

**Exploring how partnerships between a school for the deaf and hearing parents and is managed: Perspectives from school management, teachers, and hearing parents at a combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu- Natal**

**By**

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**Durban, South Africa**

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Doctor T.T. Bhengu

## ABSTRACT

This research sought to explore how the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents are managed. It was conducted and completed by obtaining insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership for the benefit of the deaf child. The literature review underpins what literature and scholars have argued, highlighted and discussed in terms of schools and parent partnerships. However, the focus of this study is schools for the deaf and hearing parents, therefore, specific literature has been identified in the literature review. It provides an understanding of partnerships between schools for the deaf and parents and a theoretical framework within which this study will be analysed.

The presentation of research, design, and methodology is mapped out utilising a case study of one combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal that offered from pre-school to grade 12. It had a principal, deputy principal and three heads of departments in the SMT. In my observation, most of the teachers signed fluently except for a few. The parent body consisted of hundred percent of the parents being hearing to deaf children.

Gough (2000) refers to methodology as doing research in an attempt to produce knowledge and provides a set of reasons for the way a researcher move ahead in the study. Methodology refers to more than particular techniques, such as ‘doing a survey’ or ‘interviewing students’. It provides reasons for using such techniques in relation to the kind of knowledge or understanding the researcher is seeking. In this study, I have selected three methods of acquiring data namely, semi-structured interviews; documents review and observations. Qualitative data analysis was used in the process of research. I was actively engaged in the setting and with the participants to generate meaning of their experiences. Therefore, the experiences of the participants have added richness and meaning to the findings. The finding in my qualitative data analysis has provided answers to the critical questions. The data generated from the qualitative research has been analysed using the thematic analysis.

The study was conducted to research the partnership between the school for the deaf and hearing parents; and whether it exists and is maintained so as to rule it out as a factor contributing to illiterate deaf learners; or is the partnership partially or non-existent therefore contributing largely to the illiteracy of deaf learners leaving schools for the deaf.

The in-depth interviews with the SMT showed that they were very open and honest in sharing all that they did to involve parents and in so doing create partnerships with parents, however, they stated that there was still more work to be done in some areas. They felt that they were doing a lot, however, it was not fulfilling the desired need for parents to become fully involved mostly so through learning their children's first language being South African Sign Language (SASL). The huge concern was that very few parents were actually interested in learning SASL to communicate with their child that created huge barriers between the hearing parent and their deaf child, and then resulting in a ripple effect into parents feeling inferior or inadequate to become involved in the school. The school personnel in this study were concerned that there were factors of finance, living a distance from the school, learners living with overburdened grannies, uninformed parents, disillusioned parents and uninterested parents were a contributing factor to parents not having a partnership with the school for the deaf.

Parent participants in this study, on the contrary are saying we want to be involved, we are involved but when we see a problem and address the problem then we are seen as problem makers and the school hides behind policies. They not feeling welcome and not enough was being done by the school and there is no partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents. The emerging themes were analysed and recommendations were made on how the school SMT can move forward in strengthening bonds with the hearing parents. The data has shown that both parties should make concerted efforts to take responsibility in their roles in relation to the deaf learners and fulfil their roles then a partnership can be created to work harmoniously in the best interest of the deaf learners.



13 May 2016

Mrs Cheryl K Devnath 9262291  
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Dear Mrs Devnath

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0491/016M**

**Project title: Exploring partnerships between schools for the Deaf and parents is managed: Perspectives from school management, teachers, and hearing parents at a combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal.**

**Expedited Approval**

In response to your application dated 29 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.**

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I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
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**DEDICATION**

To my husband, Rishi Ranjithlall and my two children, Keshav and Archana Ranjithlall, for your support and sacrifices you have had to make for me to complete this study. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. To my mum, dad and sister, Kamala, Paul and Rekha Devnath for your continuous encouragement and love in the time I needed it. To my brother, Deon Devnath who passed on during my study I know that your presence and blessings were with me all of the time. To my two Gurus, Sri Gurudev, Swami Sivananda and Mr Baboo Manawar thank you for the spiritual guidance and blessings.

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My sincere gratitude goes to all my participants (**principal, deputy principal, teachers, and parents**) at the school I conducted my study; I extend my heartfelt gratitude for giving me time and sharing information with me to make this study possible. Without your participation, this study would not have been possible.

My heartfelt thank you goes to my husband, Rishi Ranjithlall, who filled in for me as a mum and dad when I was not at home. My children, Keshav and Archana Ranjithlall thank you for understanding my need to do this and managing in my absence.

**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ASL	American Sign Language
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy
DeafSA	Deaf Federation of South Africa
DoE	Department of Education
DPPP	Deaf Parent-to-Parent Project
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
HoD	Head of Department
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
PCPT	Parent Community Participation Team
PGB	Parental Guideline Booklet
SASA	South African schools act
SASL	South African Sign Language
SLED	South African Education and Development
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USB	Universal Serial Bus



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## CHAPTER ONE

### SETTING THE SCENE FOR THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

This research seeks to explore how the partnership between schools for the deaf and the hearing parents are managed. The concept of partnership in education is important and emanates from the Constitution of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996a (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) and finds expression in the South African schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 as amended (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). In the context of this research project, the school that has been identified for the study provides education to the deaf learners but all of their parents do not have such a disability. Notwithstanding this, it remains an expectation that schools, whether they provide education to the learners with disabilities or not, should establish and maintain an effective partnership with parents in order to provide education to the learners effectively. The study further seeks to obtain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership between them for the benefit of the deaf learner. The “deaf learner” will be used throughout this study to show the learner in a school for the deaf whereas “deaf child” will be discussed in relation to their hearing parents.

The schools act, section six, in its responsibilities of parents with respect to the code of conduct state, that as parents they are expected to take an active interest in their children’s work and make it possible for their child to complete homework assigned to them. It defines the concept of parent and outlines basic parental duties. The requirements of the policy say one thing, however, in practice the parent involvement lack in South African schools. The schools act implies that schools in South Africa should acknowledge the fact that there are a variety of family types and therefore schools need to devise various strategies to communicate with the diverse family types. According to Parhar (2006), parent involvement has been an essential factor in positively impacting children’s success. Chindanya (2011), highlights the significance of parent involvement if parents designated for their children a quiet place to study and do homework, check children’s homework and talk about what happened during the school day, children will appreciate the importance of education and will be good learners as a result of this. In the situation where hearing parents have deaf children, knowing the needs of deaf learners whilst doing homework as well as studying and being able to use sign language fluently to communicate the day's experiences and their day at school, is of utmost importance. Stobbart and Alant (2008) research on parents of deaf children showed that only fifty-eight percent of parents were involved in setting goals for their children’s literacy. Chindanya (2011) argues that the home environment and the degree of cognitive stimulation provided in the home

setting may have substantial impact on the child's cognitive development. When children are diagnosed with deafness, hearing parents are in shock and have no way to communicate with their deaf child except to use gestures. This impacts the development of the deaf learner in acquiring language. Stobbart and Alant (2008) in their study, showed that parents of deaf learners generally perceived the child's literacy education to be primarily the responsibility of the teacher. It was noted that parents also did not know the importance of emergent literacy as part of their young child's development. When the SMT's of schools takes cognisance of this they can start working on a mind shift away from the belief that education of deaf learners is primarily the school's responsibility instead they can initiate and motivate hearing parents to become involved thus creating a partnership.

DeafSA (2006), confirmed that more than ninety percent of deaf learners are disadvantaged because they have not been able to acquire language by hearing it spoken as their hearing counterparts do. They further add that this is because the majority of deaf children have hearing parents who cannot communicate in South African Sign Language (SASL). The future of deaf learners is bleak until we can ascertain what our current partnership is like between schools for the deaf and hearing parents. Peel (2004) argues that schools for the deaf in South Africa are the only places that deaf learners are exposed to sign language and deaf culture for the first time and over ninety percent of deaf children have hearing parents of who majority have never met a deaf person before. Therefore when they find a school for the deaf they are happy to believe that the school will solve all their problems which is not the case. The responsibility of the SMT in the school is to design an initiation program to educate hearing parents that seek placement or place their deaf child in the school.

Decker and Decker (2001), claim that due to the rapid changes that have occurred in families and schools, the schools are required to communicate with families if they are to achieve in their primary goal of educating children. When we find that schools, parents, and families work together in a positive way it will influence the achievement of goals in a school for the deaf which is to ensure that the learners can read and write fluently by the time they finish school. The goal of any school for the deaf is to ensure that their learners can read and write a written and spoken language since SASL is not a spoken and written language.

Heystek (2004), in a discussion on relationships between the school principal and the hearing parents in the school governing body, argues that this relationship must be to make sure that school improvement takes place and improved teaching and learning continues. Heystek (2004), in his research conclusion highlights that the principals were not positive about parent involvement instead principles did not show that parental support had any possible advantage for the schools. It is further argued as to what is the need for "support teams" as the SMT and teachers felt they are the

professionals and they know best about the main activity of teaching and learning in schools. Heystek (2004) ends by debating whether the “support team” really contributes to improved standards of teaching and learning. This study seeks to explore more literature to establish whether in fact there needs to be a partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents for improved teaching and learning standards or can the schools for the deaf do it alone. Lemmer (2007), confirms that schools and families that have good partnerships pave the way to improved academic learner achievement, self-esteem, school attendance and social behavior. The study further claims that schools and parents do not always share the same ideas on what is wanted or needed and that education department policies are not always effectively implemented at the schools.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

According to the South African Education and Development (2012), most deaf young adults spend thirteen years at school and then leave school functionally illiterate. They also state that the Department of Basic Education is fighting to improve literacy levels of pupils at mainstream schools but deaf learners are marginalised. These statements contribute to this study in that it searches deeper to see what the main contributing factors resulting in deaf learners performing poorly and coming out of school illiterate. The concern that brought about the study is that is the partnership between the school for the deaf and hearing parents existing and maintained so as to rule it out as a factor contributing to illiterate deaf learners or is the partnership partially or non-existent therefore contributing largely to the illiteracy of deaf learners leaving schools for the deaf. Ultimately the positive, strong and sustained partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents results in happy, well-educated deaf children and that should be the aim of the SMT in the school.

Schools for the deaf are unique in that they not only rely on the parents of the deaf learners for support but also rely on the extended families to create support that enables the deaf learner to learn and succeed in the “hearing world”. Nicholas and Geers (2003) research findings proved that deaf learners who have deaf parents and therefore exposed to sign language from birth can even attain the same linguistic milestones as hearing learners. Therefore, there is a need to start language from birth with hearing parents of deaf children which then continues into formal education where the hearing parent continues their role supporting their deaf child and the school for the deaf. In Chapter Four it is discussed how the knowledge of sign language and input by the hearing parent impacts not only the deaf learner but the relationship the hearing parents have with the school for the deaf. Deaf learners need to be able to access information on a daily basis and the only way to do this in a country like South Africa with not much access to SASL for information, is to be able to read and write with understanding, since they do not get enough information from television (only interpreters

for some news) and obviously the radio is not an information source for the deaf unless they have someone to interpret for them. Therefore, deaf learners rely heavily on magazines, newspapers, books and other forms of literature to access information. If the learners are not encouraged to read daily and have no parent involvement in actually reading one on one with their deaf child then this can impact on the literacy level of a deaf learner in the classroom. The parents will need to get involved in learning to sign fluently and confident in using SASL in order to read with their child. When parents form a partnership with the school for the deaf, teachers of the deaf imparts information of ways that the parents can assist to make their homes literacy rich and get involved in their deaf child's education in the home which is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. It is also discussed how the SMT assists the process of this happening harmoniously.

Schools for the deaf should be resource sites for parents of deaf children in the school, which will enable them to learn SASL. There are various ways this can be done. One of the ways is for parents and family members to volunteer and spend time with the deaf and teachers of the deaf, to acquire SASL and on the other the school can offer SASL classes free of charge. It is imperative for parents and extended families to learn SASL because often deaf learners are not included in conversations at family dinners or family occasions that include extended families because everybody speaks leaving out the deaf child who then finds him/herself isolated and ultimately not engaging in conversations; therefore not picking up language which is essential for deaf learners learning of literacy which ultimately impacts all areas of their academic learning. The school for the deaf in my experience has deaf learners who come in and express their frustrations about all of this and as a school, the SMT and teachers need to ask how they can help the deaf learner overcome this challenge and bring hearing parents on board in assisting the process of educating the deaf learners attain maximum academically.

Bastos (1998) argues that it is difficult to provide statistics of hearing impairment in children because there is a lack of audiological screening of young children which means that in national planning the education for deaf children is not included. When babies are identified as being deaf there are certain structures that need to be put in place for that baby to acquire language from day one. The families response to finding out about their deaf baby and how do they recover from the shock is something to be dealt with so that it does not impact the family and their views on having a deaf child. It is important that they move beyond the shock and believe that their baby has a future being deaf. Hulsebosch and Myers (2002), the focus on hearing parents when they discover their child is deaf, is on the disability and the unfamiliarity with deafness results in parents being unsure of their deaf child's capabilities. Scott and Dooley (1982. p. 212) reports that professionals "become viewed as more expert parents than the parents themselves." Until they believe that their child can be deaf and



successful, parents will not get involved in their deaf child's education, therefore, a partnership between the school for the deaf and hearing parents will be bleak and unattainable. Hearing parents will see themselves as separate and leave the work of education entirely to the school because their belief is that deaf people are not successful, can they be blamed especially since we see in South Africa the deaf community only doing unskilled labor or unemployed with low literacy levels. People also harbor myths and traditional beliefs about deafness which can be rooted out at school level if done carefully. If the school gets involved in exposing successful deaf adults in a school forum, parents will feel empowered and start becoming advocates for their deaf child, and work towards making their deaf child successful in a hearing world, ultimately through being highly literate. I would like to touch on having an early intervention program and how it can help parents', especially hearing parents of deaf children communicate and initiate discussion.

Gregory (1998) confirms that in deaf learners the low achievement levels seen is predominantly due to deaf learners having restricted opportunities for incidental learning. Nodoushan (2008) in his discussion about troubles of deaf learners in hearing families, states that language development requires exposure and that no acquisition of a mother tongue language can take place in the absence of naturalistic exposure to that language. A deaf child that has deaf parents who signs can through observation, learn incidentally from conversations happening around him/her. This is in contrast to the hearing child who does not have to explicitly do careful observation. The hearing child can be in any room and still overhear a conversation occurring in another room. The hearing loss in deaf learners regardless of their parents' hearing status, constantly exposes them to less information. Karen & Kritzer (2009), confirms this when it is stated that parents being trained or coached to initiate incidental learning in their deaf child from a young age are of utmost importance in developing and constructing language. This should happen at all stages of the deaf learner's life in school, in the home environment and other environments the family engage in or visit for whatever reason. This is not only applicable when a child is younger than the school going age, it should be carried through even when the deaf learners start formal education and require the language input constantly to achieve in all academic subjects at school.

Moore (2001), noticed that it is not surprising to identify language delays from deaf children of hearing parents by the time the deaf child goes to school. In Chapter Four it further discusses the impact of hearing parents who do not sign to their deaf child and it impacts their partnership with the school for the deaf because they feel inadequate. Hulsebosch and Myers (2002), discuss the Deaf Parent-to-Parent Project (DPPP), which is a project designed to bridge the cultural gaps between deaf community, hearing parents and school personnel who are nurturing and educating deaf children.

One of the goals of this project is to quickly provide information to hearing parents on cultural perspective of deafness rather than them having their own perspectives that they may have acquired. This can be the work of a school for the deaf as soon as hearing parents place their child in the school, immediately their perspectives can be rectified so that a strong partnership can be made with hearing parents and hearing parents immediately see their roles as valuable in educating their deaf child.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The challenges of deaf learners growing into functionally illiterate adults due to the lack of literacy which impacts all areas of their education are highlighted in 1.2. These ongoing challenges of the deaf community have brought about many questions as to the reasons for the lack of literacy when deaf learners have been through an educational system in a school for the deaf which has failed them. There are many contributing factors that can be researched but the angle used in this research focuses on the personnel in schools for the deaf and the hearing parents and whether their partnership contributes to the challenges faced by the deaf learner pointed out in section 1.2. This research sought to explore how the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents is managed and to obtain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership for the benefit of the deaf learner. The school for the deaf is not usually serving the community they reside in. Only a few children from the community may be attending the school, however, most of the pupils are attending the school from long distances and outside communities since there is only a few schools for the deaf that services the scattered number of deaf pupils in the country. Parents have to travel long distances and incur financial expenses to attend school meetings and have personal interaction with the school personnel, for various other reasons hearing parents are not involved in their deaf learner's education and the main focus is what are the schools for the deaf doing to create and maintain partnerships with the hearing parents. The SMT in schools for the deaf should take responsibility in steering the process which is not always the case. On the other hand most hearing parents do not take their role as parents of deaf learners seriously and become involved in their child's education or do not partner with the school and leave all the work to the school.

### **1.4 Rationale for this study**

The Australian Education Department, in its Family-School Partnership Framework (1996), explains that creating partnerships in schools mean bringing together of parents, guardians, caregivers, extended families, teachers, school management and other support staff to engage effectively and work together to reach the goals of learners. In this research the focus is on a school for the deaf and

the bringing together of parents, guardian, caregivers and families of deaf learners by school management, to assist the teachers to enhance and improve teaching and learning. Lemmer and Wyk (2004), in their study, argue that home-school communication is practiced for many years and parent involvement is very important but the implementation is poor. They further argue that it is essential that communication must flow in two directions and schools must encourage parent communication to teachers and the school community. It is most important for teachers to be leaders in initiating this process and the SMT to manage their schools so as to bring about change and find ways to encourage hearing parents and teachers to work together for the benefit of improving the learning of deaf learners.

Whilst teaching the deaf for many years I have observed that teachers of the deaf work alone in educating the deaf child. Occasionally there would be the odd parent who would invest time in trying to help their deaf child but sustaining such bonds is not long lasting. In the results from the research by Calderon (2000), it showed perhaps parents of deaf children do not feel they have enough skills to communicate with deaf children and mothers who can communicate well with their deaf child may also feel more comfortable in interacting with their deaf child in places other than the home and will participate in their child's school environment. Hearing parents who can communicate with their deaf child can assist in doing homework and provide enriched support. Schools for the deaf are unique in that they not only rely on the parents of the deaf learners for support but also rely on the extended families to create support that enables the deaf learners to learn and succeed in the "hearing world" and to create a language-rich environment using sign language.

The Department of Education: Gauteng Province has designed a Parental Guideline Booklet (2010), it mentions that parents and grandparents are the main pillars of support for children, however, they take cognisance of the fact that today many children are orphaned therefore extended families and neighbours also become an important pillar of support for these children. It argues that for schools to work effectively, and children to achieve in school, it is important for families to move towards creating a partnership between the school, themselves and their children. The PGB stresses the importance of doing homework and ways parents should support and assist their child; staying informed about what is happening in your child's school; practice work given with your child; be a role model for learning; be a part of what your child learns in everyday life; pay attention to your child's needs; set up meetings with your child's teacher. In my teaching experience of the deaf I have observed that deaf learners who are not only supported by their parents but extended families are involved and create support for the deaf learner, the deaf learner works to the best of their ability and achieves.

Moeller (2000) studies confirm that parents who take the initiative to become active in their child's education have been found to communicate better with their children and to contribute more to the child's progress than parents who are not involved. Moeller (2000), further adds that children who are admitted to school with language delays are at a distinct disadvantage and may encounter difficulties in academics, social-emotional development, and self-esteem. My personal experience supports Moeller's above statement, whilst teaching at a school for the deaf for seventeen years I have seen most deaf children coming into a school for the deaf having absolutely no language or just basic gestures. The young child that is entering a school for the deaf struggles to close the gaps in literacy therefore in most cases has language delay throughout their schooling life. Teachers try their best to bring the deaf child to the age-appropriate language levels, however, the huge challenge is time constraints, language barriers and the extensive curriculum they need to cover which does not allow them to fully achieve their goals. However, if parents get involved in the learning and teaching of their child and sign fluently and is confident in using SASL in order to read with their deaf child and work hand in hand with the teacher the goal of bringing deaf learners to their reading age levels is achievable

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The literature available has shown that there has been a lot of research done on partnerships between schools and parents, however, it has not shown the partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents which proves to be a unique scenario in education. This research contributes to deaf education and how schools for the deaf can improve the quality of deaf education when involving hearing parents of the deaf to the maximum. Scholars engaging with this study will gain insight on some of the barriers schools for the deaf and hearing parents experience in creating and maintaining partnerships. It also will provide some ways that the school's management can manage, steer and encourage partnership with hearing parents, the school and teachers of the deaf, therefore in this study the terminology of partnership and parent involvement is used interchangeably.

### **1.6 Critical questions**

How is the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents managed?

What is the relationship and partnership between the school management, teachers and hearing parents?

## **1.7 Demarcation of the study**

This study has purposefully researched one school for the deaf in the KwaZulu-Natal province and the hundred percent hearing parents that have their deaf children in the school. The school principal, deputy principal and one head of department as part of the school management team were participants in this study. This study also required two teachers and two hearing parent participants to gain insight into their perceptions of parent involvement. Since this was a qualitative study the interviews conducted were guided by the research questions and research problem mentioned above.

## **1.8 Outline of the study**

This study is made up of five chapters and these are briefly summarised below.

### **Chapter One**

This chapter sets the scene for the study and provides the background and the rationale for the study. It states the problem and highlights the research questions and limitations.

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter reviews the literature about partnerships and the management of the school and hearing parents of deaf learners. As part of the literature review process, the chapter illuminates the research problem and brings to light the concept of partnership and what it means in schools for the deaf. In addition, the chapter explains the theoretical framework within which this study is being discussed.

### **Chapter Three**

This chapter discusses the research design; and the methodology. It further states the participants involved in the research, data generation methods, data analysis. The issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues, and limitations of the study will be discussed later in the chapter.

### **Chapter Four**

Chapter Four presents and discusses the data provides that was generated mainly through semi-structured interviews, observations and documents' review. The generated data is thematically presented with a view to addressing the research questions that underpin the study.

### **Chapter Five**

This is the final chapter which presents the findings. The research questions have been used to frame the discussion of the findings. Based on the findings, implications for further research and practice are discussed.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

In most schools for the deaf, a gap exists between parents and the school. The SMT and the parent body play a vital role in ensuring this gap is bridged. In order for schools for the deaf to work effectively for the benefit of the deaf child, the school requires SMTs, teachers, and parents to work together. Therefore, this study explores the importance of SMTs, teachers and parents involvement in the educating the deaf child.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set the scene for this study. It discussed the background to the study, statement of the problem and further discussed the rationale and significance of the study. It proceeded to mention the critical questions, demarcations of this study and finally gave an outline of the study. This chapter discusses literature related to the study. It underpins what literature and scholars have argued, highlighted and discussed in terms of schools and parent partnerships/involvement. However, the focus of this study is schools for the deaf and hearing parents, therefore, specific literature that is applicable to this has been identified in the literature review. It provides an understanding of partnerships between schools for the deaf and parents and a theoretical framework within which this study will be analysed. In accessing my literature which is cited throughout this study, I had to use many journal articles online. I found a few journal articles and research articles done in South Africa and managed to get some statistics and data from them, however, most of my material were from journal articles written in other countries.

#### 2.2 What are policy requirements and what is practiced?

The literature used here is silent to the provisions of learners of special needs more especially deaf learners but it does provide a standardised requirement in terms of partnership between schools and parents. It provides a guideline on the way forward where the standardised requirements are implemented together with the more specialised partnering of hearing parents with schools for the deaf.

Children with Disabilities in South Africa (2012), report deafness as a disability, argues that strategic leadership is required at the national level to plan and implement appropriate services for children with deafness. It requires joint planning for the development of services with clear objectives and guidelines for implementation so as to achieve a common goal. In the same way, SMT's in the school for the deaf needs to seriously consider not only the deaf learners they teach but also the families especially their hearing parents. They need to very strategically manage their schools so as to ensure joint planning with the parents to develop clear objectives and in this way ensuring the common goal is reached.

The Children with Disabilities in South Africa (2012), explain that changing mindsets towards children with deafness is an ongoing challenge and that the important part of this challenge is to provide the necessary support to parents and caregivers who play a vital role in the lives of deaf learners. The SMT' in the school for the deaf plays a vital role in ensuring that the hearing parents care for and support their children therefore the need for hearing parents to know their rights and responsibilities, and what resources are available for them to access. The Children with Disabilities in South Africa (2012), asserts that parents need to be provided adequate information so that they can make informed decisions about the development and education of their children. The information given must be cascaded in different formats and in ways that take into consideration parents' level of education. When the child starts attending a school for the deaf the responsibility of the above is that of the schools to ensure this is done in a proper manner reaching all hearing parents optimally. The Guidelines to Full Service and Inclusive Schools (2009), says that the principal and management must promote the view that special needs education is a service. It further constitutes that parents are critical success factors and therefore consultation and involvement of parents are crucial. In collaborating with parents the Guidelines to Full Service and Inclusive Schools (2009), says that effective arrangements should be made by the school SMT to involve parents in all aspects of their children's school lives and decisions that have to be made; and that such arrangements should involve counselling and support that lead to independence. In involving the parent's various modes of communication can be used by the SMT which is suggested in the Guidelines to Full Service and Inclusive Schools (2009), that communication in the school and to parents stay accessible. The school must recognise that not everyone communicates via written or spoken English. The SMT should be constantly re-evaluating the communication needs within the school and for the parent community. Communication to the parents in the form of notices, reports, information can be disseminated by using different methods of communication, e.g. home languages of the parents, large print, digital text, video's in South African Sign Language, computer discs, DVDs, USBs and pictograms.

The South African Schools Act 84 (1996), in its responsibilities of parents with respect to the code of conduct state that parents are expected to play an active role in their children's work and make it possible for their child to complete assigned homework. It defines the concept of parent and outlines basic parental duties. The requirements of the policy confirm that parents should take an interest in their children's schoolwork however, in practice is this actually happening in South African schools for the deaf and are school SMT's and staff, making enough of an effort to create the partnerships between themselves and hearing parents. The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 implies that schools in South Africa should acknowledge the fact that there are a variety of family types and, therefore, the school needs to devise various strategies to communicate with the diverse family types.



There are many children that attend schools for the deaf coming from orphan homes headed by older siblings or parents have died to leave their grandparents or other family members as guardians. Therefore, schools are left in situations where they have to identify the backgrounds of each child in their school, allowing them to make special arrangements to communicate with the guardians of the deaf child.

### **2.3 The link between parent involvement and educational achievement of children**

Symeou (2007) argues that empirical evidence highlights that there is strong link between parental involvement and educational achievement of children. Similarly, Sheng (2012), claims that parents involved in the early years of their child's educational development will significantly impact the child's cognitive and literacy abilities. Chrispeels (1996), concur with what Symeou (2007) and Sheng (2012) say, however, schools fail to establish strong bonds between home and school and parent participation and the partnership is not validated.

Chrispeels (1996) discusses two main strands that influence home-school partnerships: Family learning environments that positively affect students' school achievement and school initiatives to involve parents in schooling. Chindanya (2011) identifies two types of parent involvement namely, school-based involvement and home-based involvement and adds that both these impact on pupil involvement. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) identify two types of school-based involvement which is school communication which involves interaction between parents and school personnel. This interaction must be encouraged to share information about the child's progress and it will develop good relations between teachers and parents so that it creates a positive environment to discuss problems that may arise. These interactions should not just be mundane social meetings of parents and school personnel instead it should be meaningful relations in the interest of the deaf child. Teachers and the management in schools should share meaningful information to parents struggling to assist their deaf child or they just do not know how to. It is imperative that the school personnel have an approachable, open door policy so as to make the parents feel comfortable. Parents may also feel that the school knows more about deafness and how deaf children learn and that they have no role to play, however, school personnel needs to change this notion of thinking and empower parents to learn more and to be part of the teaching and learning the process. The other type of school-based involvement that Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), discuss is school participation which is when parents volunteer for school activities attend school functions and are in school governance. Home-based involvement according to Chindanya (2011), has a more effective impact on learning than school-based involvement. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), identifies two types of home-based involvement which is when the parents discuss school related topics and the other is when parents conduct home supervision involving monitoring the child's activities outside the school which

involves homework supervision. They affirm that home-based involvement positively impacts on school achievement. Chindanya (2011) discusses ways that parents can practice home-based meaningful activities. Parents can motivate and encourage their children to learn in the home and provide learning opportunities for children. This is so apt for the parents of deaf children where ensuring the home environment is also a learning environment. Parents should make every opportunity to turn simple home activities into a learning experience for their child and use these experiences to build language and deeper thinking cognitive skills amongst deaf children. Chindanya (2011) goes on to say that parents should review children's homework, spend time working with their children's reading and writing skills and they should bring home learning materials such as books and parents should model the love of learning. This is mentioned for parents in general but there is such a greater need for this with parents who have deaf children since the first language of deaf children is not a written language. Their first language is sign language, therefore, the introduction to a written language comes much later when the deaf child goes to school which should not be the case. Many deaf children are identified late as being deaf and in my observation they sometimes arrive at a school for the deaf at eleven or twelve years old. So the need for helping with homework, exposing the deaf child to as much literature as possible and spending time with reading and writing skills is so much greater for children who are deaf. However, all of this cannot be done by parents alone instead they should receive support and skills to carry out these activities in the home from the teachers and SMT's of schools for the deaf.

In my experience working in a school for the deaf I have observed that majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents, therefore, this study is being done to show the importance of the relationship between hearing parents of deaf learners and the school for the deaf in the improvement of achievements by deaf learners thus impacting the larger deaf community. In an article written by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), (2014), say that most deaf children are born to parents who are hearing and further add that ninety percent of deaf children have hearing parents. My key concepts in this study focus on partnership and involvement of hearing parents of deaf learners and also to research the role that schools for the deaf play in creating and maintaining this partnership.

Boase (1998) argues that a partnership is based on trust, equality, mutual understanding and obligation and that is a relationship between two or more people that form an alliance to achieve something. Boase (1998) continues to describe partnerships as formal or informal. The formal partnership involves a written agreement and the informal partnership is based on assumed roles and obligations which are agreed to verbally. This is a powerful definition in that it highlights important characteristics of partnerships namely trust, equality, mutual understand and obligations. It does not

matter if an agreement is formal or informal it should always be kept. Haxby (1998) stated that the school and the home share responsibility for children's learning. The relationship must be based on mutual respect and acknowledgment of the assets and expertise of each member. Haxby (1998) further explains that as an extension of this partnership, schools can emphasise a broader base community involvement promoting effective school-family-community partnerships. The importance of school and parent partnership was identified as early as 1998 but it continues to be seen of utmost importance even in present times. Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2013), argue that by working together, schools, parents, and families can increase their combined effort to influence student outcomes positively.

Lopez and Stoelting (2010) explain parent-school collaboration as centered on a culture of relationship building and reciprocity between the parents and the schools, the schools and parents work together to educate the child holistically, and their relationship through continuous dialogue will develop and grow in a meaningful way.

#### **2.4 The importance of communication between hearing parents and the deaf learner as a way of cementing partnership.**

According to Swanwick and Watson (2005), research has shown that the acquiring of reading and writing skills in deaf children has consistently revealed low levels of literacy. The literature above is based on data found as far back as 1998, however, my research seeks to determine if this is still prevalent in this day and age and as well as in a South African context. If this is so what is being implemented by the SMT and teachers to ensure that parent and family involvement takes place. According to the National Deaf Children's Society (2005), they discuss parenting a deaf child and developing communication with your deaf child and go on to say that there are some ways that help with development of language which include building a word or sign vocabulary, the child being included in all family situations, and using books extensively in the home. The impact that hearing parents and the school for the deaf partnership will have on teaching and learning at the school and in the home is unimaginable. The discussion of implementation strategies that can be used to create these partnerships and the barriers that need to be overcome in trying to create and maintain these partnerships must be addressed urgently by schools for the deaf.

According to McAllister (2004), statistics it is indicated that about two-thirds of the deaf adult population are functionally illiterate and unemployed in South Africa. In 2004 it showed that the literacy levels were low and many deaf were illiterate and unemployed, this has not changed over the years and when researched, the Caring Hands Foundation site they mention under their facts and figures that there are 383,408 deaf persons in South Africa and sixty-five percent are unemployed

and that majority of deaf school leavers have the average language ability of an 8-year-old hearing child. Since the year 2004, not much has been done to address this issue, therefore, the figures of illiteracy may have increased. This reading age gap gets wider as the learner progresses into the higher grades because teachers are trying to educate the deaf learner on their own due to poor parent involvement and hearing parents not partnering with the schools for the deaf to assist with language delay. This often results in learners dropping out, going into a skills class or just scraping a pass in matric. It results in deaf adults wanting to go into tertiary institutes but they do not cope with the reading and writing and, therefore, are afraid to register or are just not accepted at tertiary level. This goes back to Chapter One where it was discussed that parents do not believe their deaf child can succeed and therefore not surprised by their deaf child's poor performance in school and may give up in even applying for their child in tertiary institutes. The parent's perseverance and having high standards in their deaf child's future is important for what they will achieve.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), (2005), discuss working with teachers of the deaf having specialist knowledge about deafness for a child's educational, social and emotional development. This should be true in a school for the deaf but in a country like South Africa if we have only one institute providing professional training in Deaf Education for teachers it leaves much to be desired. Teachers in schools for the deaf are learning about deafness and deaf education on the job, SMTs are not adequately equipped to run a school for the deaf, therefore, my other focus is on how educators of the deaf and the SMT in a school for the deaf initiate involvement between the school and the hearing parents of the deaf learners and to discuss the role of the SMT in detail and what is the role of the educator in creating and maintaining bonds with parents of the deaf. The importance of schools for the deaf being used as community service centers targeted to improve parent, family and community SASL, thus creating a signing community where the deaf learner can acquire language, is a need.

According to the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA), (2006), majority hearing parents cannot communicate with their deaf child and this means that deaf children get no language until they start school. In my observation, deaf children come into a school for the deaf with no language. Depending on when the child arrives at the school they sometimes receive language only at the age of five or as late as seven to thirteen years old. So there is already a language delay, parents have no way to communicate with their deaf child so the school for the deaf is seen as this miracle place that will provide all knowledge for their child whilst they have very little to do with their deaf child. However, this is not the case, some parents are fortunate enough to have had access to an early intervention program whilst others have had nothing and, therefore, have no knowledge about deafness and how to educate their deaf child in the home. The education is then left entirely to the

teacher. The need for a partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents and families is imperative for the raising of literacy levels amongst deaf pupils and future deaf adults going into a hearing society where reading and writing will get them professional work.

Mashie (1995), states that in Sweden and Denmark bilingual/bicultural programs for deaf students have operated since the 1980s. Akach (2010) confirms that hearing parents of deaf children are provided strong support and encouragement to learn sign (e.g. paid release time from employment) and the national language are used throughout children's education, from early childhood through to high school. In Sweden, children that have established some sign language will then only be considered for a cochlear implant. In a South African context time provisions for hearing parents of deaf pupils are not even considered. SASL has only just been recognised and implemented in 2015 in schools for the deaf therefore has not even been offered to hearing parents/families to learn. The school that I am using in my study provides free sign language classes to hearing parents/families of pupils in the school but again parents have to work and cannot be released from their place of work to attend lessons to learn SASL.

Nelson (1998) highlights the poor academic ability of deaf learners due to the fact that deaf learners lack in their first language. He adds that a very small percentage of deaf children achieve continuous excellent, processable language and actually go onto using their excellent first language skills in American Sign Language (ASL) as the base for acquiring English literacy. Akach (2010) research data clearly show that students (from both deaf and hearing home backgrounds) who have developed strong ASL proficiency have significantly have a better opportunity in developing adequate English literacy skills. This data support the reasons for ASL-English bilingual/bicultural implementations. In the South African context where the bilingual/bicultural theory is not practiced in all schools and not developed from very young therefore deaf learners in South Africa struggle to acquire the written language.

## **2.5 School climate**

Perry (1914) recognises that many individuals are involved in the development of the school climate, including the teacher, parents, older learners, and principals. Freiberg and Stein (1999) maintains that school climate is the heart and soul of a school and that the school climate can be a major contributing factor that affects the quality of a school. A positive school climate creates a healthy environment; encourages and motivates the children's and parents' dreams and aspirations; stirs and sustains teachers' creativity and enthusiasm, and heightens all its members. Freiberg and Stein (1999), identify the parents as part of a school member that needs to be empowered. Haynes, Comer and Hamilton-Lee (1989), argue that the climate of schools is significantly enhanced when parents

are included in the planning and organisation of school activities and contribute to the important decisions. Stevens and Sanchez (1999), concur with the above when they argue that parent involvement has been found to impact academic achievement and school climate. In my observations in a school for the deaf, the parents who are involved in their child's learning had shown that the child benefits immensely academically.

Stevens and Sanchez (1999) suggest that schools should have a Parent Community Participation Team (PCPT) where the schools encourage parents to participate in parent involvement activities but most especially with the intent of increasing parent involvement at school and establishing an effective parent communication network. It is the role of the school for the deaf to establish a parent support group like the PCPT, it brings together parents of the deaf experiencing the same difficulty with their deaf child and finding ways to overcome them like having motivational speakers, parents of successful deaf children and medical professionals to address the parents to come on board to assist their deaf child. They further argue that not only teachers, school administrators and students but also parent and community members that can lead to improvement in school climate should be considered.

Hall and George (1999) in their discussion state that not only teachers establish the climate in schools the school principal plays the significant role in establishing the climate of the school. It is important from my observations that the principals of schools for the deaf have to possess a personality of empathy and understanding of deaf culture. They must be able to guide their teachers into ways and strategies to involve parents but at the same time professionally developing teachers of the deaf on how to teach their deaf learners. The principals must be fluent users of SASL to be role models to teachers and hearing parents.

## **2.6 The role of the School Management Team (SMT) in managing, the partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents**

In research articles that I have read the focus is mainly on teachers' relationship with parents but is it only the teachers' responsibility. Brookover, Erickson and McEvoy (1997), explains that just as the principal is responsible for communication goals and strategies to the staff, he or she is also responsible for the communication of policies, regulations, procedures, and expectations to both students and parents. This is all very important to communicate to the parents however, in schools for the deaf the responsibility is not only the principal but the entire SMT as well as teachers to keep parents updated on the current issues facing deaf learners in South African schools for the deaf and find ways together with the hearing parents to overcome these dilemmas. There are always new and important strategies and research done on deaf education, it is the SMT that needs to educate not only

the staff but make hearing parents aware of the current trends so that they are made to feel involved and feel a need to assist in any way they can. It is the role of the heads of department to ensure that maximum communication about the teaching and learning is conveyed to the parents.

A study by VanVoorhuis and Sheldon (2005) shows that, where the SMTs' are not effective in spearheading organised efforts towards family involvement, it leads those once enthusiastic teachers to get discouraged. Teachers who were once excited and driven to involve the hearing parents and the deaf child in activities to support the learning process can be stifled by member/s of the SMT in various ways or if they show no interest.

Brookover, Erickson and McEvoy (1997), explains the role of the principal to ensure that families entering the school experience a welcoming and positive atmosphere from the friendliness of the school secretary. The principal's vision and motto should be evident to parents visiting and they further claim that as an instructional leader, a persuasive administrator should push teachers to link their teaching with learning at home and to liaise with families on issues, including family literacy, home extension activities and learning challenges. This is so apt for the school for the deaf because there are parents from all walks of life placing their child in the school, usually from far and wide due to the few schools for the deaf in South Africa. When they arrive at school all parents should be treated equally and made feel welcome and not be judged on their status in society or through any other prejudices. There should be sign language communication all over the school walls to show parents how serious we are about sign language which until recently was not even acknowledged in South Africa. The importance for principals themselves to teach the deaf pupils so they understand the challenges the teacher's experience and in knowing they can assist and push teacher in the correct direction of involving the hearing parents.

Grant and Ray (2013), supplements the idea of positive management of school for the deaf and hearing parent relationship when they present nine empowering guidelines for schools to adopt to improve the school climate. However in this study my focus is on principal one, two and four which is explained as follows: principle one – the staff must work together to build positive relationships with families based on equality and respect; principle two - administrators, principals, and teachers must identify the value families have to offer and honour their role in supporting the overall growth and development of all family members; principal four - schools understand that successful family involvement with support programs must acknowledge and strengthen families cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and improve their ability to become involved in a multicultural society. The principals work integrally to create a school climate where everybody feels involved and transformed into knowing they are part of this teaching and learning of the learners. Parents of the deaf become equally accountable for the education of their deaf child. The challenges faced by the school and

parents can be dealt with jointly to resolve in the best interest of the deaf child. Particularly principal one and two ensures that parents are not dismissed in what they can bring into the teaching and learning process of their deaf child. Besides the deaf child having to overcome the challenges of being deaf dealing with their own deaf identity they come from diverse families which principle four explains needs to be understood by the school SMT and taken into account for strong bonds to be maintained.

## **2.7 Special Needs Education**

Grant and Ray (2013) argue that families of children with exceptional needs go through the same stages. Mascott (2002) explains the three common stages in most cases as being shock and denial; emotional disorganisation and emotional adjustment. Teachers may not fully understand the stages that parents are experiencing and may see their behavior as a hindrance to their partnership. Ulrich and Bauer (2003), quote teachers in his research as saying that the mother is still in denial and that the family is the real problem because they are demanding and unpredictable. The teachers even go so far as to say that if the father would just get over his anger then they could work together better. Families having a deaf child may discover their child's deafness at birth, at two years old or even as late seven or eight years old. The grief stages begin when the parents discover their child's deafness and can proceed for a long time, sometimes there might even be regression or moments of entering stage two where the parent ask questions like "Why my child?" or "What future will my deaf child have?". Teachers and SMT's in the school for the deaf must be mindful of these stages that parents may go through. Some parents have denied that they go through these stages so Ulrich and Bauer (2003), proposed another approach by using the concept of "levels of awareness." They specifically indicate the following four levels:

Level 1: The ostrich phase. The parent here is not denying their child's special need instead they still have not realised that their child is deaf, so there is a lack of awareness. Not very often do hearing parents come in contact with deaf people therefore to identify their child's deafness will be near impossible. This can impact parents partnership with the school for the deaf, if they come to the school it is a reminder that their child is deaf which can be painful to digest every time they attend. The easiest choice is to just stay away.

Level 2: Special designation. This is a transformational phase. The deaf child of hearing parents have been diagnosed as being deaf and require special needs, so the parents are in need and want of services to be provided. Parents may become quite desperate for resources for their deaf child and therefore resulting in them becoming confrontational with teachers and the SMT in seeking help.



Level 3: Normalisation – Minimising the differences. Parents at this stage want their child to be like other children. In the case of hearing parents having deaf children at this stage they may want their child to learn to speak and not sign so they can fit in with their siblings and with extended family. They would probably want their child to learn to speak so they can enter a mainstream school and learn in exactly the same way as hearing children.

Level 4: Self-actualisation – including the child in educational decisions. As the parent adjusts to their child's diagnosis they accept and recognise that their child needs extra support and how they can cope with it.

The knowledge of these four levels helps schools for the deaf personnel to understand where parents have started and in which stage they lie and how to help them progress to ultimately help their deaf child. There are often in my experience personnel in schools for the deaf that are employed but have very little or no information of deaf people, deaf culture, sign language, families of deaf children, parents of deaf children and deaf education. This makes them reluctant to involve parents if they have so little knowledge themselves and they may be afraid that parents know more which can be rather intimidating and embarrassing for school personnel. Grant and Ray (2013), discovered that families in low socio-economic conditions are often most vulnerable to having a special needs child. Williams (2007), recommends that school SMT's and teachers should focus on three areas to ensure that ethical, thoughtful, and culturally competent practices are standard throughout the referral process: facilitate a school atmosphere of transparency, trust, and collaboration with families; attract, recruit, retain teachers who practice culturally responsive family involvement; recognise the sociocultural, political, and historical realities that shape the experiences of students and affect educational outcomes.

Grant and Ray (2013) conclude by suggesting that building strong relationships with parents who have special needs children are even more important and that school personnel have special skills and knowledge to be successful with these families. They say that SMT's and teachers understanding how families view having a child with a special need, and knowing the legislation relating to disabilities and their role in the referral and evaluation process are crucial. The key to success is communicating with families.

## **2.8 Theoretical framework**

This study focus is the shared responsibility of the school as in the SMT and teachers and the hearing parents. The theory that has been used to capture the essence of this study is the study by Epstein (1987), "the theory of overlapping spheres of influence" which explains the shared responsibility of the home, school, and community for children's learning and development. Epstein's theory of

overlapping spheres discusses external and internal structures. The focus in this study is an external structure which recognises the three important factors for children to learn and develop; namely, the family, school, and community. However, more attention is given to family and school. He claims that the three spheres directly affect the learning and development of the learner separately. The external structure recognises the three major contexts in which the learner learns and grows; the family, the school, and the community. These three may be pulled together or pushed away from each other. The internal structure shows where and how the complexity of the relationship between the school and the parents influence individuals at home and at school.

In practice, the theory of overlapping spheres in some schools Epstein (1995), elaborates on by saying that educators say, “If families would just do their job, we could do our job”, whilst other teachers say, “I cannot do my job without the help of my students families and the support of this community”. Families say, “I raised this child, now it is your job to educate her”, whilst other parents are saying, “I really need to know what is happening in school in order to help my child.” There are those parents who want to have nothing to do with their child’s education and feel it is the responsibility of the teacher whilst other parents want to become more involved and interact with the school as to how they can assist in helping their deaf child develop and reach their full potential. There are various kinds of teachers who are not very patient with parents and expect the parent to know and have the skills to help their deaf child. They do not entertain much input from parents. There are teachers that expect parents to be involved and might even find ways to involve parents but they only attract a few.

Epstein (1995) identifies six types of parent involvement that are within the overlapping spheres. These six types of involvement help teachers to develop more detailed programs of school and family partnerships. Each of these types of involvement makes use of different practices of partnerships, it presents particular challenges that must be met to involve all families, needs redefinitions of some basic principles of families. Finally, each type leads to different results for students, parents, teaching practices, and school climates.

### **Type 1 - Parenting:**

Parental involvement requires that there is a need for assisting the parents and providing child-rearing skills, skills to understand their child and adolescent development and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. It is also to assist schools in understanding families.

Sample strategies:

Workshops, videotapes, computerised phone messages on parenting and child development at each age and grade level; parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., family literacy, college or training programs); family support programmes to assist families with health, nutrition, and parenting, parent-to-parent groups; home visiting programmes to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families; annual survey for families to share information about their children's goals, strengths, and special talents.

Challenges:

Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the parents who attend workshops or meetings. Provide opportunities for the families to share information with schools about their background, culture, children's talents, goals, and needs.

### **Type 2 - Communicating:**

In this type of involvement, finding ways to communicate information to families about school programmes and their child's progress through effective communication school-to-home and home-to-school are important. The communications are not only from school-to-home but also include two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication connect schools, families and learners.

Sample strategies

Conferences with every parent at least once a year with follow-ups as needed; language translators to assist families as needed; folders of learners work sent home weekly or monthly for parent review and comments; regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, and other communications; effective newsletters; clear information about selecting courses, programmes, and activities within schools; clear information on all school policies, programmes, reforms, assessments, and transitions; annual survey of families on learners needs and families' suggestions and reactions to school programmes.

Challenges

Make all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications clear and understandable for all families; consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type; obtain ideas from families to improve the design and content of major communications such as newsletters, report cards, and conference schedules; establish an easy-to-use two-way channel for communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school.

### **Type 3 - Volunteering:**

The involvement of families to train or work as volunteers at the school must be improved and encouraged.

#### Sample Strategies

Annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of volunteers; parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families; annual review of schedules for students' performances, games, and assemblies to encourage all families to attend as daytime and evening audiences

#### Challenges

All families must know that their time and talents are welcome; make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable working parents to participate; provide training for volunteers.

### **Type 4 - Learning at home:**

Families must be involved in learning activities in the home which will include homework and other required activities from the curriculum. The homework should be interactive activities that they share with others at home. Families must encourage, listen, react, praise, guide, monitor, and discuss school work with their children.

#### Sample strategies

Information for families on necessary skills in all subjects at each grade; information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home; information on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve; interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning in class; calendars with daily or weekly activities for parents and students to do at home or in the community; summer learning packets or activities; family participation in helping students set academic goals each year.

#### Challenges

Design and implement a regular schedule of interactive homework where learners are responsible to discuss important things they are learning with their families.

### **Type 5 – Decision making:**

Decision making, governance, and advocacy must involve families who play an important role through parent-teacher organisations and committees. "Decision making" means a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals.

#### Sample Strategies

Active parent organisations for parent leadership and participation; Action Team for School, Family, and Community Partnerships to oversee the development of the school's programme with practices for all six types of involvement; independent advocacy groups to lobby for school reform and improvements.

#### Challenges

Parent leaders should be from all racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other groups in the school; offer training to enable parent leaders to develop skills to serve as representatives of other families.

### **Type 6 - Collaborating with the community:**

Resources and services can be outsourced and provided for the families, learners and the school. Collaboration with the community can be a way to access resources and services.

#### Activity focus:

There should be four approaches namely: learner centred where student incentives are provided; family centred where family centred activities are provided and families are given incentives, counseling and assistance; school centred where equipment, school maintenance, funding and classroom assistance is important; lastly community centred approach where the learners can exhibit their performances.

#### Sample strategies

Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programmes or services; information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programmes for students; "One-stop" shopping for family services through partnerships of school, counselling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies; service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling projects; art, music,

drama, and activities for senior citizens; tutoring or coaching programmes; participation of alumni in school programmes for students; school-business partnerships).

### Challenges

Inform all families and learners about community programmes and services; assure equal opportunities for learners and families to obtain services or participate in community programmes; match business and community volunteers and resources with school goals.

Epstein (1995) argues that successful programmes to encourage parent involvement will differ from school to school due to the fact that each school will devise their practice to meet the specific needs of learners and parents. According to Epstein (1987), educators that worked with parents understood the learners better and were better at finding solutions to classroom problems. However, he also states that teachers are likely to see the family separate from the school. Epstein (1995) confirms that there are many reasons for the school and home to work in partnership and he goes on to mention that partnerships can improve school programmes and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work.

Epstein (1995) encourages partnerships but the participants need to work continually to improve the partnerships of teachers and parents, and although it will not always be smooth running or successful, the partnership programmes must be built on the basis of respect and trust. He further claims that robust partnerships can bravely confront questions, conflict, debates, and disagreements; provides plans and procedures to solve problems, and the partnership is maintained, even becomes stronger after differences have been resolved.

Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres does not just leave things as they are by just giving types of involvement instead it enriches the theory when he provides implementation strategies in forming action teams for partnerships for the six types of involvement to succeed. SMT's in schools for the deaf that struggle to create and maintain partnerships can benefit from following and if followed effectively can succeed in creating and maintaining partnerships. The steps are as follows: step one: appoint an action team where there is a team approach to bonding school, family and community partnerships; step two: acquire funds and other support which is needed to cover the expenses of each school's action team; step three: identify a starting point – assessment of starting points may be made in a variety of other ways, depending on the available resource, time, and talents; step four: develop a three-year outline and a one year action plan from the ideas and goals collected from teachers, parents and learners. The action team can develop a three-year outline of

steps to be followed that will help the school progress from its starting point on each type of involvement to where it wants to be in three years; step five: continue planning and working – The action team should plan an annual presentation of progress at the school so that all teachers, families, and learners will know about the work that has been done each year to build partnerships. In this way, parents from step one are involved as part of a team and they buy into the goals of the school and give input with regards to goals of the school. It is important in these steps that there is no end point instead there is a continuous stream of planning and working with not always the same parents but that will change as parents come into the school and leave the school. The expertise of parents in terms of school maintenance and contacts they have to bring funds into the school must be identified early so as to assist the steps successfully. Every parent has something to offer the school however, it is the schools SMT with the help of teachers to identify what these are and utilise it in the best interest of the schools infrastructure as well as in the teaching and learning. In this way, they are accountable to district official, the deaf community, and parents on their initiative towards involving hearing parents and families of the deaf learners. The idea of this theory runs through this study and will be referred to in various chapters of the study highlighting important aspects to partnerships between SMT, teachers of the school for the deaf and hearing parents.

Epstein (1996) founded the National Network of Partnership Schools which provided guidance to school districts on how the framework for family involvement could be put into practice. This framework was extremely successful and boasts positive results on learner achievement, having higher attendance rates, fewer discipline issues, and improved maths and reading skills.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Graue and Hawkins (2010) in discussing meaningful home and school relationships, claim that building good relationships take time and that a one-way relationship is not much of a relationship where the schools tell families what they want or what they should do, it does not take advantage of rich experiences and knowledge that every family brings with them to their children's education. They further argue that building meaningful and prolific relationships with parents is sensitive, difficult, and time-consuming, especially when there is diversity among families because it creates disparate desires and needs and trustful relationships are indeed the key to effective partnerships. An observation that I have made concurs with the above where teachers tell families what they want and expect but there is very little sharing of ideas and allowing parents to interact and give suggestions about how their child learns best. The diversity of parents must be considered in schools so as not to infringe on any family beliefs and culture which can happen if schools are biased or have a dominating belief or culture.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter has reviewed the literature on school and parents partnership; it has also discussed the key concepts framing the study. This chapter focuses on issues of design and methodology. This is a qualitative research and this chapter seeks to discuss the design strategies underpinning this study. The interpretive paradigm has been adopted for the framework of this study. In discussion design and methodological issues, I begin with the research paradigm, research design, research methodology; participant choice; data generation methods; data analysis; ethical issues, issues of trustworthiness and limitations.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Patton (1990, p. 479) describes a paradigm as an “a world view, a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world”. Chindanya (2011. p. 39) highlights the interpretivist as being, “inspired by the belief that there are significant social dynamics that are poorly served by the logic and rationality of the scientific method.” This research was conducted in the interpretivist paradigm due to the fact that I am presently and for the past sixteen years been immersed in a school for the deaf and used my own experiences and observations during this study. Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 36), highlight interpretivism to have the intention of understanding “the world of human experience” and Mertens (2005, p. 12), suggest that “reality is socially constructed”. According to the perspectives of interpretivism, there is no one truth instead in my studies different participants have been allowed to express their own nature of truth and reality from their own experiences. My aim was to provide meaningful information by describing meaningful social interactions that contribute to insight on the partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents. I am producing new knowledge in the context of South African schools for the deaf, in light of the low achievements in South African schools for the deaf and how this can be raised by including hearing parents. It also highlights how the school management leads in order to bring about a positive, healthy, rich relationship between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents.

#### **3.3 Research design and methodology**

De Vos (1998) describes the qualitative researcher as one who utilises a plethora of strategies implemented to understand the phenomenon being studied. The strategies the researcher chooses to adopt in this study depended on the purpose and nature of research questions. The nature of this study



required rich descriptive data to answer the research question which in doing a qualitative study will provide as an end result.

In my studies, I used the qualitative research method to gather data. Oka and Shaw (2000), describe qualitative researchers as an attempt to understand meanings that people give to their study. In collecting data going into the actual site of a school for the deaf has enabled me to acquire data from people on the inside, making direct contact with participants. Qualitative research broadly defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as research that produces findings not arrived by use of statistical or quantification methods. Strauss and Corbin (1990), claim that qualitative methods are used by researchers to better understand about a phenomenon that little is known about. They can also be used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known or to gain more in-depth information. The qualitative study lends itself to a variety of ways data can be accumulated to gather information on this study. Therefore it is not restrictive in its approach and has allowed me to make a careful choice of what methodology I wanted to adopt in my study.

Gough (2000) refers to methodology as doing research in an attempt to produce knowledge and provides a set of reasons for the way a researcher move ahead in the study. Methodology refers to more than particular techniques, such as 'doing a survey' or 'interviewing students'. Rather, it provides reasons for using such techniques in relation to the kind of knowledge or understanding the researcher is seeking. In this study, I have selected three methods of acquiring data namely, semi-structured interviews; documents review and observations. The reasons for the choice of these methodologies are discussed further on in this chapter.

### **3.4 Research population**

In my interactions with many educators and SMT members from various schools for the deaf and hearing parents of deaf learners, I identified one school of the deaf having deaf learners with a hundred percent of the parents being hearing therefore making this a case study. The partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents have been of great interest to me and in my interactions with the various school personnel and hearing parents I found that the most dissatisfied were hearing parents who already have their children in schools for the deaf. The schools for the deaf SMT and teachers feel they are doing enough to build a relationship with the parents but that parents needed to take responsibility for their own involvement. Therefore in light of the different perspectives that individuals had on the topic of partnership, the participants in this study were carefully chosen to explore partnerships and how it is managed. As participants in this study the researcher selected the school principal, deputy principal and one head of department who were

interviewed to explore the perspectives of the SMT of the school; two teachers; and two hearing parents that have a deaf child at the school.

The seven participants that I have chosen provide in-depth insight into how the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents is managed and it allows the study to gain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership between them for the benefit of the deaf child.

### **3.5 Sampling methods**

Lemmer (1992) maintains that qualitative research methods use small samplings because the research study then focuses on a more comprehensive and quality of a participant's experience. In this study, the researcher used a small sample. The method of sampling was to obtain participants from a school for the deaf therefore purposeful sampling was utilised. Purposeful sampling requires the selection of information-rich participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The SMT members, teachers, and hearing parents had to be from a school for the deaf. There was only one principal and deputy principal at the school so they were immediately considered and agreed to participate. There were two available heads of departments but only one agreed to participate in the research. The two parents and two teachers were randomly chosen based on availability. The objective of this study to be achieved required the sampling as follows: an interview with the principal; deputy principal; head of department; two teachers and two parents. The participants were asked permission to be interviewed and permission for interviews to be recorded was requested in writing from each participant. The sampling size is small therefore one on one interviews were held in a private quiet room with each participant at the school in their available times. Participants were allowed to freely express their answers and add extra information where they felt necessary.

### **3.6 Data generation methods**

The qualitative research methodology constitutes the instruments used in this study. Instruments used to gather data are semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations. The school management members; the principal, deputy principal, heads of department were interviewed and observations were made based on the schedule prepared. Two teachers and two hearing parents were interviewed however observations were made on teachers and parents interactions in the school environment. Document analysis will be requested from the SMT, teachers and parents.

### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), describes semi-structured interviews as being flexible and having both restricted and unrestricted questions which the researcher prepares beforehand but during the interview, the interviewer can adjust the order of the questions and add questions based on the participants' responses. Therefore, in my interview schedule, there was a set of questions but my choice of semi-structured interviews had allowed me to probe deeper based on the information I required. Patton (1990), encourages probing stating that it maximises the opportunities for an interactive interview which assists to establish a harmonious relationship and participants are more likely to answer truthfully instead of producing socially desired answers.

According to Galt (2008), reality is subjective and multiple to each individual, as seen by the participants in the study. Therefore, by conducting interviews in a semi-structured way, allowing the participants to answer freely without imposing the researcher's views we can elicit the reality each participant has on a particular research question. Therefore, by doing multiple interviews I will derive multiple realities on the partnerships between schools for the deaf and hearing parents. Each of my participants will produce their own meaning and nature of reality and nature of truth.

According to Newton (2010) semi-structured interviews have the capacity to extract rich, original data from participants. These interviews allow people from real life situations to express their experiences and feel valued that their encounters and input matter to a research. It taps into the expert knowledge of professional people as well as allows the researcher to conduct these interviews at grass root levels enabling real life experiences and processes to be openly divulged in this way. The researcher can dig deep into a topic and to understand the deeper meanings and backgrounds that the answers come from.

Semi-structured interviews will be tape recorded because I am in agreement with what Patton (1990. p. 348) says that a tape recorder is "indispensable". The tape recorder captured all the fine details that may have been missed during hurriedly writing notes during an interview.

### **3.6.2 Documents review**

During my study on the site I reviewed documents sent out to parents by the teachers to inform them of the homework to be done. The review of messages sent home a message/homework book. Letters sent home by teachers and parents responses to the school were reviewed. The school frequently sent out circulars to parents via email or by hand which contained information of what has happened in the school and what will take place and meetings, concerts and other school activities. Documents review, is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These scholars further say that document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in

order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. The document review was done to discover documents that can reveal if there is evidence of partnership initiation on the part of the schools for the deaf and vice versa. It will reveal the SMT/teacher-hearing parent communication strategies and ways they have initiated and sustain partnerships with hearing parents in Chapter Four.

### **3.6.3 Observation**

The research site I conducted my research by observation allowed me to gather data that I not necessarily might get from other methods of research. Patton (1990) describes observation as an effective form of data collection in the participant's natural environment. Observational data is used in the intent to describe the settings, activities, people, and to make meaning of what is observed from the perspective of the participants. Observation allows the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the context in which events may happen as compared to interviews alone. The researcher may see things that the participants have not noticed themselves or may not in an interview. Therefore, the monitoring of verbal and non-verbal activities will need to be observed carefully to generate data.

Corbin and Strauss (2008), argue that observations are important because a participant during an interview may say they doing one thing but in reality they may be doing something else, which is not uncommon. The interaction between the SMT members, teachers, and hearing parents was observed. The skills that the teachers and the SMT possess in building and sustaining relationships, was observed. Ary et al (1996), describes naturalistic observation as being able to observe people whilst they are unaware therefore their behavior is not changed by the researcher's presence. Naturalistic observation will be used to observe so that the gathered data is unaffected by false behavior and authentic data can be captured.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Through my qualitative data analysis, meaning is constructed by being actively involved in the process of research. I was actively engaged in the setting and with the participants to generate meaning of their experiences. Therefore, the experiences of the participants have added richness and meaning to the findings. The finding in my qualitative data analysis has provided answers to the critical question. The data generated from the qualitative research has been analysed using the thematic analysis. According to Joffe and Yardley (2004), thematic analysis draws on themes in the data and the aim of this analysis is to understand the deeper and underlying meaning of the themes observable within the data, which requires the interpretation. Key themes emerging in my data has been highlighted and meaning made thereof which is further interpreted.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), analysis involves interpretation, which requires the researcher to understand the events “as related by participants.” Maykut and Morehouse (1994. p. 135) state six steps used in data analysis, however, this study requires only the first three steps. The first step is conducting the interview and analysing the interview in writing immediately after the interview together with the researcher’s observations. The second step is to transcribe that data verbatim immediately after the interview. The third step is to read through the data and to categorise the data into emerging themes. In this study emerging themes were extracted utilising the thematic analysis. The information emerging from the observations and document analysis was thoroughly searched for pertinent required information for this study and merged with the themes highlighted from the interviews.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues**

Newton (2010), explains that semi-structured interviews extracts the participants private thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the participant responses required to complete this research has been conducted with autonomy where absolute respect has been given to all participants ensuring that their identity is completely anonymous and no harm can come to the participants in my study. Beauchamp and Childress (2008), define non-maleficence as an ethical and legal duty to avoiding harm to others which were prevalent at all times during my research. They further add that the environment that is safe and does not harm allows participants to discuss freely with no fear of reprisal.

Lincoln and Guba (1989. p. 220 – 223), explains three ethical concerns: Ethical levels are ultimately the researcher making individual judgements reflecting his or her value structures, therefore, the ethical decisions are left to the researcher; moral responsibility, Bok (1978), a writer on moral responsibility suggests three criteria for judging ethicality of a researcher. The one that stands out for me in Bok (1982) is the last one called “discretion”. It is mentioned that the researcher must have the intuitive ability to discern what is and what is not intrusive and injurious to the participants; legal responsibility, the restraints imposed upon research are no harm, fully informed consent, protection of privacy and confidentiality and no deception. Based on the above ethical levels, moral responsibility and legal responsibilities all participants participated in my research voluntarily. Any participant has the right to withdraw at any stage during the research. The information and consent forms for all my participant’s in this study has been constructed with the objective of providing a clear and comprehensive explanation of all aspects of my research and is the foundation for obtaining informed consent from only adult participants. The consent of the school principal to conduct my research in the school was required and consented to, as well as consent was given by the Department

of Education. All data that has been generated has been kept securely and treated with confidentiality. Confidentiality of participant's resulted in no harm coming to any participants used in this study.

### **3.9 Issues of trustworthiness**

Ary, Jacob and Razavieh (1996), defines validity as trustworthiness being the most important in terms of the instrument used to measure and that it actually measures what it is supposed to measure. In using the two instruments of semi-structured interviews and documentation analysis it provides trustworthiness in that it will gather the data required to complete this research. The observations and precise recordings of observations have ensured credibility in providing the facts of what actually takes place in the natural setting.

This study heavily relies upon the responses from participants and available literature thus providing credibility to the research. The participants used in this study has been carefully chosen to provide trustworthiness in generating data and will provide confirmability where the recorded interviews make the data, not researcher biased, motivated or vested interest. The participants that are the teachers and SMT are fully submerged in the context of teaching and managing in a school for the deaf. The data generated in this research may show transferability which can show itself in other schools for the deaf. The data generated might also reveal dependability where the findings are consistent. In evaluating the worth of the trustworthiness of research Lincoln and Guba (1985), they highlight that trustworthiness involves establishing:

**Credibility** – Credibility is the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. De Vos (1998) establishes that it shows the confidence the researcher has with the findings based on the research design and context. In this study, the credibility of all the participants was conducted in the context of a school for the deaf and from the school for the deaf having experienced partnership or no partnership.

**Transferability** – Transferability shows that the findings must be applicable in other contexts. This study and its findings will be applicable to other contexts namely other schools for the deaf and the same problems and solutions may be identified by other schools for the deaf. But most importantly the recommendations are applicable in the other contexts, that is, other schools for the deaf.

**Dependability** – Dependability shows consistency in the findings and could be repeated. The findings in this study have been consistent and the recorded interviews and quotations in chapter four show that if repeated will identify the similar findings.

**Confirmability**- Confirmability is when the findings are neutral or when the findings of a study are moulded by the participant and not by the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. The researcher in

this study has not added any bias to this study. The findings have been purely from the participant's responses and observations.

### **3.10 Limitations of the study**

Semi-structured interviews are often used in qualitative research and comprise of a number of open-ended questions that is set based on the researcher's topic. Using these questions for initial discussion, the researcher can then probe the interviewee to elaborate on his or her answers. The researcher engages in a formal interview where a number of questions are discussed in a conversational manner. These conversations can sometimes go in different directions and the researcher/interviewer does not have much control over the direction of the discussion. However, in my interviews I allowed participants to freely converse but I had a goal in mind as to what was needed for the research and brought the conversation back to the relevant question drawing out the information needed.

The limitations of using the semi-structured interviews rely heavily on the skill of the interviewer and how he/she is able to elicit the required response from the interviewee. Nigel, Fox and Hunn (2002) state that due to the nature of interviews there is a large possibility of error and bias, affecting the process of interviews. The many questions, probing and engaging in the discussion can be very time-consuming and the temptation to be sidetracked is great. The participants then might tire or have other things to do which may result in them giving unreliable data. Due to the amount of information, the participants provide it is challenging to analyse especially in deciding what is relevant and irrelevant. To overcome this where I noticed that the participant's answers overlapped other questions I did not ask the question, this reduced the number of questions.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In summary, the qualitative research method and the data generation methods were carefully chosen to generate new knowledge to this study topic. The data generation methodology schedules were carefully planned to generate as much new data and to ensure validity and reliability of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter a discussion on research design and methodology was implemented in generating data to answer the research questions was presented. In Chapter Three, it was mentioned that data analysis, the thematic approach will be used where the emerging themes found in the data will be extracted and further elaborated on. The findings will be presented in the form of main themes extracted from the data and discussed accordingly.

This chapter sets out to mention the responses of seven key participants of this study, where data was generated from semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review. In my presentation of the data, quotes will be used extensively to provide a more personal “touch” of the responses by the participants. It will proceed to communicate my observations and findings in document review.

This study was conducted in one school for the deaf in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The study made use of a school principal, deputy principal, head of department, two teachers and two parents. Participants in the study are profiled as principal, deputy principal, HoD, teacher, and parent. It is sometimes profiled in a group using the SMT, teachers, and parents.

This chapter proceeds to be divided into six subtopics, and these are as follows: (a) perceptions of parent involvement in a deaf child’s education (b) determinants of parent involvement (c) ways in which hearing parents can get involved in their deaf child’s education (d) barriers to parent involvement in a school for the deaf (e) a way forward in encouraging and sustaining parent involvement of hearing parents in schools for the deaf for the benefit of the deaf child (f) teachers and SMTs not trained to deal with parents of the deaf.

#### 4.2 Data presentation and discussion

##### 4.2.1 Perceptions of parent involvement in a deaf child’s education

The participants in this study have all agreed that parent involvement by hearing parents is of great importance for a number of reasons discussed further in this chapter but it is stated that there are also limitations to the involvement.

NSW Priority Schools funding Program (2002) defines parent involvement as the school keeping parents informed and when the parents volunteer their services when the school requires. Parents do



not usually help in making decisions affecting their child's education but their role is important in school activities.

It is imperative from the outset to establish stakeholders perceptions on parent involvement in a deaf learner's education. Three participants interviewed in this study stated that:

*...it's integral, absolutely important if we can get that.*

*...involvement of a parent is vital.*

*...parental involvement is exceptionally important.*

Epstein (1995) mentions two important strands which are extremely vital in parent involvement in a school for the deaf which are, parents helping their children to learn and parents learning about children's learning. One of the participants expresses clearly the importance of this partnership below.

*You know parental involvement is exceptionally important because our kids lose out so much of language before they come in and so whatever we do at school needs to be consolidated at home as well and it's to be supported and whatever happens at home needs to be supported and consolidated at school so it's a huge partnership. In any kind of learning activity it has a four-way relationship. You have a relationship with the child, the parent, and teacher at the school so I think it's extremely important that parents are involved in their children's learning.*

In their vision and purpose of parent involvement in partnering with the school for the deaf Harris, Power and Goodall (2010), explain that where schools have achieved effective practice of parent involvement they shared a view that every parent genuinely matters and that every parent is reachable.

In the school where this research was done they had to use a variety of ways to communicate with and personalise engagement with parents which improved parent involvement. It also required that the school do thorough planning and use personalised approaches to work with specific parent groups or individual parents.

NSW Priority Schools funding Program (2002), reiterate the values of stakeholders in the school for the deaf when they add that, parent and teachers should work together to plan and produce meaningful homework that involve the parents. It is most applicable in the case of what the participant above says that deaf children lose out on language because they do not learn language through listening and internalising language through conversations in the home or outside the home

in everyday situations as their hearing counterparts do on a daily basis. The deaf child is disadvantaged in acquiring language naturally, therefore, a concerted effort needs to be made by their hearing parents to make time to increase the deaf child's literacy levels to that of their hearing counterparts with the guidance of the teacher, SMT and hearing parent working together.

A participant in this study felt that not only parents should be involved in the schools there should be equal involvement from all members involved in the deaf child's life.

*...you not only talking about parents but caregivers, it's the grannies, extended families. As you know some of our kids are living with relatives closer and parents live much further away and they go away to extended families on the weekends and that's where the breakdown sometimes happens because the parents are further removed and it becomes more of a challenge for us to try to have that link.*

NSW Priority Schools funding Program (2002) explain that partnership of parents and the school working together improves the student's outcome which is what has been observed over the years in the school for the deaf with a few parents becoming involved, which is what the school principal supports in response as a participant in this study.

*We see what works, the families where there is support, there is interaction and communication and ongoing communication between the school and the home, whereas, if you haven't got that, it's a one-way process. It's just difficult. It's not fair for the children. They are the ones that battle more.*

In another interview the participant clearly spelled out the parent involvement as being the following:

*Involvement, I would say is attending meetings, checking their homework, assisting them with homework, ensuring that they are able to communicate with their kids, ensure that they are clean and their bags are packed properly. Most important I think is being able to communicate with their child.*

Department of Education, (2007), states that the guardians and extended families are fundamental and essential to the functioning of a full-service school with regards to the school can drawing in the knowledge and skills of families. Therefore parent involvement should be a continued, positive interactions which must be enabled and managed skilfully by the school SMT. In managing parent involvement in schools for the deaf, NSW Priority Schools funding Program (2002), gives a way forward by stating that the level of partnerships that Epstein discuss may be different at times

depending on the changing nature of families and the school. There should be a time when school management are in “maintenance” mode when the partnership is working well, however, at other times they may need to be more proactive in building these partnerships. It clearly states that there is no end point of partnership.

A participant in this study has mentioned a perception of parent involvement that requires parent involvement but not to the extent where they dictate to the school. There are many things that happen at a school for the deaf and cannot always be understood by parents so it may be easy for them to criticise it without actually knowing the reason why a decision has been taken.

*I think there's a line you got to be careful you don't cross because you want parents to be involved but you don't necessarily want the school filled with parents every day. You don't want parents to be in the classrooms, to be acting as assistants, to be doing things in the office. I think it's very important that education belongs to educationalists. I think it's very important that education remains the domain of people who are experienced and understand it just because people are people doesn't mean everybody understands education in particular deaf education. So you don't want to say parents just come, just come and you all can do whatever and you can pick on and criticise everything that you see, because they don't always understand the reason for doing a whole lot of things.*

In my observations, there are hearing parents who have realised that their involvement is vital in the education of their deaf child but they do not have the skills to become involved and have limited knowledge on how to contribute to their child's education.

#### **4.2.2 Determinants of parent involvement**

The determinant's of parent involvement in this study is so vast. There are similarities to that of the mainstream schools, however, vast differences in deaf education. The requirements of parent involvement are detailed and it requires so much more one on one time that the parent spends with the deaf child. The hearing parents are also required to learn a new language, in this case sign language, very quickly in order to teach their deaf child effectively. Chindanya (2011), in his research on parent involvement, identified through his interviews with teachers and SMT three determinants of parent involvement.

### Home environment

The home environment to include reading material and there needs to be story-telling and cognitive stimulation at home. This is the foundation to not only hearing schools but more so in schools for the deaf where a written and spoken language lack. This will be discussed more in detail in the next theme where in the case of deaf children it's not just the home environment but any environment can be a learning environment for a deaf child.

### Parents' cognitions about their role in their children's formal education

Here it is mentioned that there are three forms of parental cognition where parents' desires concerning their child's future occupation, the parents own knowledge in raising and educating their child and the parents' conceptions of the school. In a school for the deaf, the main concern when hearing parents discover their child is deaf is the future of their deaf child. The school principal sees these concerns and expresses the emotions of parents:

*"I think that they got them for the rest of their lives so they have this ongoing sense of responsibility and probably concern about what lies ahead. You see the high school parents starting to become quite anxious, the special class when it's time for them to start leaving school that absolute anxiety. So what now? Where to now? Whether it's those going to university or whether it is those pupils just finishing school and looking for jobs, for parents, this has been a safe environment for so many years of their lives and now it's this, "Ok, we out of this comfort zone now, what's going to happen?"*

When asked about the parent's knowledge and if they are equipped to assist in the education of their deaf child there were definitely a deficit when it came to parents and how few parents actually knew how to get involved in assisting their deaf child. The communication was the biggest barrier in terms of hearing parents assisting their deaf child, which is discussed further in barriers of parent involvement.

### Family variables

The family variables for sure impact the involvement of parents or no parents in the case of a school for the deaf. The school principal has identified how this impacts hearing parents in the school.

*...there involvement is less because in some cases there are no parents and there are just grandparents if you lucky extended families. The very elderly are looking after many children, there could be 10, 12 children that they're responsible for that they just don't have the time or the energy to be focusing on learning sign language and getting involved in just*

*this child. They're battling just to simply provide enough food for the table, meals and clothing and that sort of things.*

These determinants are the same in a school for the deaf but an additional determinant for parent involvement in the school for the deaf which was frequently highlighted by participants is hearing parents must be able to sign fluently to their deaf child to maximise parent involvement, parents perception of the school for the deaf and its role and how the hearing parent sees themselves as part of the school. In my observation hearing parents signing skills is poor which makes them shy away from involving themselves with their deaf child.

The other determinant which came out strongly in the interviews is the number of deaf children coming from indigent homes and its impact on parent involvement. In this school for the deaf, there is a majority of pupils from indigent homes.

*I think the vast majority, most certainly more than half will fall into that category of being indigent.*

The impact is huge and the participants discuss a range of reason for this impacting the parent involvement.

*...of course it impacts on education because if you can't read and write English and the person that's meant to help can't read and write English, how are you going to succeed.*

It impacts their ability to assist their deaf children academically they do not place much value on education if their core purpose is to ensure they have a shelter and food on the table. When parents are poor they cannot afford good health care and this results in poor involvement.

*It impacts on all the other things because they can't help their children with homework, they don't understand especially as they move up the school they don't understand homework themselves. They don't see the value in it or they don't even see their children. Perhaps they staying far away and their children are in the hostel, many of them board. I think there are health issues that come with all of that. The kids get sick or the parents get sick. So there is a whole heap of stuff that is definitely a negative for promoting that kind of healthy relationship.*

When schools require the basic needs from a family like uniform and for the child to attend school daily and parents do not have the money then education of their child is not a priority anymore.

Instead, they may use the little money they have to provide meals for the family. This teacher discusses that it definitely impacts involvement of the parent.

*It's transport costs, its buying equipment for your child, buying correct school clothes, buying uniforms, buying PE clothes, sending them on excursions, sending them on sports outing maybe if they get chosen for the provincial team. Those things can definitely impact negatively on the parents.*

Epstein (1995), in his theory, discusses homework as a task that should not be done alone by the deaf learner instead it is an interactive activity involving others at home and there should be a link from school work to real life. He adds to say that parents helping their deaf child shows how families encourage, listens, reacts, praise, guide, monitor, and discuss schoolwork with their children, not how they "teach" children school skills.

#### **4.2.3 Ways in which hearing parents can get involved in their deaf child's education**

The SMT, teachers and parent participants expressed that there is a huge amount that hearing parents can do to become involved. In Epstein's (1995) theory, he discussed six ways parents can become involved is parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Two where the sample strategies and challenges are discussed. The participants responded with a lot of the strategies discussed in Epstein's theory but new strategies have also emerged as to how hearing parents can assist the deaf learners and how the SMT can facilitate the process.

The data gathered displayed that most parents attended meetings and sports day or swimming gala's and assisted mainly in the high school. One teacher responded that the ways parents got involved in their child's education were very limited and another responded saying in the teaching and learning process parents were not at all involved.

*It's really varied. You have some parents who are super involved and have initiatives and they take on and have parent support groups and parents who come and help in extra-curricular activities, other parents who just want to know therefore they attend every single meeting. They meet with the teachers, they meet with the management, they really try to understand stuff but that is, unfortunately, a smaller percentage. There are those parents and then there are extreme parents that we never see that come to drop their kids of maybe or to fetch them for holidays and after that, no one tends to see much of them and that is, unfortunately, the larger percentage.*

Those few parents that the teachers and SMT mention that are really involved in their child's education and get involved to the maximum they did not know where to start explaining to me the things they did with their child. A parent in the interview gave very specific and extremely valuable ways how hearing parents of deaf children could actually become meaningfully involved in their child's learning. The priority is to focus on their deaf child's language and knowledge where they say deaf kids lack and that, everyday activities can be a way to teach your deaf child.

*Well, school just really where they spend time during the day and so learning never ends. First of all, we don't have a television, we don't have anything that will otherwise distract them. We started building on our own communication strategy as soon as they were identified so that we have the means to communicate about other things. We always, just using everyday stuff, like making supper, get them involved, to really stretch their language because they are still little. And then we do try to embellish their weekends with fun stuff, stuff that not necessarily costs money. I take them to a reptile shop and we will sit on the floor next to the tanks with stuff about snakes and ask them to just observe, and ask, why does a snake need a light? And hold the snake. Is it warm or cold? It's normal stuff but stuff that deaf kids miss. And if we doing the body we pick the eye and that was the first one they could spell and they felt excited they could spell the word. We have been looking at lots of utube videos made for kids on how the eye works. We've been looking at stuff like idioms around the eye like "you the apple of my eye". We using almost a theme based to expand our learning at home outside of the realm of school.*

This parent communicates a lot with teachers in terms of where the teacher thinks the child is going and where the assessments are leading them. In interacting with the teacher gaps in the child's education can be identified. The parent had formally assessed her deaf child just to see whether there are academic gaps so she knows where to build and support her child.

In my interviews, it came out very strongly that many parents are not competent enough to assist their deaf child academically because they cannot sign or communicate with their deaf child. However, one of the parents I interviewed say she feels competent enough to help her deaf child and if she is stuck she will get hold of a deaf friend who is more experienced than her and then they will send her a video clip showing her how to explain something.

*The other day my daughter found some slime mould in the garden. I didn't know what it was either. She was very excited about that, she loves exploring. So I asked a friend. How would you sign mould, fungus? What would you use? How would you explain it? She sent me a little clip so it was like that's how I beef myself up in terms of learning.*

This parent is clearly not intimidated by sign language and has taken the initiative to involve herself in the deaf community for the sake of her deaf child. She is not limited in communicating with sign language just because she does not know a sign instead she will make up a sign until she finds the correct sign.

*But I don't feel limited at the moment about communication so when it comes to their homework they'll be a concept and I don't know the sign for plus and minus so I will say we giving more and we taking away so the concept is still the same. The signing itself was not really a limit. Obviously, I try to continuously learn myself.*

The other parent interviewed helped her deaf child by trying to get as much information from the teacher so that she could help her child in the home.

*In terms of homework, my child is quite responsible, homework is not forced, he does it very willingly. Whilst he's doing his homework either my husband or I am assisting, whoever is free and who is home by that time. We are assisting testing him, he knows basically what's to be done but in terms of spelling we test him, we give him his learning time and start testing and his homework is generally always complete so in terms of homework.*

*...we try as far as possible to download things from the internet so he can relate to you know what is being taught. You know we try to make it more visual because this will actually help him because he is a deaf child...*

The parent participant in this study has suggested ways the parents can come to the school and become involved. Often parents of the deaf have little or no knowledge of how teaching and learning occur at a school for the deaf. This parent has now encouraged parents to put forward the idea of an orientation day where the parent can come in and be actively involved in getting to know the teaching and learning process and at the same time ask the burning questions they may have.

*It would be nice to have maybe once a term or more an orientation day where parents were invited to spend the morning in the classroom where it's not made fake for parents visiting but it's made to be authentic to that day, so nothing really special to see what is going on and parents are welcome to ask questions even if it's uncomfortable questions and then work together to deal with it. And then also taking parents through the everyday thing is critical, making that communication process transparent and easy.*

This parent's strong statement on Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and how it can assist in involving parents in their deaf child's educational needs. The limitations and strengths of each deaf learner are different and for parents to be included in on the designing of an IEP would be giving



them equal power in deciding how to move forward in educating their deaf child. In the experience with the school for the deaf, this parent felt that the IEP done at the school is not what an actual IEP should be. The parent further adds that the numbers at this school for the deaf are not large so teachers can actually do an IEP for each and every child.

*I don't think the IEP is according to what an IEP actually is. The ones that have been done from my side certainly aren't international standards of what an IEP is and it always required me to push for it so it's never been you in the beginning of the year you do an IEP. It's an individual plan for your child, we'll do it every six months, where we will sign the agreement and work together. There is none of that and that's foundational to working with a parent and the unique child, that's foundational for involving the parent, it's a contract between the school and the parent of how you gonna move forward with your kid and its doesn't exist. It's a big gap and there are so many resources international examples of stuff so when we think of the beauty of having classes with such tiny numbers there should be not much excuse as opposed to because this expected of any school. When you got 40 kids in your class it's hard, when you got 5 kids in your class it should be optimal circumstances. If that was done it would be amazing.*

School very often state that parents need to set up appointments to visit the teachers or SMT members but this parent is saying that if something just comes up and she really needs it to be dealt with then she will visit uninvited and this is often undesirable by the school. She has even sat in lessons just to see what happens in the classroom which is something parents must request to do.

*Yes, I do, especially, uninvited especially if something just comes up that I feel I really need to address. Otherwise, I will send an email or a message to say can we meet or whatever. I have arrived uninvited too many times. I have sat in a school classroom setting which wasn't created for parents, it just because I asked if I could eyeball what happens. So that wasn't a fake scenario either.*

The learning of SASL should not be a desire you do not want to fulfill or would like to fulfill at your leisure. Learning SASL is a necessity and a requirement in having a deaf child. The principal of the school feels like they trying really hard to involve parents by offering free SASL classes but parents are not taking opportunities to learn SASL.

*It's a difficult one, we try but every now and then we become despondent, when you look at the sign language lessons, we have tried how many different ways. The poor sign language teacher comes all enthusiastic to give. There might be 5 or 6 families the first time and it dwindles down to 1, 2 if we lucky. We then change our approach, we try something different.*

*Those that are really wanting it, are going to go out of their way to try and be involved but in many cases, it isn't possible. I think there are still huge gaps. We can never give up. We have to constantly try and see how we can close those.*

Parents need to ensure they are involved by requesting exam timetables and assessment programs from the school to track assessments they deaf child is doing. In this way ensuring their deaf child is studying for the assessments and the parents are involved themselves in assisting their deaf child by revising the work. This will definitely improve the child's marks.

*...in high school very few parents do this and this is really, really sad because they should be there when the child gets home to have an exam studying table. Exams are being written now and I find, I actually try to help the child. I don't tell the child what questions are coming out. Then I tell them these are the sections that are important concentrate on that. They wrote a paper for me, a geography paper the Grade 8's and Grade 9's, I was so disappointed that there was no learning that took place, no learning! Elementary things which made me very, very upset. So we need somebody to guide them and make sure that homework is done and they must not watch television. Give them time to watch television, but also monitor them.*

When parents leave the school to their own devices and show no interest it can be misread as the parent is not interested or bothered in their child's education which can result in the teacher becoming complacent in their communication with parents. This is how another parent participant describes her situation at the school.

*...we do liaise with the teachers but the problem is I would also appreciate it if the teacher liaises with me because my child has moved to a new teacher and there was no communication, no correspondence whatsoever. The child was frustrated I was frustrated he's done badly in the first term and ever since I came to school and confronted, started to ask questions. Where's revision? Where's this, what's happening? I need books to come home. I've never seen a natural science notebook. I've never seen his maths concept book. I don't know what is happening and then after all the information that started coming home then we started working together so now I know what's going on and the child also feels this pressure off him because he knows what's expected of him. So in terms of that, I do check on my child and you know how is progressing.*

This parent who has a hearing child and one deaf child at the school compares the way they both learn and discusses why a deaf child needs so much more support and time compared to their hearing counterparts. Parents need to be aware of these special needs of your deaf child so that the parent can have expectations of the teacher as well. The teacher was sending loads of revision work over a

weekend expecting the parent to cover the work for the Monday and Tuesday. This parent was fully aware that it's not possible for the amount of work given that her child can manage all the work so she could advocate for deaf child and ensure her expectations were met.

*...but now revision is coming home is coming a bit too late where thick booklets are sent when that needs to be done a week or two before for a Saturday and Sunday and the child needs to write on a Monday and Tuesday it's not sufficient and then you sending a booklet that Natural Science and Maths how do I work with both and these are learners with disabilities it's not like they can read and understand like a hearing child can read, there is so much more that needs to be done and explained and repetition you know you got repeat everything it's not something if I can do something with my with my hearing child in one hour with my deaf child it might take me at least three to four hours to do it because my child's hearing and then I have a child that is not hearing. So all these things still need to be addressed and I am going to take it forward because the truth is I'm still not hundred percent happy that much I can say.*

The most important thing that every parent can do is read the communication book that comes home daily. The teacher writes all his/her correspondence in that book. This book should not be ignored because it means that you ignoring to become involved in the daily happening in your deaf child's education. Teachers are aware when parents have read the book and have involved themselves in the child's work.

*...we send home reading every day and you have to sign it and the kids will tell you, they honest, mummy said you go read yourself or I didn't know this word mummy helped me. You can see in the communication in the homework diary mum will say, "I didn't know this word please can you remind ... What this is?" Then you know the parent was with the child actively involved so like when parents make a note on the homework. "Oh, we struggled with this!" You know that they were involved. So we do have parents that are involved.*

*In the Foundation Phase once in a while, we may send home something to do. I know I personally used to send home book reviews to do at home and saw it more as a fun activity. Here is a library book from school, sit with mummy and read and do a little review, draw a character or draw a setting or something but some parents complained.*

Parents must make time for the “talks” that the school for the deaf has from time to time which is combined with their SASL classes or in separate times. The Head of Department (HoD) of the Foundation Phase make mention of her strong opinion that,

*...the ones that come for the “talks” and the ones that come for sign language classes are better equipped than the ones that don't.*

When asked to explain what “talks” she was mentioning in the above statement it sent out a powerful message to parents who presently do not see themselves as important stakeholders in their deaf child's education. She explains the “talks”,

*...often we will do a little talk, management does something. We had something down here in sunbird (pre-school). We had a whole sunbird conference where we invite parents in to explain to them this is how a deaf child functions, these are some of the activities that you can do. We even had a whole sandwich making activity whether the parents had to be involved with their children and know the signs, this is cheese, this is cucumber, this is marmite. One of the things is that they get frustrated because they can't, their parents don't know what they want so something as simple as making a sandwich. “I hate butter but mummy put butter on my bread every time.” How do you get that across to the mother if the mother doesn't know the signs for it so we do a lot of education for our parents? We have had many talks like I have done a few talks with parents in the foundation phase and more specifically in the pre-school and so those parents, but then again it's what you take from it. So it's those parents that are willing that are better equipped.*

Finally, a parent participant in this study very strongly makes an appeal to parents to get involved because she claims that parents of deaf children do not always know the competency of the teachers teaching their children. There is no other way to know until parents become involved and keep in constant contact with the school. Later on, there is a discussion of how teachers may not be able to use SASL fluently themselves and this impacts the deaf child's education.

*...we as parents need to be so involved because sometimes some teachers are not that interested or you know they are very good teachers I'm not saying that there aren't and it's also not my position to undermine anybody but at the same time I also feel that there are educators that are not competent enough. You know it may sound contradictory but I'm also in the education system and I know how the department works, I know what is required in terms of, exam scopes need to be sent out, learners need to know what to study all that was not coming home and that's when I started to query.*

#### **4.2.4 Barriers to parent involvement in a school for the deaf**

Grant and Ray (2013), state that although there may be multiple benefits of family involvement researchers have identified barriers to genuine family involvement and that the way to overcome the barriers is to first identify school and barriers that obstruct family or parent involvement. This research is no different from this opinion in that it has also in the data collection come across already found and new barriers that are hindering the involvement of hearing parents in their deaf child's school. The participants in this study have agreed that there are barriers, however, many of them can be overcome if both team players the school personnel and hearing parents play their role effectively.

##### **4.2.4.1 Hearing parents barriers to becoming involved in the school for the deaf**

Grant and Ray (2013) discuss time as being one of the biggest barriers to family involvement. They add that whether it's work or a busy lifestyle, families today do not have free time to be involved in their child's education. In my interviews, the participants had the following to express in terms of supporting my finding that time hinders parent involvement.

*I think it's their ability and finding the time or making the time to support the teachers.*

*I think the things like where people live, it's time...*

*I think it's the language is the biggest one and then possibly time and resources for many families. Those are quite a problem. People are just battling trying to make ends meet and are busy at work so don't have the time to provide for their children, not only deaf children but hearing children as well. It's probably worse in the case of ours.*

In observing the costs that parents of the deaf have to incur as opposed to parents with hearing children the financial obligation is so much more. It's not only the distance parents have to travel but the additional costs of assistive devices like hearing aids and cochlear. The maintenance and update of these devices run into thousands of rands. If the family is living far away they have no choice but to place their deaf child in the school's hostel which is an added cost. Not forgetting all the other costs of stationery and uniform.

Moloi and Motaung (2014), in their article, identify sixty-four schools for the deaf in South Africa but only twelve of them offer schooling up to Grade 12. In Storbeck and Young (2016), an article on statistics of deaf children under the age of six years old in South Africa, they estimated that 6200 deaf babies are born in South Africa annually. With such a large number of deaf pupils requiring admission in so few schools for the deaf most certainly when schools for the deaf have reached its maximum intake the parent is then left to seek admission in a school for the deaf out of their area and long distances away from home. There are therefore schools for the deaf which are dispersed all over

the country making it long distance for parents to travel to. In response to this a school personnel stated that:

*I think one barrier would be distance when children are from far out that would definitely be a barrier and does have a financial impact for the family because a child is far so getting to and from the school is a huge, especially with the rising cost of petrol.*

But on the other hand, teachers are saying that parents who can become involved and have the time choose not to:

*We have some parents that are not working or whatever but they are not here. We got some parents who are, stay-at-home moms and could easily volunteer two hours a day to come in or even volunteer a morning. We struggle with watching the kids in the morning before school starts. We have one staff member for a whole lot of children and some parents complain about that but no parent has said, "Oh I will come and wait here for a little while and then go." So there are parents who can but choose not to. The problem is you cannot force people to do something they don't want to do.*

But in this statement the teacher is saying that parents also visit schools for the deaf in search for quality education for their deaf child and therefore end up choosing a school far away.

*I think that is something that needs to be addressed. But then they could move the child to a school closer to the area but obviously, they have chosen this particular school for a specific reason for the quality of education and just the environment, the social interaction and the impact it's had on the child's life. So I would say distance and finance could be barriers to some of their parent's involvement.*

In my experience, I have noticed that many parents come from far and wide even from other provinces in seek of a school for the deaf that provides the best education. The surroundings of the school and the facilities in school are of a high standard and when parents arrive they are immediately drawn to the school and want immediate placement. They have chosen this school in comparison to a school closer to where they live because of better education, however, leave the responsibility of teaching and learning solely to the school due to having to travel far and financial cost. However, in other cases, as one participant puts it:

*I think there is also a general apathy actually in the world today and I think we see it with kids and social media and all that kind of thing. The world out there is not necessarily placing huge value on education and I think some of the parents fall into that category too. They don't really see the value necessarily.*

When a parent was asked the barriers to parent involvement it was stated that:

*...there are huge barriers and nothing to do with the school. Things like the population group that kids that are deaf come from, the poorer population group and then in South Africa the parents with more money go more oral and tend to put their children in mainstream and cochlear and all that stuff. So schools for the deaf end up being the place that really concentrates on children coming from poorer socio-economic status which means they have issues with transport, it means that they don't have time on Saturdays or transport is too hard on Saturdays. It means because of financial constraints they don't feel like they can be involved. They can't just come to something in the afternoon. There're lots of real logistical things, like money issues which are real...*

However, in my observation some of the children fitted with cochlear implants do not function optimally in the mainstream and they, therefore, have actually been registered at the school for the deaf because those parents who are supposedly wealthy have no other option but they also not always happy with their deaf child learning sign language they much rather prefer the oral route. These parents then become despondent that their “wants have not been met” and do not attach much value to sign language, therefore, leaving the school for the deaf to educate their child without much valuable support.

The other reason as one of the management members have experienced is that:

*I think it's the same thing that goes around all the schools lack of fathers, too many grannies looking after children or just mothers or aunties or whatever. There's not a strong family structure in many families, there are very strong family structures in some families but they not in all of them.*

In my observations, this has been the case where many of the deaf children in the school are taken care of by extended families living close to the school due to their parent's home being far off. There are plenty single mums and many have been left with grandmothers due to the single mum having to work. One participant added that the grandmothers sometimes have many grandchildren to take care off and therefore this one deaf child becomes a heavy burden on her and it is easier if the school handled all the educational needs of that child.

Gender biases have been another barrier pointed out by an educator who has noticed in her time of teaching how this can impact the education of deaf girls.

*Even gender biased, there might be situations where little girls aged 14 and just go home and clean the house and so there are things like that where culturally where those are barriers to parental involvement.*

In my interviews with parents and on the discussion of whose responsibility is it to bring up the deaf child and learn to sign. They had both said it was equally distributed in their family and they both supported and assisted their deaf child in the home. In the study done by Chindanya (2011), there were some parents who felt it was the mother's duty to be more involved in the primary school education and that fathers should only get involved when the child reaches twelve thirteen years old because if the father interacted earlier with the child then the child will not respect his authority and end up ill-disciplined. There are many cultural beliefs where the mother is believed to be the one to give educational support but when having a deaf child the responsibility is far too much for one person to bear. Furthermore, at any age, a father should still be in the position to communicate with their deaf child which will result in them having to learn SASL. In my observations majority of families with a deaf child or children the mother only signs and can communicate with their deaf child and this too, are very few mums.

An educator has pointed out that bulk of the parents do not come to schools meetings and try and communicate with the teacher, therefore, they do not know the support their child needs. In requesting documents of ways teachers communicate with parents I observed that parents did not sign their children's homework book, they often did not read notices and messages to them in assisting their deaf child. The teacher added:

*...again it has to be a team effort for the sake of the children, but if they always too busy, not interested, couldn't be bothered. We pay our school fees so it's the teacher's job to educate the child, which is in some cases, then it's very hard.*

I have over the years observed that most of the hearing parents who have their children in the school boarding become complacent and do not take responsibility for the education of their deaf child. An educator at the site very clearly stated that:

*...also families with children in the hostel, boarding the family feels the child is at school so you get on and do it. You supervise that's why they here, you do their homework and don't feel that in the weekends they need to accept responsibility and check or support their child.*

*Some families will approach and want their child to be a boarder so the school will do their homework, the school will help them study. It's easier that way. They not studying at home*



*they finding it a behaviour problem so put them in the hostel and then it's the school's problem to make them study.*

Throughout this research and in my question of barriers to parent involvement almost all of my participants came through very strongly with the fact that communication between hearing parent and deaf child as being the hugest barrier in becoming involved in the education of their deaf child.

*Parents feel inadequate to help with helping with the homework. ... "How am I going to explain the homework?"*

*If the parents are not learning sign language to communicate with their child, I think that is the biggest barrier. If they don't learn sign language how can they be involved in their child's education.*

*Once again it's communication. That is a big barrier, it is a big barrier because if you as a parent are unable to sign to your child and understand what your child's needs are, it is the biggest barrier then nothing can happen. You can take care of their physiological needs but the emotional, mental, educational and all that you not going to do it you just don't understand what the child is trying to tell you. ... I understand now that sign language is so important because there are some things that you cannot express by spelling it out to them or showing them on a transparency and you need to explain. So, in the same way, the child that is deaf needs his/her parents to understand what is happening in his/her life.*

South African Sign language (SASL) has been officially implemented as a first language in schools for the deaf in January 2015. There is a Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS) document for SASL which has to be implemented and in 2018 national Grade 12 examination will be written in schools for the deaf. Hearing parents have to come on board and become familiar with the content of this document and interact with the SASL teacher to assist their deaf child. However, in my observation when this document was being discussed in a phase implementing this year, only four of the twenty-four parents arrived for the meeting. The concern is if they themselves cannot sign, then how will they provide any assistance to their deaf child in a crucial first language subject which will play a vital role in determining if their child is accepted at a tertiary institute. This is a major concern to the school management member who states:

*In the CAPS document, the updated, the new curriculum we facing for example sign language curriculum and how do the parents support the children in that now, just with assessments and preparations. Those parents must feel very uneasy and inadequate because how are they*

*gonna help their children with that. They don't know. Those that want to are feeling quite anxious about it.*

One of the parents explained that communicating with her deaf child was not a problem because she learned sign language but what she was most concerned about and felt is the major barrier to parents becoming involved in their child's education is communication from the school and teachers to the parents.

*The barriers here I would say there are communication barriers. There is a communication barrier and I think communication is a big thing, people need to communicate with us. We need to know what's happening, need to know what's going on in terms of my child's progress. I need to know what is happening. Communication, correspondence is very important. You didn't expect me to be sitting at home and thinking my child is doing so well meanwhile my child is now on a one-to-one basis. I don't know anything about it. I don't know anything that my child is struggling, so communication is very important.*

Most definitely in my observations I did see that a few parents were yearning for the teachers and the school to communicate assessment dates and revision work but not all teachers were doing this. Then lastly there are valuable reasons as to why some parents truly cannot get involved in their deaf child's education,

*...the very elderly and those that are really very, very ill. I think it would be virtually impossible. Those children rely on the support of everybody from school.*

There are parents who are too busy and really cannot find the time or do not want to make the time for their deaf child's education. In an interview with a teacher she says,

*You know you get 2 extremes. You get some parents that just drop and go and then you get some parents that are overly involved to the extent that it can be detrimental to the child because you have to understand deaf children and hearing children learn differently and they have different needs and different processors so you have a lot of extremes. You have some parents that are very busy so have nothing really to do with their children.*

The other added barrier is that not all the parents speak the same language and the school has found ways that could benefit these parents by having meetings translated, however, it is time consuming so may not be done at every meeting. This leads to parents being misinformed or not receiving all the information required. They also not able to read messages sent home in the message book or newsletters.

*...we have at the school for the deaf is that not all the parents speak the same language either. So it's not that they can't sign it's that they don't all speak English. And the majority of them probably speak Zulu or some of them don't speak Zulu at all. Some of them, the black parents are not Zulu, some of them are from other countries and then we have English and Afrikaans. So even that point of view makes it a little bit tricky for parents to actually come in and attend because often the meeting is held in the language that they don't understand. I feel that kind of the thing that we should attend to and we do it, I know I have asked people to do it on numerous occasions is to translate letters and have a meeting where the parents can be spoken to in their own language. I think that's an area we can work on but it is difficult because it is very time-consuming but it is an area where we could more culturally aware of our parents and perhaps in a way that will make them feel more welcomed or more confident to engage and not to sit there quietly because they don't know the language.*

One of the major barriers that schools for the deaf experience as one of the participants have mentioned is that the school for the deaf is not a community-based school. It is based in a predominantly a hearing community with only one or two children from the community coming to the school because these parents have decided to relocate to the area due to reasons of travel and being more involved. In a school for the deaf most children are from far distances. It is further added that parents attending meetings should be mandatory, however, due to the fact that we not a community-based school it cannot be implemented.

*You know short of making it mandatory which a lot of schools do. They say you have to come for this and have to come to that. The difficulty with our school is that it's not a community-based school, it's not like parents are just around the corner. We got parents that live in Pietermaritzburg, parents who live in Umhlanga and Chatsworth, in all those areas, outlying areas and a lot of the rural areas as well. They can barely afford to make it to work and back. How do we then expect them to travel from those outlying areas to come to the school? So if we were a community-based school, yes absolutely you put it in a policy, you make it mandatory. When you admit your child these are your responsibilities as a parent so we are not a community-based school we cannot put unrealistic expectations on parents.*

#### **4.2.4.2 Barriers that the School Management Team and teachers practise that hinder parent involvement**

Grant and Ray (2013. p. 10), make a valuable statement in describing today's era of schools where security is an issue therefore many schools have suspicion of non-school personnel and therefore lock their doors and put up notices requesting that visitors report to the office, which may create a physical barrier to families wanting to visit the school. Saunders (2001) adds that the schools are under pressure to improve their academic performance, therefore, may not welcome parents especially those that may be critical or question school policies.

In the interview with school principal, a very positive response was given which is extremely valuable in a school for the deaf.

*I hope that there is this open door policy of encouraging parents, inviting the parent to come to the meeting when we feel the children are battling or we need some support or intervention from home. That is certainly what I would like to encourage most definitely. I think we must always be mindful that we don't create the impression that they can't come to ask us and that we are fountains of knowledge and we don't need them. Because that is certainly not what it is. We certainly want to welcome any questions or support that they have or ways that we can empower them. I would hate families to feel that they were inadequate and too embarrassed to ask us because that's going to be a negative impact on the children most definitely. And it really doesn't matter who they are and where they from or what their home language is we need to always be the ones who are trying to empower them and encourage them to be part of us rather than us ever being a barrier to them. We need to encourage and make the time but I think we do where we can to meet whenever it's convenient.*

In my observation at the site, parents are never turned away when they come to the school. They are always accommodated and all their needs are met. Even parents that have transport and cost issues, there are accommodated at school functions to discuss their child's education and other matters that are of concern. In my observations, this came out quite clearly and during my interview with the principal of the school it was made mention off.

*If the living far away and only here at a gala then meet them after the gala or do whatever is convenient. Transport is a problem and it's expensive. Use those opportunities to get hold of the family. Even if its audiology and all those sorts of things. Helping them with hearing aids, to test batteries and making sure it's working functioning on weekends because what's the point of a child having hearing aids if the parents are too frightened to ever test batteries or replace batteries because it's not going to benefit the child.*

The limited or no knowledge of sign language by parents themselves can create a barrier because then this results in the School Management Team (SMT) and the teachers become too involved with the child both personally and academically which can make parents feel inferior or inadequate in involving themselves in their deaf child's education. But a teacher at the school did not feel it was necessarily a barrier because when deaf learners come for advice or help regarding personal matters and they cannot communicate with their hearing parents, then teachers are obliged to assist.

*The only thing I can think of that is a positive thing is that we are too involved, I think all teachers of the deaf and management get exceptionally involved with their children and exceptionally involved with the process that maybe parents sometimes feel inadequate. So I think that sort of goes for both teachers and SMT because this child can express to me exactly their needs and thought and fears but does not express it to their mother because their mother does not understand. So sometimes children form stronger bonds with the teacher that can understand them than a parent and that can be intimidating for parents. I think that might be the only thing but it's not necessarily a bad thing because you are here for the children and it's not the teacher's fault that the parent can't understand the child.*

In my observation and experience teaching at a school for the deaf and being a management member myself I have had children each year who require help with personal matters because their parents cannot communicate with them creating a barrier. This impacts the barriers that can be created by SMT's and teachers when they get too involved with learners because parents also find it much easier to leave it to the school to deal with or they too embarrassed to face the school personnel because they might know details about their family issues that they may not necessarily want the school to know about.

Grant and Ray (2013), mention that schools might organise family engagement activities that may fail to recognise all family participation in them. They give examples of hosting Mother's day or Father's day and many children are orphans or have only one parent. They go on to say that an event planned by the school might include features of a meal which might not necessarily take into consideration other cultural and religious beliefs. In my experience and observation I have seen this happen often where meals are provided and in some cases paid for but only accommodates for the majority culture and religion that prevails in the school. One of the teachers interviewed also made mention of this in her response to barriers.

*I suppose bad decision, if you making a management decision and it's not or hasn't taken into account perhaps a particular cultural group or it hasn't taken into account a systematic manner of doing something I suppose that could create like if you thinking of parent meetings*

*on Saturdays and the management just makes that decision but in actual fact it's not helpful to parents I suppose that could be a barrier.*

Chindanya (2011), states one of the barriers to parent involvement, is the lack of a clear school policy. In doing more research it was found that the school principal and teachers thought that there is a lack of a clear school policy or guidelines and schools could not produce effective strategies to encourage and build parent involvement bonds. Parents in his study felt that without clear policies there was confusion and misunderstanding that prevailed amongst parents. Parents in their interview did not specifically state that the policies were not clear but what one parent was saying that the school is so controlled by policy that if a parent wishes to challenge the policy for the improvement of their deaf child the school hides behind the policy and stick to what the policy requires instead of adapting to the needs of the deaf child. The parent has responded by stating that both department and school policies is what the school strictly implemented.

*I think policies and stuff the way it feels like things are set in stone and there is red tape regarding just doing things differently. Things that would help is if everybody looked at the kid and not at the policy and actually stuff the policy, we will figure it out, how to word the policy or figure out how to tick the boxes to meet the needs of the child. I had a recent thing that been a significant problem for us and yes policies have not been bent in any way. Anyway, my kids are my primary importance and I do whatever I need to do to make sure she is okay is what I'll do. So although in that situation I felt, the communication was pleasant there was no ugliness or anything, I certainly did not feel heard and certainly haven't seen any change so you kind of look at creative ways of how you can do things differently.*

The school principal response when asked about barriers that teachers may create that hinder parent involvement, it was very clear that this is not what is expected of teachers but said that in some cases it is possible that there might be breakdowns in a teacher-parent relationship but was positive in ensuring that teachers have positive relationships with parents.

*It needs to be a case of working as a team and trying to support those parents and get them to work with you rather, it should never be against. And I think open channels of communication are important. Expectations, of the teacher to the families of what you are requiring, is important, clear expectations, so the families are in preparation for tests or assignment and hopefully, not having unrealistic demands on parents. Too, too much homework or things that are beyond families realms of availability! Being mindful of whether they have computers, whether they have the technology that will be available to achieve what the teachers are requiring of the families because that can just create more anxiety and stress*

*for those families. But knowing your children and obviously every child in every class will be different from year to year but I certainly hope that in most cases it's not a case of hindering because that's really not, it should be the case of stretching that arm out and saying so how can I help you, how can you help me help your child.*

*For teachers understanding different cultures and the family environment and whether maybe it's a child headed family at weekends, families out working far away and just an older brother looking after the family or a grandmother. It makes it really difficult then and yes we encouraging children to do their homework but if there no one there to really supervise it, it's not going to happen.*

The other participants pointed out that it depends on the teacher and there may be personality clashes between the teacher and a parent and that teachers don't set out to specifically hinder parent involvement. Each teacher is an individual and may have their own personal attributes that contribute to hindering parent involvement.

*I think some teachers are experts and they really know what they talking about but they caught up in that your language can be very expert language. Your terminology can be very specialised terminology .... it can freak a parent out and so they don't know what you actually talking about so they just rather stay away from you. I'm sure that, that is an issue.*

*I think also it just depends on you know if a child is in somebody's class and the child, perhaps a really difficult child, and then the teacher is writing notes home all the time complaining about the child. The parent is not really wanting to come to school because they gonna feel embarrassed and uncomfortable.*

*Probably if the teacher is not open and does not have a good relationship with their children and the child complains about them then probably that will hinder parent involvement because the parent is so tired coming into school to check the child's work and the teacher always complains. Then straight away the parent is reluctant to come and hear these complaints all the time.*

*...the teachers know a parent in the class is a single mum and has five other kids and she has no nanny and there is this really tough expectations are put on the parents. I think that makes people withdraw.*

One of the teacher participants at the school who has been teaching for over twenty-five years and has seen teachers come and go over the many years, has worked with various teachers with various personalities, had a valuable contribution to make to this study when she specifically comments

about teachers who have gone to a college of education to be trained as opposed to teachers who come out of varsity.

*I think, over the years education has changed. It has gone from a college to a varsity sort of system. College trained versus varsity trained graduates. Colleges were more practical based for a longer time and I think that people who studied and just did a BA and then the year of the teaching didn't really come to grips with the whole technicality of teaching and how to interact with children, it's more academic and it's not more on a personal, social level so I think that can become a barrier.*

In observing teachers and interacting with them there may be some truth in this because there are teachers whose first option was not to actually become a teacher instead it was a last resort to obtaining employment. Therefore, if a student has done a science degree and finds not much employment opportunities, the option is to do a one-year degree at university to teach. This person has not had sufficient interaction with children or in the school environment as opposed to a student who is studying a four year teaching degree and has been on numerous teaching practices to schools. The social skills and interaction of these teachers are non-existent or minimal in trying to create a working relationship with parents. The teacher adds the following to support this barrier:

*When you speaking from an academic point versus going to grass roots level, with the walking in their shoe kind of thing, I think that it could be a barrier for a parent, because from a parent point of view they maybe haven't gone to a university or haven't qualified in matric or they haven't got a grade 8 and they feel threatened or not significant enough to approach a person who is more educated. People won't approach you because they don't feel comfortable talking to someone highly educated. It's like I am a bit nervous to talk to that person.*

*...you find teachers feel I am the teacher and I know it all which shouldn't be that way, respect each other's views.*

A parent participant responded very honestly about what she felt was the situation of the relationship between parents and the school personal. Her relationship with the school she says is very honest and fairly open and she does not hide anything, however, she did express:

*I do feel there's a silent criticism but I think I will probably feel it anyway because I am not going to sit back and let just anything happen. I don't honestly care and I think it's probably normal and a parent is technically an outsider and unfortunately, that is how you feel I suppose in any institution. So if you have this core team that might have its comfort zone*



*stretched or confronted, you obviously don't want issues within the core team so it's easier to kind of stay as a core team and see the parent as an outsider. It wasn't until I had an issue I needed to get dealt with and haven't had it dealt with that I felt like that. So up until then I did, I think if you hunky dory happy with what's going on and it's like this in most areas of life everything is good, wonderful, the moment you bring up something that ruffles up a few feathers, challenges norms and just because they have been going on forever doesn't mean they great, and actually seeing your kid as an individual. Then you feel like you not part of the team, you as the parent are causing trouble and we deal with you in a very pleasant quite professional way but it's no longer one team for one purpose of one team for the child and parent, its parent versus the school, that's what it feels like.*

*So if we can have honest conversations where you don't feel like I'm going to say something to the school that will offend them but rather we also think it's a problem. How can we improve it? That will be really great and feel like you've got a team on your side and not being the one doing the fighting because it exhausting. I think sometimes parents who don't have it in their personality or they just exhausted by the whole idea or actually only having one deaf kid. I understand why they give up early.*

Another parent expressed similar feeling and did not have a very good relationship with the school because she felt that when she also did not question anything everything went well but as soon as there was an issue the relationship between the school and parent turned "sour".

*When I come to school with an issue you don't need to have your deputy principal to sit there and like fight on behalf of your staff. It's totally unfair. It's not fair to me, it's not fair to my child so these are my concerns. I don't have a good relationship because I feel it's very biased here. This is how I am made to feel. It's a biased thing where you know but it's my staff and I need to protect them. And even they will speak to you in a very tactful way, they may not tell it to you directly but at the end of the day, I'm not stupid as well. I know what they are saying to me so I feel it's biased. From my experiences it's biased just because at the end of the day the child is more important, the parent has a problem, you listen to the parent you give her a chance to speak. You don't if there's a problem with an educator you don't sit and defend your educator you don't know what's going on in the classroom but how is it that you do it, that's my best question. How is it that you do it?*

The above statement is powerful and really is what I have observed as well. In some cases parents have right to ask certain questions about why things are not going as it should with their child which is not many at a school for the deaf, and this is not very well accepted. Some of it can be blatantly

incorrect behaviour on the part of the teacher and there is always someone in management who has the “gift of the gab” who can manipulate the situation so that the teacher wins and the school looks good. Something like this immediately disheartens parents and they never want to communicate with the school again or they come back stronger fighting against the school rather than discussing and finding an amicable solution where there is a win-win conclusion established. This can link to maybe school heads or SMT’s having limited knowledge of the concept of parent involvement and how to deal with such issues which Chindanya (2011) elaborates on. He also further discusses teachers and parents having limited knowledge on the concept of parent involvement resulting as a barrier to healthy relationships.

Chindanya (2011) identifies unreliable pupils as a barrier to parent involvement. Some pupils intentionally distorted information that was sent from school to home and vice versa. These pupils sometimes talked negatively about the school and teachers which has soured relationships between schools and the home. The irresponsible child hid homework from parents which create an impression that parents are irresponsible in assisting their child. The school for the deaf has its own unique ways highlighted by some participants but some are the same as all other schools.

*The child might not take their report home, not giving information that has been sent by the school, not communicating what is needed, forgetting to give the parent information whatever was sent, not giving parents official documents, not giving parents newsletters. Some of them will not do that, they will forget. So the parents are not aware of what is going on.*

*I don’t think any child doesn’t want their parent involved. I think secretly deep down every child wants their parent involved but when you’re a teenager, your parents embarrass you, you don’t want them here or you don’t want them there. You don’t want to seem dependent on people. So it depends on the age and the stage that you’re in. It depends on the age, the attitude, your relationship with your parent.*

*Some children are embarrassed by their parents because they can’t sign, they are rude or they might have a problem with alcohol. If they have a tough relationship with their parent and their parent does not understand them, this is their safe place. I always say this is their safe place, a deaf child’s safe place. Anyone who comes in is coming into their environment. So here sign language rules, here deaf culture rules, it might be different at home but here that’s what is of utmost importance. So if that parent doesn’t fit or understand that then children can be embarrassed or hurt by it and reject a parent.*

Chindanya (2011), also mentions “lazy and incompetent teachers” as being a barrier. This links to the above mention of where pupils speak ill of a teacher. Teachers come to class not prepared and do not mark children’s books and pupils become frustrated, this message is taken home and parents have a negative attitude towards the school and the teachers. In the case of the school for the deaf, it is often if a teacher cannot sign it causes much frustration in the deaf child and results in the teacher and children having a bad relationship which filters home. I have noticed that teachers are in a school for many years and still do not sign which is unacceptable if it impacts deaf pupil’s results and their increased frustration levels to dislike a teacher or member of the SMT. One of the parents in her response to parents who are not involved in the school may feel they are getting the best and this is what mentioned:

*...they feel they are getting the best at this school. I would say I’m not getting the best at this school. Especially this is not an ordinary school. This is a school with a disability more needs to be done, more is required. So I would say I’m not getting the best because there are times when my child came home and he said to me, “Mum, my teacher did not know certain signs.” Another child who is hearing who could hear well and because she was hearing, she had the advantage of sign and she could speak, she used to basically teach the teacher certain signs. So I am like “Oh my God” so who are you bringing in? Are these people known to you that you are just employing at your school? Are they family? Are they friends? Who are they? How come they just coming into the school with no knowledge of sign.....*

*Or are you coming here to learn sign language and then teach the learners? Because I feel my child as well in that respect he also lagged behind because now you don’t know three-quarter of the things, how are they going to move forward. So I also feel as well my child was stifled in that regard.”*

*Well, parental involvement will help with in terms of language development for the child because the more the parent learns sign language the more the child will benefit.*

In my observations, there are teachers who are not prepared and learners are very open to mention it and express their dissatisfaction. The parents who are involved and can sign get this information from their deaf child, however, parents who cannot sign are not aware of this and think that their child is getting the best education. The parents that do know will question and are not always satisfied with the results.

## **4.2.5 A way forward in encouraging and sustaining parent involvement of hearing parents in schools for the deaf for the benefit of the deaf child**

### **4.2.5.1 Benefits of parent involvement**

As we have seen in the theory by Epstein on parent involvement there are immense benefits to parent involvement in not just a school for the deaf but any all schools. Chindanya (2011), the most frequently mentioned benefits are ranked from the first to the last mentioned, benefit being mentioned last as upkeep and improvement of infrastructure; promotion of trust between teachers and parents; promotion of pupil's motivation; promotion of teacher motivation; improved school attendance; promotion of good behaviour; and payment of school fees and levies in time and allocation of teaching and learning resources. As much as all the above-mentioned benefits extremely important at a school for the deaf in interviewing my participants they have focused on a unique benefits that is specific to schools for deaf and how it will benefit the deaf child. The benefit of being able to communicate with their deaf child is mentioned by the SMT:

*I think communication clearly is the biggest one. If families are able to communicate with their children, a deaf child particularly it's going to make life so much easier for the child, just receiving input and extra information into their lives. Not just simply "Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?" But deep conversations that you would have with any other hearing child, for families with deaf children, it's so important so therefore they are able to work closely with the school and be empowered with communication skills it definitely helps children, just their general knowledge and general well-being.*

*...specifically for children in a special needs school, particularly for children in a school for the deaf where the child has particular special needs and if that parent understands and knows them, is obviously going to assist that child to be better prepared for life and it's not just about an education it's about completing an education, in the process of completing an education you need a parent to be involved to the point of being able to assist. Obviously, for the deaf child, it's a communication issue so the more involved the parent the better the parent understands the communication problems and the better the child going to access better support required.*

A parent interviewed has identified herself, what the value of being able to communicate with your deaf child and acquiring a bond with the school for the deaf will enable you to e the required skills but at the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the parents.

*So the parents role is anything from being able to communicate with their child to apart from academia look at the whole child get know them, be that person that they can come and talk to if they feeling whatever, their worries, their concerns, their dreams, just getting to know your child, because obviously that's just going to affect their self-esteem. And then being transparent enough and have communication with your children to address things that happen in the classroom, I mean interesting things. I get interesting things told to me. Not bad necessarily but interesting things that other parents' don't get to know in great detail that has just happened in the classroom, which happens to be and that is not school related but it happens to be from a safety point. I mean bullying happens everywhere if you can't support your kid through that just because you can't communicate then it's hectic.*

The parent participant from her point of view says that parent involvement in a school for the deaf will impact “everything”.

*Well if we looking at deaf education, being schools for the deaf in SA, we are massively short of actually providing our children with equal opportunities to that of their peers. Advocating, if I'm not happy with something then I need to be the first person at school to say “hey!” this is not working out for us, this does not fit my kid, how can we adapt it, what plan can we come up with to work together so that we can have an education to an equal standard to where I would have open choices if my kids were hearing. Actually bring up concerns, challenge things, suggest things, the parents are the centre.*

Teachers have added that if parents are involved they will find that the deaf child will definitely be more confident and better prepared for the school day and not feel like,

*Oh! I have forgotten my homework, Oh! I have forgotten my file at home, Oh! my lunch is at home.*

The learners are more organised, they are more planned for the day. The deaf child definitely needs more involvement of their parents.

Something that could jolt the personnel working at a school for the deaf when an Early Intervention Programme called the Home Intervention Programme for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HI HOPES) are able to have hearing screening done on every baby born in South Africa and babies are identified early. If this programme is able to empower parent's right from the start this parent in her interview says it can be threatening for schools for the deaf and they will need to up their game.

*I think that now I am working with HI HOPES eventually kids are being identified earlier and earlier and then kids are getting early intervention you going to have lots of very little people with lots of languages and with brains that have been given all the possible food it can get, schools for the deaf are going to get a big fright. It is not going to be okay for teachers who are not fluent in sign language it's not going to be okay to not have equal standards like in every other school. And I think that's going to happen so it would be optimal for at the moment while things are happening to really look at things and see how things can change, how things can be better, how the fact that this school can in no way be the final option for my kids who might want to do something in science. It's disabling being in a school for the deaf, at the moment but not because it's a school for the deaf but because its limitations limit our kids. It's a tough pill to swallow but let me tell you it worries every single parent.*

In other words schools for the deaf will no longer have children that have language delays instead the deaf child will be on par with hearing counterparts. The schools for the deaf that are not offering science subjects in high schools and the parent is requesting it, then the school for the deaf could find themselves in a situation where they will not be able to meet the needs of their learners. The parent participant is saying that together with the parents the school should work to put a plan in place, to at some stage in the future meet those needs of the learners.

*So if we can have honest conversations where you don't feel like I'm going to say something to the school that will offend them but rather we also think it's a problem. How can we improve it? That will be really great and feel like you've got a team on your side and not being the one doing the fighting because it exhausting. What's the point I just put them there, they going to get a matric. What that's worth is zero. You know you have to have a matric to be packer in Checkers, that's a prerequisite. So let's not celebrate too much in getting a matric because it's not such a great thing after all. But then just the kid as a whole actually they don't need matric in some ways to be their very best just depending on who they are and what they do but the point is we want our children to have equal opportunities and they don't and that is the sick fact and it's not because no one's trying hard or working hard it's just we gotten frustrated an apathetic and exhausted by trying for such a long time and being said no to. To figure out okay can we resurrect a little bit of energy, does it have to be somebody who hasn't fought yet be asked to energise in that area. Who do we talk to? How do we make a difference? Who will listen?*

#### 4.2.5.2 Expectations of parents and are these expectations communicated

Often what I have observed is that teachers expect a list of things for parents to do and in some cases the expectations are communicated to parents and some parents are meeting the expectations whilst other parents choose to ignore the needs of their child in the classroom. The participants in this study stipulated what their expectations are, for parent to go for sign language lessons and to make every effort to learn sign language; new parents to keep themselves informed of what is expected from teachers; to make sure their children did their homework.

*...that they would understand that a deaf child needs to spend extra time so they would make the time for that child to take books from the library or spend in conversation with that child, and to gain knowledge and make appointments to speak to people if they want to know, not in a confrontational way but in a learning way in an ability to understand more.*

*...if a child is battling with reading and battling with spelling then their child has the freedom or the ability to go to their parents and sit and read with his/her parent and in order for that to happen the parent should know basic sign language and be able to communicate with the child.*

*...maths this drilling times tables making sure it is done properly with their homework, giving them a certain time to do their homework and remove or extraneous things remove the computer, the TV, ban them from certain things if they don't complete their homework. That's what a parent can do to make sure that the child got a specific space where they sit and study, do their homework. When your homework is completed then you must go outside and play.*

*You know you have your basic communication and then you have academic language so it's all good and well. Parents are gun hoe when they with the foundation phase and the pre-school learning all the signs, and communicate at a basic pre-school level like colours and days of the week but as they get older when you got to learn about science, history, geography, technology, biology, all of those things. The language doesn't stop at colours and numbers and occupations. So having a basic communicative language is very different from having academic language. So for me parents need to learn, their language needs to get deeper and deeper as the child gets older.*

Lastly what happens to deaf learners when they coming to the end of their schooling life. The expectation is that the school will see to the needs of deaf learners and prepare and plan for their tertiary education after they finish school. On the contrary schools for the deaf are saying:

*I think by the time children are in matric or a school leaving age by that stage a lot of time, a lot of effort has been invested in that child by the school and hopefully by the parent. That's when the parent needs to then become fully responsible for their child. It is the hearing parent's responsibility to think about what is my child going to do after school. The school can guide, the school can suggest, the school can give ideas but the last year or two when the parents know, it's the hearing parent's full responsibility to go out there and lobby for jobs, lobby to get interpreters in colleges. I don't think it's the school's job.*

The schools boarding facility will expect parents that meet their children only on weekends to become meaningfully involved with their child on a Saturday and Sunday and one of the teachers say that it is an easy way out for parent because it becomes the schools responsibility only when their child attends boarding and if there is any blame then the parent takes no responsibility but the teachers say:

*...even if the child is in a hostel the parent should go over the weekend and say: What have you done at school? What have you learnt? What are your problems? Can I help you? Can I be involved in your life? I think once again the communication is a barrier and there is no excuse for that anymore because they have ample opportunities to learn sign language.*

These are the expectations that the school teachers and SMT have off the hearing parents of deaf children at a school for the deaf and they are adamant that's it is the parent's responsibility to ensure these expectations are met. The concern is "Do teachers and SMT's expect parents to just know these expectations or do they communicate it to the parents?".

*In the outset of the year, we tell the parents exactly what we expect of them. What we would like them to do. How we would like them to get involved. How we would like them to sit and do the homework.*

*We do communicate our needs for example if there's something that I need from the child I'd probably write a letter in their homework book, give them a call. So we do communicate in that way. But I don't expect the parents to know what is needed if I don't communicate with them it's all about communication I think, verbal or non-verbal.*

*No, I don't think you can expect parents to know what is needed. I think that's why you got to establish I think that why it's the school's responsibility when new parents come in to make it*



*very clear, this is what is going to happen and these are the needs. Sometimes you can't give too much information too quickly because it's too much information so you give them information that is required. So when they very little you talk about these are the things you going to need: child is going to need to go to the toilet, etc, etc. So here are some ways to help you communicate these things. Then there's going to be issues of discipline. Whatever you use to discipline your other children is probably not going to work as well with your deaf child so here are some ideas. So there needs to be something that is initiated by the school and sometimes for each child it's slightly different. But then as they going through the school you will then increase that knowledge to the point when finally the children are school leavers by then they will be engaged in every phase whether there's a change in program, going to be vocational and not academic which the parent is engaged and this is the job of the school to inform the parents.*

*I communicate my needs with our communication books. If there is something specific I send it home I do little power-point presentations on little things that we are learning about, send it home to parents. Our class Readers I've also got it on PowerPoint signed and scanned so that they are aware of what we are learning, what we are doing and sometimes at home stories so like fairy stories or normal story books we scanned it my assistant has signed it and we send it home so parents that parents can engage with their children. I have sent home some comprehensions so the parents can ask children but also see this is how you would ask questions in sign language. I have definitely done a great deal of communicating my needs to parents so that they know what we learning about. We did a fabulous little Rice Krispy treat. I sent them the link to the YouTube videos that we watched and said, "make it with your kids". We made jelly one day now make it with your kids. So I'm always trying to link the home with school."*

The teacher and SMT have in their responses above stated that parents are not expected to just know the expectations of the school instead the school itself has a responsibility to communicated their expectations to parents especially if the needs are specific to deaf children, parents will not necessarily know this.

*... it is then the job of the parents to make sure that they understand that and to ask those questions and understand and also to appreciate the wisdom of the school and to see why have you made those decision and not just question every single decision just because it's not the one you like but try to understand how we got the best interest of the child.*

#### **4.2.5.3 Ways in which the School Management Team get the parents involved and keep the parents informed.**

According to Epstein (1995), in his six types of involving parents, he mentions communication, communication with families about the school programs and learners progress. He mentions as mentioned in chapter two sample strategies. The principal in my interview concurs with ways that the SMT communicate with the parents.

*The newsletters and I think sending them out via SMS's and email has reached more families just because most of our children don't take the newsletters out their bags. So from that, communication books from the teachers need to be encouraged. If the families take the books and read them, that area doesn't always happen. And then just trying to encourage them to attend meetings, to attend whatever functions there are around to help. I don't think we can ever say we doing enough it's constant trying to find ways to encourage that.*

It is where sometimes the school for the deaf make the effort to communicate using different means of communication to parents, however, the sense of apathy mentioned above on the part of the parents is unfortunate for the deaf learner. The school reaches out to parents in terms of offering free SASL classes however in my observation out of a school of about a hundred learners only five parents may attend and then the SMT reviewed the situation and parents were given alternative times. However, taking into account cost factor of travelling to and from the school weekly the SMT had devised a plan to prepare free SASL lessons and download them on USB sticks which can be watched in the comfort of their homes. In my observation and through my participants it has come through quite strongly that a large percentage of parents have not taken advantage of this opportunity to equip themselves with SASL skills. Not only SASL but the school has provided opportunities for hearing parents of the deaf with other areas of their deaf child's life mentioned below by the principal.

*I guess it's the sign language, those classes, the extra support and counselling that we link with that when they coming. We did that behaviour management and how to u know work with your children. How to make sure they are able to follow sort of what the family is requiring at home from a behavioural point of view. Punishment, reward kind of thing we have done.*

A parent participant in response to whether she thought the school did enough to involve parents.

*Almost probably say not if I had to just remove myself from other things but at the same time I do think that parents need to take the bull by the horns, so you can't just be fed everything. So it's not really the school's responsibility holistically to wholeheartedly give me what I need. I*

*heard a really nice analogy the other day about involvement and commitment and I think deaf need committed parents if they going to be anything. Involvement sounds good, though, it sounds like you doing stuff, the analogy with bacon and eggs, “the chickens involved and the pigs committed” and for me, that’s so perfect you really got to slow yourself out for this journey. Because being involved, paying your school fees seriously that’s no guarantee to anything so whilst I would say no I would not be getting everything from the school, I don’t think that’s the school’s role either. For me to educate my kids, yes, to support me yes, to link me up with resources that are doing that already yes but there comes a point in time when the parents need to move forward on their own.*

Having said this, the parent has suggested ideas that the school can consider in involving parents more.

*...sign language lessons could be more regular, I know it’s been a mission but then especially optimise it for parents travelling on for it then let’s not just do it as a sign language lesson but why don’t we do it as a support morning. So seven-eighth of it is sign language but then how about asking “THRIVE”(parents support group), but actually school shouldn’t have to ask but one or two representatives just to lead a parent discussion afterwards. Break up into smaller groups. So a similar thing could happen after parent meetings.*

Parent discussion should be held by parents who have been through the journey of having a deaf child and she says the point of this,

*...is that there is no teachers or professionals looking in otherwise it’s not a natural time to share and then will be prepared to take feedback from the ‘THRIVE’ representative, if something school specific came up then you maybe bring that up and maybe request someone from the parent body to represent on the governing body. I mean we do have that but just happen to be that way as opposed to a desire and then obviously, taking parents seriously when they come with a request or a situation. To feel like someone really heard me and significantly appreciates my input that really builds your faith in the school for the future.*

Teachers and SMT’s of schools for the deaf must take cognisance of the fact that parents who have deaf children have often had to make huge sacrifices to become fully involved in their deaf child’s education. When parents see that teachers and the SMT value their sacrifices in involving themselves they know that it was all worth the sacrifice and feel motivated to do more. Parent in my interview speaks of her sacrifices.

*I have given up my whole career, my whole plan since I was five, I totally gave up. That was to be a paediatrician specialist in neonatology. Gave that up the day we found out they were deaf. So I gave up everything about myself which is fine and actually I am quite happy where I am at. We moved across the country from where we were happy to live. We gave up everything. I think parenting deaf kids is flipping hard work and I think what I hate the most about it is the feeling that I am always asking other people for a favour to accommodate them. Whether it be ballet, whether it be that they can wear amplification devices that aren't pretty or whether they don't have to say the words in the exam but they can actually sign it*

Like all parents, parents of deaf children also like to expose their children to extra-curricular activities after school hour, however, the school day is longer in this school for the deaf for the Foundation Phase. Where times are made suitable for hearing schools extra-curricular it does not accommodate schools for the deaf. The school SMT needs to adapt and adjust to assist parents who are going the extra mile in developing their deaf child. This parent feels as if she has to ask for a favour from the school and probably being at their mercy.

*...whether it just maybe that they adjust their timetable because my kids in grade 1 finish later than any other kid in grade 1 so their class is actually at 1pm. I feel like I'm always asking for favours and so it's exhausting when you come up with a favour and by favour I mean accommodation to a school and they will just say no and not willing to see the importance of it when it is small, realising that for your next 18 years your favours are going to get bigger and bigger and sometimes it will be really big and if they say no to that I'm feeling a lack of hopeful. So any parent that brings up anything the school probably the same way because its journey looks like a huge, massive thing in front of you and this step is so flipping hard how I'm going to have the energy for the next years.*

The school for the deaf personnel mentions a variety of way they try to get parents involved and do the best for the deaf learners.

*... we very specific about what each child needs. We look very carefully to establish what is best for this particular child, endless meetings and endless discussions. We institute our own programs. We move people around to make it sort of homogenous groups and all these kinds of things, so I think from the schools perspective we are doing everything we can to help the kids and all of those decisions are run by the parents. Every single decision a parent is involved in or is invited to be involved. They invited to attend. They invited to parent meetings and Annual General Meeting's (AGM).*

The other added problem is that not all the parents speak the same language and the school has found ways that could benefit these parents by having meetings translated, however, it is time consuming so may not be done at every meeting. The uniqueness in a school for the deaf is the fact that the pupil's first language is proposed to be SASL but the learners come into the school being able to lip-read or hear (hard of hearing learners) their families home language as their first language before coming to a school for the deaf. When they enter the school for the deaf the learner is expected to learn English as their second language and SASL as a first language and as a medium of instruction. The learners learn English which is challenging and then go home to the family language which in most cases maybe IsiZulu and sometimes Afrikaans. The parents also find reading any circulars from the school challenging if it is not in their language. Parents are not keen to go to a meeting they partially or fully do not understand and where they cannot be active participants in discussing school matters or concerns about their child's progress. They may just decide not to go at all or ignore the circulars from the school. An SMT member expresses it as a challenge in the school, however, they have found ways to overcome this challenge.

*And perhaps it's also the added problem that we have at the school for the deaf is that not all the parents speak the same language either. So it's not that they can't sign it's that they don't all speak English. And the majority of them probably speak Zulu or some of them don't speak Zulu at all. Some of them, the black parents are not Zulu, some of them are from other countries and then we have English and Afrikaans. So even that point of view makes it a little bit tricky for parents to actually come in and attend because often the meeting is held in the language that they don't understand. I feel that kind of the thing that we should attend to and we do it, I know I have asked people to do it on numerous occasions is to translate letters and have a meeting where the parents can be spoken to in their own language. I think that's an area we can work on but it is difficult because it is very time-consuming but it is an area where we could more culturally aware of our parents and perhaps in a way that will make them feel more welcomed or more confident to engage and not to sit there quietly because they don't know the language.*

In my interview with the deputy principal, it was said that for many years the school has tried to set up a parent support group for parents of deaf children and for many reasons parents who volunteered did not run with it. However recently a parent has taken it on and is doing an amazing job. It is a fully functional support group for all parents of the deaf called "Thrive". It was felt that there was a great need for parents at the school to get together and create a parent-teacher coalition. In the interview, it is stated the reason for this.

*...but I still think there is an avenue for just our parents, with this school parents to just maybe get together and make it not exclusively a parent thing perhaps a parent teacher thing. There should be opportunities on a social level a parent, teachers, and children mix. There have certainly been fun runs that are beautiful and ideal opportunities so perhaps those kinds of things just to break down the barriers a bit.*

A parent in the interview highlighted an important aspect about the sign language classes the school offers being very helpful up to a certain point, however, when the deaf child moves into the Intermediate Phase and High School the sign language classes are not adapted to equip parents to gain enough vocabulary for the parent to cope as their deaf child moves to the higher grades. It is something that the school SMT can revisit to assist parents and make the sign language lessons more meaningful for parents as their deaf child moves into higher grades. In my observation, I have seen this being implemented by the school.

*I would like advanced sign language lessons to help us know that our learners are going into the bigger grades, can help us even if it's like words that the Intermediate Phase is using and how the vocabulary builds. If they can start equipping us, we can send memory sticks put everything on it for us so we know we are also equipped.*

Parents can be involved in various ways and the school is doing a lot, like inviting parents to swimming galas, fundraising events and meetings. The school has implemented the idea of having special case conferences on specific children the teacher would like to discuss due to some problem the child may be experiencing or just general class case conferences to discuss challenges that teachers may be facing. In these case conferences, all the school's personnel working with the child are involved and discuss a way forward. The parents are then contacted and a meeting is set up to discuss the way forward involving the parents.

*Whenever there is a problem with a child we do a case conference and if need be, invite parents in for meetings so I think there is a large want from the school for parents to be involved but doesn't always materialize. Like it would be great if parents could, for example, do the matric dance, take over to do the matric dance but no parent has ever offered or if approached to do it has ever said I'm going to do it and run with it. No parent has ever said I'm going to organise a fun run for Fulton school or organise I'm going to come and run the tuck shop for you so that you know you can earn money for the school.*

The HoD in the school they use the communication book and write to parents for basic things, however, issues of a sensitive nature follows a strict protocol. It is referred to the HoD who will then either phone the parent and chat just to gain more insight on the matter. This is always a way forward

in involving parents because they feel that you care when you make that special phone call and do not just assume things. However, if a matter is unresolved the matter goes to the principal who then sends a formal letter home.

*I don't think if it happens in other schools but I think because we are such a family based school because we are so close, sometimes parents are so far away and you don't see them every afternoon when the child says goodbye.*

Related to this the participant does not find Whatsapping parents an effective way to communicate with parents as the disadvantages of using it can have huge ramifications in distancing parents and teachers if teachers feel they are disturbed in their personal time or there is a misread tone in a message sent.

*When you got someone else there, there is always another witness but now when you are engaging in WhatsApp messages between parents and teacher's people can easily misread tone and I think it's very dangerous ground, very, very dangerous ground.*

#### **4.2.5.4 How can the SMT and teachers and Department of Education (DoE) assist in breaking down barriers to parent's involvement?**

The school principal discusses a valuable point when she hones in on the DoE. The most important for a deaf child is to be identified as early as possible so that proper intervention can take place equipping the hearing parents to communicate with their deaf child from birth thus language development can take place early in preparation for the deaf child to enter school having the appropriate language required for school.

*From an educational point of view, I am not sure that there is enough done for a special need for parents, just general information session and things like that. I think the Education Department possibly could do more, I just think of identification, early identification. That is so lacking, yes it's starting to gain momentum but there is so much that can still be done with clinics and hospitals and things like that which will just help parents. Those children will then be brought into schools much earlier. These ones coming in at 10 and 11, that is an absolute tragedy, it really and truly is. And that should never be the case. So generally speaking the government can do a whole lot more to try and make that awareness. I believe that in some of the hospitals like Albert Luthuli Hospital the Auditory Brainstem Response unit is closed down. They don't have the staff to man the equipment. That's a huge facility now. All those children going through there now and the screening can't happen. That's just because of the lack of manpower.*

The teacher participant lack of faith in the department and their priorities come to the fore as she mentions that we cannot expect much from the government as they:

*...cannot help because they always have no money, they always just don't care. They are too busy checking the schools that are doing their work. They are not focusing on problem schools as it is. They are checking on all the schools that are so good at functioning properly. So a lot of time is being wasted by going and checking on these good schools. They should be focusing on problems like let see what they can do to help the deaf children too.*

The schools for the deaf can break barriers by encouraging all sorts of activities involving an environment where the parents can just walk around and see what is being done in the school.

*...there is a place for parents to pop into classrooms right through not just babies. I think things like open days and orientation mornings. It's just simply come and look at how the school runs and what your kids do. Obviously, on those particular days, everyone is going to play nicely and the parents are not going to see what really happens on the other days when they are not expected so I suppose if parents can just pop in, practically you can't just have parents popping in "willy nilly" all the time. But I think that there is that kind of transparency that assists parents. I think the SMT even the teacher can do that even at assemblies. I think parents being invited to assemblies on a regular basis just to see actually what happens. It's the boring old notices plus the assembly people put on, the star of the week, I think those are really valuable for parents to see because they don't know all these things happen. If parents were allowed to come regularly to those sorts of things they would just feel better about what is happening in the school. They wouldn't just know what was happening in their own child's book. And then just the nice fun run things because actually parents that I have spoken to you don't want them to think their whole identity as a hearing parent with a deaf child. They need to have their own identity, they need to have an interest in and that's why the mum who comes in on Thursdays just to help with the craft activities in the afternoon. I think it lovely just a lovely thing. This is a lady who is very good at this kind of thing and she is coming to and she is a mum and it's nice. I think those kinds of opportunities are good.*

Besides parents receiving newsletters and communication books, the school makes use of social media like "Facebook" to expose the school and its happenings. They have a website for parents to read about what the school offers. Parents are emailed letters so they can get it immediately on the devices and do not need their child to hand them a newsletter. But the participant is really unsure if the avenues to communicate to parents on social media are actually being used effectively.



The HoD of the school explains that offering more sign language classes and more parental education in terms of special needs education and in this case it would be deaf educational needs which could assist in breaking down barriers. She further adds that the Department of Education needs to themselves understand deaf education themselves to make valuable input both whilst deaf pupils are in school and post school. Department officials would come to a school for the deaf and ask teachers to:

*...bring out their Braille books when they come to a school for the deaf.*

The Department of education should provide support to parents of the deaf when it comes to where the deaf child is headed when it comes to tertiary education.

*I think just basic parental information improve access because where do you find University that caters for deaf children, few and far between in terms of courses provided more teachers because we can't offer more courses because we don't have the staff so those are the different things that the department could do is actually become more aware themselves of what it is to be involved in deaf education.*

#### **4.2.6 Teachers and SMTs not trained to deal with parents of the deaf**

The responses of the parent's participants are that the teachers at the school for the deaf do not necessarily deal with parents who raise many issues, therefore, may not have acquired the skills to deal with parent complaints. The SMT and teacher participants agree that teachers may lack the skills to deal with parents and may require training in that field.

An interesting observation made by one of my parent participants who put her observations about moaning parents what she in her experience at the school for the deaf felt about teachers' dealing with parents.

*I don't think you've got very many parents that do very much here. If you go to a private school just down the road then you'll know what it means to have a moaning parent. So maybe they haven't much experience with dealing with that many parents that are pushy or willing to be disliked for their kid. I am happily willing to be that person. And I think it's easier at the school for the deaf just knowing what the parents are like. Maybe teachers could be equipped better if they could come out the loop.*

The participant talks about an interesting concept of people in the workplace having "soft skills" which she implies is a need in dealing with people or parents for that matter.

*I think about medicine, you never ever taught how to do grief sharing. If somebody dies nobody tells you how you share that. It's like a "soft skill" you expected to have it. Depending on your personality, depending on your own life experiences you could be very bad at a very important task. So it's probably the same with teaching, there are "soft skills" that one assumes you going to have but certainly not and there are some people better at negotiating stuff.*

This point can be linked to the ways that the SMT can help involve parents by providing teachers with these "soft skills" to communicate with parents in various situations. In my interviews it was clear that none of the school personals had received any formal training from the Department of Education or institutes they studied at or school development programs on skills of how to communicate with parents. It is a very valuable skill where teachers and the SMT can be taught of negative language that should not be used and how these things can be said in more positive ways to make parents feel comfortable. The use of appropriate facial expression and positive body language, when approaching parents and discussing their deaf child, must be used by teachers. The heads of the school are in full agreement that empowering teachers with these skills to communicate with parents is essential.

*I think that's the point about empowering the teachers that's a good idea.*

*I think there is certainly a place for understanding how one communicates with parents.*

The deputy principal also explains the need for teachers to be trained on report writing which is in direct communication with parents and teachers do not necessarily have the skills to do that.

*Even writing reports is a communication between a teacher and a parent. I do think our teachers need to be work-shopped in effective report writing, effectively communicating.*

It is assumed that teachers are professionals and should just naturally have the skills to communicate effectively with parents more especially parents of deaf children but it is not always the case. In my interview with a teacher, it was mentioned that in all her years of teaching she has never attended training on how to communicate with parents and how to get parents more involved. The teacher further adds that there is definitely a need for teachers to be trained on how to deal with parents, however, the department of education does not provide any such training. But the HoD takes the initiative to empower the teachers on how to communicate with parents in certain cases.

*I usually do lots of one on one work with teachers like if they have a particularly difficult parent I will speak to them on how to interact with that parent. We have done general things in meetings about how to approach parents or when you are writing in your communication*

*books how to put things down, remembering the child that you talking about is someone's child but we haven't had any formal workshop on it.*

Just the discussion above on difficult parents, we have a variety of personalities that teachers deal with when it comes to parents. Some we may say are more understanding, some are just accepting of everything and some that challenge everything the school does. The teacher participant discusses this and explains the need for teachers to have tools to equip them when communicating with parents.

*Each parent is an individual and each parent will treat his or her child their way or their disability their way but I think there is some common ground. Just how to interact with parents? How to ask questions? To give them the freedom to open up and provide some tools that a parent can use. You know like little words of wisdom that will help them feel comfortable.*

When it is said to make parents “feel comfortable” it could mean that parents of the deaf are stressed about their deaf child and their future and when their child is experiencing other difficulties in the classroom or during learning then the parents feel pressured and uncomfortable and may lose hope. When teachers have the tools to say the truth about how their deaf child is performing but the same time is able to add hope in their message it comforts the parents. One of the tools that one of the teachers have discovered which she shares:

*You know one thing I did learn is parents coming in and you making them sit at the child's desk, you might be sitting on a high chair, immediately will get the parent to feel inferior because you are maybe sitting on your chair instead of being at the same level as the parent at a table so it's got that immediate hierarchy.*

Parents of the deaf learners expected a hearing child when this baby was born but now suddenly this child is deaf, something they know nothing about. They feel like they have lost something and it has a domino effect on different aspects of life which new teachers coming into a school for the deaf and existing teachers of the deaf must be trained on. This information will allow them to empathise with the parents.

*How do you empathise with a parent that's lost something that they had a vision of and now it's come and it's removed? It's a whole grievance process, coming to terms with, it's a whole coming to terms with, a whole family disruption.*

As teachers, one of the participants implies that we need to take a look at the big picture. The difficulties that these parents experience in having a deaf child, is quite different to that of having a

hearing child. The attention that the parent has to give the deaf child is so much more and the participant says that most times the responsibility is that of the mothers.

*It's really huge, we think it's nothing but its huge because the responsibility 99% of the time is always on the mother so she got to cook and clean, take the kids to school, pick up my deaf child and then sit at the table. When does she get time to be herself?*

A time that parents of hearing children take for granted is when they watch a movie. The parent can relax and watch enjoying the movie however for a parent of the deaf it's not the case which the teacher participant explains below:

*...because constantly if you are watching a movie the child will nudge you "what are they say", "how they saying it", "why are you laughing, why am I not laughing". The responsibility is heavily on one person and I think we need to be sensitive to the needs of those parent's and how do we help them. Give them coping skills to make it easier and we sometimes are not aware of it.*

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Epstein (1995), a theory stating the six types of parent involvement is highlighted by the participants in this interview. Type one, two and three which are parenting, communicating and learning at home discussed in Chapter Two has been mentioned as being some of the things already being done by the school. However, what has been not mentioned by the personal and parents which are extremely important in involving the parents is the other three, which is volunteering, decision making and collaborating with the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND HEARING PARENTS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has thematically presented and discussed the data from three of the data sources. It is established in this chapter that the research problem has been discussed and the aim of this study has been reached. This chapter presents the findings drawn from the data which was thematically presented in the previous chapter. Epstein (1987), the theory of overlapping spheres of influence which explains the shared responsibility of the home, school, and community for children's learning and development is made reference to in explaining the lack of existence of a partnership between the school for the deaf and hearing parents. Epstein's (1987), the theory of overlapping spheres will also help to explain in this chapter the recommendations that are to be made. This chapter is shifting from just describing the themes that emerged to an analysis and then make the findings drawn from the data. Ultimately, recommendations or suggestions are made, based on the findings.

#### 5.2 Synthesis of the study

In researching the partnership between the school SMT and teachers with the hearing parents and its impact on the education of deaf learners the South African Schools Act 84 (1996), state that parents are expected to take an active interest in their children's work (Chapter One). The literature pertaining to difficulties that hearing parents experience and so resulting in their poor partnership with schools for the deaf and Epstein (1987), theory of overlapping spheres where he mentions three important factors for children to learn and develop; namely the family, school, and community (Chapter Two).

The presentation of research, design, and methodology is mapped out utilising a case study of one combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu-Natal that offered from pre-school to grade 12. It had a principal, deputy principal and three heads of departments in the SMT. In my observation, most of the teachers signed fluently except for a few. The parent body consisted of hundred percent of the parents being hearing to deaf children (Chapter Three). This study has researched the experiences of the school SMT and teachers that work in a school for the deaf and specifically explores their relationship with hearing parents of the deaf learners. The research explores partnerships between schools for the deaf and parents and how it is managed. The perspectives from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents at a combined school for the deaf, is researched in depth in this study. The perceptions of parent involvement; determinants of parents involvement;

ways that parents can get involved; barriers to parent involvement in a school for the deaf; a way forward in encouraging and sustaining parents involvement; teachers and SMT's not trained to deal with parents of the deaf, ultimately affecting the partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents (Chapter Four). It is established in chapter four that the school for the deaf is not a community-based school where the deaf learners attending the school is not from the community that the school is physically immersed in. The SMT was very open and honest in sharing all that they did to involve parents and in so doing create partnerships with parents, however, they said was still more work to be done in some areas. They felt that they were doing a lot, however, it was not fulfilling the desired need for parents to become fully involved mostly so through learning their children's first language being South African Sign Language (SASL). The huge concern was that very few parents were actually interested in learning SASL to communicate with their child which created huge barriers between hearing parent and their deaf child as well as having a ripple effect into parents feeling inferior or inadequate to become involved in the school. The school personnel in this study were concerned that there were factors of finance, living a distance from the school, parents living with overburdened grannies, uninformed parents, disillusioned parents and uninterested parents were a contributing factor to parents not having a partnership with the school for the deaf.

Parent participants in this study, on the contrary are saying we want to be involved, we are involved but when we see a problem and address the problem then we are seen as problem makers and the school hides behind policies. They not feeling welcome, not enough is being done by the school and there is no partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents. The emerging themes from Chapter Four were then analysed and recommendations were made on how the school SMT can move forward in strengthening bonds with the hearing parents (Chapter Five). The data has shown that both parties should make concerted efforts to take responsibility in their roles in relation to the deaf learners and fulfil their roles then a partnership can be created to work harmoniously in the best interest of the deaf learners.

### **5.3 Research questions restated**

This chapter will indicate the extent to which the data has successfully answered the key questions that guided the study. As part of presenting the findings, the extent to which each research question has been addressed is also discussed.

#### **5.3.1 How is the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents managed?**

The data has shown that the school for the deaf is trying various avenues to involve parents and manage the partnership as they know best and that is by inviting parents to functions and meetings. Where there is a need when parents cannot make it to the school due to financial constraints or other

pressing factors the SMT uses other social gatherings that many parents attend to make opportunities to meet with those parents. There are phone calls made to parents who do not see their child's message book because the child does not go home on weekends or parents have just not shown any interest. There is a message/homework book that goes home to parent's every day with notes recorded homework and messages from the teacher. The school sends home circulars every Friday when needed and email to parents living far distances from the school. The SMT have for many years offered SASL classes free to the hearing parents and tried as much as they could to find a suitable time for all parents. There were still parents who could not make the SASL classes so the SMT took a decision to ask parents to send memory sticks to school where lessons will be prepared and sent home to parents who can then watch and learn SASL in the comfort of their homes and as many times as they liked to. They do admit that there is more they can do but they are in need of the same enthusiasm from parents.

The research also shows that there are a few parents who do make the concerted effort to involve themselves but is not always satisfied by the outcome of the situations because of poor management of the situation sometimes. The school SMT has an open door policy but would like the school managed by professionals who know what they are doing and parents can get involved but they do not always understand why certain decisions are taken and that the school is governed by department as well as school policies which cannot be bent for some parents whilst applied to others. In careful consideration of the data, it seems that there is a gap in communication between parents and management and much more can be done about that by the SMT if managed well.

### **5.3.2 What is the relationship and partnership between the school management, teachers and hearing parents?**

This research and the data show that the relationship and partnerships between the school management, teachers and hearing parents is minimal due to various contributing factors discussed in Chapter Four. The relationship and partnership of which some are in the control of the school management and the teachers, whilst others are beyond their control and more ideas need to be brainstormed to overcome the challenges. The relationship and interaction is not on a regular basis as it should be to discuss the learners progress, the school relies on functions to see most parents which is not always ideal to discuss learner performance. There is most certainly more that needs to be pursued in the area of developing relationships and partnerships.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Hearing parent's limited understanding of their involvement in the school for the deaf**

Chindanya (2011), states that some parents were morally compelled to be involved in their children's education while others thought that school and educational matters were best left to the SMT and teachers who are trained to the job. It is further added that parents did not have the same understanding of parent involvement. In this research it is learnt that parents of the deaf feel inadequate to become involved and have a partnership with the school for the deaf and therefore leave the teaching and learning to only the school. There are however, parents who understand the urgent need for them to be optimally involved. To provide the best education to their deaf child, hearing parents must be aware of what it means to be involved in the school for the deaf and develop and sustain a relationship with the school.

### **5.4.2 Majority parents do not attend school meetings to discuss their deaf child**

There were various reasons due to lack of finances, long distances and uninterested parents given as to why parents are not involved and consequently affecting the partnership between the school and the parent. Some reasons are understandable and parents must look for ways to communicate with the school and create a strong bond with the school for the deaf to become their support in assisting their deaf child. The parents who are so call uninterested have to come to a realisation that there negligence of their deaf child has huge ramifications on the future of their deaf child's success. Often hearing parents are of the myth that their deaf child is doing poorly in some areas of learning because they are deaf and this may not be the case instead it could be because they not provided the extra support in the home. It may be that if the deaf learner was provided more support from home by the hearing parents their work will improve and the deaf learner may even excel. In my experience in teaching at the school for the deaf I have seen deaf learners who have progressed substantially when parents realised their importance and came on board and started to assist their deaf child.

### **5.4.3 Training to be provided to teachers of the deaf and SMTs of schools for the deaf on how to deal with parents of the deaf**

It is a glaring conclusion in this study that teachers and SMT members could benefit from formal training in the field of how to deal with hearing parents; sensitive parents, parents still suffering from grief of having a deaf child, how to involve parents in a positive way to assist the process and building of a long lasting partnership. The recommendation is that schools do not rely on the department of education instead they themselves outsource people that have the skills from within or outside the school to train school personnel.



#### **5.4.4 Lack of enthusiasm and effort amongst hearing parents to learn SASL**

An example that can be used here is if you go to a country where a different language is spoken and you wish to place your child in that school. Your child will need to learn the language of teaching and learning. The school will assist in teaching the child and provide the opportunities for the child to learn the foreign language. However, the school does not take on the responsibility of teaching the parents the new language. It is the responsibility of the parents to access classes and immerse themselves in the community speaking the foreign language to learn the foreign language. In the school for the deaf the same applies the school takes full responsibility in teaching the deaf child SASL but it is the parent's responsibility to learn SASL themselves. Fortunately the school in this study has taken on the responsibility of assisting parents by providing free SASL lessons in various ways but the parents have not grabbed at the opportunity to empower themselves in SASL. To become involved in the school for the deaf the recommendation is that parents do everything in their power to learn SASL. If private lessons can be afforded then every effort should be made to learn, where parents cannot afford it they must take full advantage of the lessons held at the school.

#### **5.4.5 Teachers who lack in SASL**

Teachers who lack SASL negatively impact the teaching and learning process as well as the partnership between the school and parents. Pupils go home and communicate their observations to their parents who in turn have a negative impression of the teacher and may not bother to communicate with the teacher resulting in a communication breakdown. I think it goes deeper if the principal of the school and other SMT members cannot use SASL proficiently to communicate with the learner's, it presents a poor image of the school because children discuss these observations with parents or parents themselves observe this. If the school SMT's do not value the learning of SASL and do not take it seriously it filters to the teachers and other support staff, parents noticing this might develop a negative attitude towards the school and may even ridicule the school system and policies. It is recommended that the SMT's together with teachers to become fluent signers and if teachers are new and have very little sign language skills they should spend time learning SASL under the guidance of experienced staff until they are fully equipped with SASL to be left alone to teach deaf learners so as to not open the school up to ridicule and criticism.

#### **5.4.6 Teachers not communicating with parents effectively**

Teachers in the school for the deaf are quite used to the fact that parents do not want to become involved because they trust that the school will do the best for their deaf child since they have the training and skills to teach deaf children. Teachers believing this can easily become complacent and paint all parents with the same brush, they will give up communicating their needs and learner needs

to the parents. It is very dangerous grounds when there might be that minority of parents who read up, do research and take full responsibility in becoming involved with their deaf child's education and seeking a partnership with the school. Teachers on a continuous basis regardless if parents are involved or not need to express their needs and pupils progress to parents, whether it is writing in the communication books or phoning them, it has to be done, no assumptions should be made. Parents on the other hand make your presence and express your needs to the teacher and the school, demand respect and for teachers to share ideas that you may need to assist your deaf child.

#### **5.4.7 Barriers to partnership between schools for the deaf and hearing parents**

There have been various barriers to partnerships between schools for the deaf and hearing parents stated in Chapter Four. To overcome the challenges the school, parents and department of education need to jointly explore channels to create opportunities to break down the barriers and work harmoniously in the best interest of the deaf pupil. The school and department of education must formulate as Chindanya, (2011), states there should be research-based policies. The policies he says should be crafted taking into account the realities attaching to their environment and what is necessary to improve the school climate. When all stakeholders' perception of this partnership and their understanding of their role in educating the deaf child are clear then they will not step on each other's toes.

#### **5.4.8 Positive learning environment in the home**

In Chapter Two, it was discussed about the importance of a learning environment for the deaf child in the home is so much more in need than in a home of hearing children. Deaf children in most cases have little or no language and therefore a recommendation is that an environment rich with literature and learning experiences as well as incidental learning to place is what hearing parents need to incorporate into their lives and their homes.

#### **5.4.9 Deaf children can be successful adults**

The concerns of many parents are that they do not know what the future holds for their deaf child. They immediately see a bleak future with no success for their deaf child. The simple reason for this is that hearing parents have not had enough exposure to the deaf community or interacted with adult deaf people to find out what work they do and how they survive in a hearing environment. It is recommended that parents of deaf learners interact in the deaf community and communicate with the deaf. It will enlighten your knowledge of the fact that many deaf people are successful and have been to universities and some have professional work but what will also be discovered is that those

successful adults had supportive parents all through their schooling life. They communicated with the school and created a partnership to make their deaf child's future a success.

#### **5.4.10 Hearing parent involvement in their deaf child's learning outside the school**

In Chapter Four, ways in which hearing parents can get involved in their deaf child's education is discussed. The involvement is deeper and there were ideas that parents have shared that they implement in their daily lives. This research takes from that and recommends that hearing parents make everything, a learning experience for their deaf child. A simple experience of going shopping, crossing the road, having lunch can be an opportunity for the parent to impart some information to their deaf child provided they can sign and as one parent said do not allow not knowing the sign stop you from communicating with your deaf child, make up a sign until you find the proper sign. Parents must keep in mind that the deaf child does not learn incidentally from the social media and normal, everyday conversations as in the case of their hearing counterparts. Therefore parents have to create opportunities for their child to learn and parents can communicate with the teacher and the school for the deaf to draw on ideas and how these ideas can be implemented.

#### **5.4.11 SMT's, teachers and parents to encourage and sustain partnerships with each other for the benefit of the deaf child.**

In any institute, all stakeholders' attitudes, beliefs and efforts are what makes or breaks the communication. In Chapter Four a discussion on ways the school can be encouraged and sustained is elaborated. In Epstein (1987), theory of overlapping spheres of influence which explains the shared responsibility of the home, school, and community for children's learning and development, it is recommended that all the stakeholders in the deaf child's life are of equal importance and they each have a responsibility in ensuring that they have a part to play in encouraging and maintaining the relationship with each other. It is recommended that the SMT's, teachers and hearing parents take equal responsibility in encouraging and sustaining their relationships in the best interest of the learners.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the data relates to the stakeholder's partnership status and factors that influence its success or failure. The chapter provides a summary of the study and focuses on the critical questions that initiated the study. The presentations of data findings and the recommendations which are directed to SMT's, teachers and hearing parents in a school for the deaf.

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## 7.0 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Letter requesting permission from the District Education Office

350 Shannon Drive

Reservoir Hills

Durban

4091

28 April 2016

Attention: Mr Sibusiso Alwar

The Research Unit

Resource Planning

KwaZulu natal

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Dear Sir

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Cheryl Keerpaul Devnath, a Masters student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree fulfilment, I am required to conduct research. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in one combined school under your jurisdiction in the Pinetown District. The title of my study is:

**Exploring partnerships between schools for the Deaf and parents is managed: Perspectives from school management, teachers, and hearing parents at combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu- Natal.**

I am seeking your permission in an important study which explores the how the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents is managed. To obtain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership between them for the benefit of the deaf child.

The study requires me to interview, observations and to make use of document analysis. I am seeking your permission to conduct the study with one principal; one deputy principal; two heads of department; two teachers and two parents of the school. The interviews will not take place during teaching learning time. No aspect of the research process will interfere with the normal running of the school.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to study in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary which means the participant may withdraw at any time without incurring any penalties.

You may contact my supervisor, UKZN Research Office or myself should you have any queries or questions:

**Supervisor: Dr T.T. Bhengu**

Tel. 031-2603534

Cell: 0839475321

E-mail: [bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za).

**UKZN ResearchOffice**

Mariette Snayman

HSSREC Ethics

Tel: 031-2608350

E-mail: [snymanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za)

**My contact details:**

Mrs C.K. Devnath

Tel: 031-7671215 (work)

Cell: 0824471142

E-Mail: [Cheryl.devnath@gmail.com](mailto:Cheryl.devnath@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2: Letter requesting permission from school principal

### Gatekeeper Permission

Dear Madam

I am a fieldworker participating in a research project which is entitled

**Exploring partnerships between schools for the Deaf and parents is managed: Perspectives from school management, teachers, and hearing parents at a combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu- Natal.**

I am seeking your permission in an important study which explores the how the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents is managed. To obtain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership between them for the benefit of the deaf child.

The study requires me to interview, observations and to make use of document analysis. I am seeking your permission to conduct the study with one principal; one deputy principal; two heads of department; two teachers and two parents of the school. The interviews will not take place during teaching learning time. No aspect of the research process will interfere with the normal running of the school.

Every effort will be made to ensure that no one will be able to identify participants or the schools they work in. They will be free to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative or undesirable consequences. All information is only intended for research purposes. Teachers will not be paid for participation in the study. All data recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office.

Should you require further clarification, please contact my supervisor, Dr T.T. Bhengu, on Tel: 031-2603534 and by bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za. Permission to conduct this study has been obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Should you wish to get further information from the research office of the University of KwaZulu-natal as regards to this study, you may also do so via the following contact details:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 – 2604557

Email: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully,

---

Mrs C. K. Devnath

Fieldworker's name

### Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet

#### Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant

Information regarding participation in a research project, my topic stating:

**Exploring partnerships between schools for the Deaf and parents is managed: Perspectives from school management, teachers, and hearing parents at a combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu- Natal.**

I am seeking your participation in an important study which explores the how the partnership between the school for the deaf and the hearing parents is managed. To obtain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership between them for the benefit of the deaf child.

The study requires me to interview you. As a participant you have rights. These include voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. You have the right to be protected from harm and no detail that will enable you to be identified will be used. All information is intended for research purposes only.

Please note there is no payment for participation in this study.

Should you require further clarification, please contact the lecturer, Dr T.T. Bhengu, on Tel: 031-2603534 and by bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za. Permission to conduct this study has been obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Should you wish to get further information from the research office of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as regards to this study, you may also do so via the following contact details:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 – 2604557

Email: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

## **Appendix 4: SMT interview schedule - Principal, Deputy Principal and Head of Department**

### **SMT interview schedule – Principal, Deputy Principal and Heads of Department**

1. What is your perception of the concept parent involvement in a deaf child's education?
2. What are the benefits of the parental involvement in a school for the deaf?
3. In what ways are hearing parents involved in their children's education at your school?
4. Do you think that this school does enough to involve parents in their child's education?  
Explain/Elaborate on your answer.
5. In your opinion, is there anything more that the school can do to encourage and increase parental involvement?
6. Do some of the parents involve themselves in their child's education? Elaborate.
7. Are hearing parents of the deaf pupils in this school properly equipped to become meaningfully involved in their children's education? Motivate your answer.
8. Specify some the things you actually expect parents to do in involving themselves in the education of their children.
9. Do you communicate your needs in assisting their deaf child to the parents or do you expect parents to know what is needed?
10. Are parents encouraged to voice their suggestions on how to help their children with their education? If yes explain how. If no, explain why not.
11. What are some of the barriers to parental involvement in the context you teaching in?
12. In what ways do teachers of the deaf hinder parent involvement?
13. What are some of the ways that hearing parents inhibit their involvement?
14. In what ways are SMT's creating barriers to parental involvement?
15. What role does the deaf child play in hindering their parental involvement?
16. What are some of the strategies that the SMT, teachers, and government can use to break down barriers to parent involvement and empower them to become effectively involved?
17. Would you say that many children in your school come from indigent homes with uneducated parents?  
If yes, how can we get the poor, uneducated parents more involved in their child's education?
18. As a school principal or HOD or DP have you attended any workshops on parent involvement?
19. Have you organised any workshop for teachers and parents on parental involvement?
20. Are their parents who cannot be meaningfully involved in their child's education at a school for the deaf? Explain.
21. Describe the present parental-school communication that goes on between the school and parents? How can you improve it?

Before we conclude our conversation, is there anything that you want to share with me that I did not ask you about?

Thank you for sharing your views with me!

## **Appendix 5: Interview schedule for teachers of the deaf**

### **Teachers of the deaf interview schedule**

1. What is your perception of the concept of parent involvement in a deaf child's education?
2. What do you think are the benefits of the parental involvement in a school for the deaf?
3. In what ways are hearing parents involved in their children's education at your school?
4. Do you think that this school does enough to involve parents in their child's education?  
Explain/Elaborate on your answer.
5. In your opinion, is there anything more that the school can do to encourage and increase parental involvement?
6. Do some of the parents involve themselves in their child's education? Elaborate.
7. Are hearing parents of the deaf pupils in this school properly equipped to become meaningfully involved in their children's education? Motivate your answer.
8. Specify some the things you actually expect parents to do in involving themselves in the education of their children.
9. Do you communicate your needs in assisting their deaf child to the parents or do you expect parents to know what is needed?
10. Are parents encouraged to voice their suggestions on how to help their children with their education? If yes explain how. If no, explain why not.
11. What are some of the barriers to parental involvement in the context you teaching in?
12. In what ways do teachers of the deaf hinder parent involvement?
13. What are some of the ways that hearing parents inhibit their involvement?
14. In what ways are SMT's creating barriers to parental involvement?
15. What role does the deaf child play in hindering their parental involvement?
16. What are some of the strategies that the SMT, teachers, and government can use to break down barriers to parent involvement and empower them to become effectively involved?
17. Would you say that many children in your school come from indigent homes with uneducated parents?  
If yes, how can we get the poor, uneducated parents more involved in their child's education?
18. As a teacher at a school for the deaf, have you attended any workshops on parent involvement?
19. Have you organised any workshop for teachers and parents on parental involvement?
20. Are their parents who cannot be meaningfully involved in their child's education at a school for the deaf? Explain.
21. Describe the present parental-school communication that goes on between the school and parents? How can you improve it?

Before we conclude our conversation, is there anything that you want to share with me that I did not ask you about?

Thank you for sharing your views with me!



## **Appendix 6: Interview schedule for hearing parents that have a deaf child in the school for the deaf**

### **Hearing Parent Interview Schedule**

1. What do you do at school and at home to help your deaf child succeed in their schooling?

2. How do you help your child in terms of homework and general study at home?

Do you feel competent to help children with homework and general study at home?

Elaborate.

3. Does the school communicate what is expected in relation to parental involvement?

4. What are your views about on joint involvement with teachers in your child's education?

5. Do you sometimes visit the school uninvited to discuss your children's education?

6. In your opinion, what are the benefits of parental involvement in children's education?

7. What are the barriers to parental involvement? How can they be overcome?

8. Is parental involvement more of a mother's duty than a father's at primary school level?

Explain.

9. How would you describe the state of the relationship between you as a parent, teachers and the SMT?

10. Do you think there are barriers in parents becoming involved in the school for the deaf?

Explain.

11. Do you think that the school for the deaf can do more to increase the parents' involvement? If so, explain how this can be done.

12. What can hearing parents do to get more involved in a school for the deaf, to become more involved in their child's education?

**Before we conclude our conversation, is there anything that you want to share with me that I did not ask you about?**

**Thank you for sharing your views with me!**

**Appendix 7: Observation Schedule**

These are the following that will be observed during school meetings with parents and on a daily basis in the school environment between school for the deaf and hearing parents (some of these observations will be supported by document analysis):

1. How often in which parents and teachers interact in formal school meetings to discuss the deaf child?
2. Parents and their effort in communicating with the teachers about how to support their deaf child.
3. Do the formal SMT meetings include informing the parents of school policies and assistance for parents to help their deaf children?
4. Are SMT's encouraging and providing skills and ways for teachers to have open communication with parents?
5. Does the principal have an open door policy and the school environment-friendly, making parents feel welcome and comfortable to come in and discuss their deaf child?

## Appendix 8: Turnitin Certificate

Turnitin Document Viewer - Google Chrome

https://turnitin.com/dv?lang=en\_us&u=1042004587&s=3&o=727005782

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BY CHERYL CHERYL

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Exploring partnerships between schools for the Deaf and parents is managed: Perspectives from school management, teachers, and hearing parents at a combined school for the deaf in KwaZulu- Natal

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE FOR THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This research seeks to explore how the partnership between schools for the deaf and the hearing parents is managed. The concept of partnership in education is important and emanates from the Constitution of South Africa. Act No. 108 of 1996a (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) and finds expression in the African schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 as Amended (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). In the context of this research project, the school that has been identified for the study provides education to the deaf learners but all of their parents do not have such a disability. Notwithstanding this, it remains an expectation that schools, whether they provide education to the learners with disabilities or not, should establish and maintain an effective partnership with parents in order to provide education to the learners effectively. The study further seeks to obtain insights from the school management team, teachers and hearing parents regarding their relationship and partnership between them for the benefit of the deaf learner. The "deaf learner" will be used throughout this study to show the learner in a school for the deaf whereas "deaf child" will be discussed in relation to their hearing parents.

The South African Schools Act 84 (1996), section 18, in its responsibilities of parents with respect to the code of conduct state, that as parents they are expected to take an active interest in their children's work and make it possible for their child to complete homework assigned to their child. It defines the concept of parent and outlines basic parental duties. The requirements of the policy are one thing, however, in practice the parent involvement lack in South African schools. The South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 implies that schools in South Africa should acknowledge the fact that there are a variety of family types and therefore schools need to devise various strategies to communicate with the diverse family home.

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