me in my schoolwork. I wish I were staying with my mother because she was going to be able to help me with my schoolwork. But my mother wants me to stay with my grandmother.

My grandmother collects my examination report from school and when she gets home she tells me what teachers say about the examination report. She does not have much to say about my schoolwork. She does not speak English and cannot understand what is written in the report. What she normally tells me is to ask teachers where I do not understand. My neighbours are also not educated.

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