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An investigation of the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning parental involvement in kindergartens and primary schools in Kuwait

Thesis presented for the fulfillments of the requirements for the degree of PhD. In Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Research conducted over nearly a quarter of a century has shown convincingly that children are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home (Epstein and Dauber, 1991).

Despite the existence of considerable evidence of the positive effect of parental involvement on students' academic success and school development, few studies have been undertaken to examine parental involvement in Kuwait. Hence, little is known about the attitudes and opinions of parents, teachers, and principals towards certain types of parental involvement practices and their willingness to establish ongoing two-way communication to foster children's success at school.

The aim of this study is to investigate the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals about parental involvement in kindergarten through grade three in primary school in Kuwait schools in Hawalli district. Data collected from the three groups were employed to examine the ways that parents are involved and how they desire to be involved in their children's schooling. The influence of family background factors on parents' current participation at home and school as well as barriers hindering parents' participation in Kuwait schools were identified.

To achieve its goals this research adopted a mixed methods design utilizing three sequential and complementary (quantitative and qualitative) methods. The study sample consisted of 12 focus groups of a total of sixty teachers, 14 interviews with principals and 430 parents who completed questionnaires.

i

Findings from the study revealed that parents, teachers and principals agreed that parents' levels of participation in home-based involvement were generally higher than their levels of school-based involvement.

The influence of family background factors was examined. Child grade level, family size, and the parent's gender, level of education and employment were each found to have a significant influence on certain types of parental involvement. The parent's lack of time and time conflicts with school schedules emerged as major barriers to family involvement as perceived by parents, teachers and principals.

The findings also revealed that parents and school personnel have different perceptions of their roles. The strict nature of the educational system in Kuwait and attitudes among school staff created some limitations to the participation of parents in certain types of activities.

Overall, the findings of this study could be used to provide helpful recommendations that might enhance parental involvement in a meaningful way and contribute to the success of children and improvements in schools.

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Finally, a very special thank you to all who have supported me throughout the past years. I am grateful for your help, concern and encouragement for making this achievement possible.

Declaration

I, Hanan Almazeedi hereby declare:

a) That this dissertation is my own original work and that all source material used is acknowledged herein;

b) That it has been prepared specifically for a first degree of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne; and

c) That it does not contain any material previously submitted to the Examiners of this or any other University.

Signed: Hanan Almazeedi

Date: 30/08/2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

The selection of the topic in this thesis stemmed from my direct experiences as a mother and researcher. As a mother, my participation in my children's schooling encompassed traditional patterns of parental involvement. It was limited to reviewing my children's homework and lessons, receiving report cards and newsletters, and contacting school teachers through parent-teacher meetings to follow my children's progress. When I went with my family to the United Kingdom to pursue my doctoral studies, I had the opportunity to go together with my children to kindergarten, primary and middle schools where I experienced productive relationships between teachers and parents. School personnel provided us with various opportunities to get involved in our children's education in meaningful ways.

As a researcher, I was interested in the field of early childhood education and interaction between teachers and parents. The positive experience which I encountered here in my children's schools has guided me in exploring more broadly the pertinent literature of parental involvement practices. In actual fact, its value and extensive lasting benefits have reinforced my interest and enthusiasm to undertake the challenge and study parental involvement in the early years from the Kuwaiti perspective.

1.1 New Concept

Parental involvement is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of parents' behaviours, such as monitoring and supervising children, communicating with schools, reading to children and helping them regularly at home, sustaining engagement with teachers about a child's progress, and volunteering in the school or classroom (Epstein, 1986, 2005; Henderson and Mapp; 2002; Porter, 2008). However,

options for involvement have moved beyond narrow and traditional practices (fundraising, volunteering, helping with homework) to include roles for parents as teachers, decision makers, advocates, and supporters of activities for their children's education and schools (Hester, 1989).

1.2 The context of the study

This thesis utilizes a mixed methods approach in aiming to study the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals about parental involvement in kindergarten and primary schools in Hawalli district in Kuwait. The following brief review of the educational system in Kuwait allows an understanding of the context where the study has been undertaken.

Due to the importance of education in the development of the country, the Kuwaiti government has issued laws and legal forms which regulate the provision of education for all Kuwaitis to ensure justice in offering equal educational opportunities for all citizens.

The government of Kuwait has divided the state into six educational districts: Al-Asemah, Al-Jahrah, Al-Farwaneiyah, Hawalli, Al-Ahmadi, and Mobarak Al-Kabeer. Each district has its own administration under the authority of the Ministry of Education which is responsible for schooling and educational units in public and private schools.

Although the form and structure of the Kuwait educational system has been influenced by Western educational theories, and particularly the U.S.A educational system, Kuwait preserves its own education system which is implemented and controlled by the State (Ministry of Information, 1997).

Schools in Kuwait were considered to be government property. The centralized nature of the educational system in Kuwait revealed to the public that the people did not have a role in school functions. Almost every educational aspect is controlled by the Ministry of Education and by other authorities associated with it. For example, parents were not given the opportunity to participate in planning and managing the schools that had been designed to serve them. This may have led to a deficiency in the educational system, as parents remained outside the decision-making groups and accepted whatever was planned and suggested for them and their children by the professionals.

Education in public schools is free and compulsory for all Kuwaiti children, male and female, from the age of 6 at the start of primary education to the age of 14 which is the end of intermediate education. The state is compelled to provide school buildings, schoolbooks, and teaching staff to facilitate the process of children's schooling.

In response to changes in Kuwaiti society and after several research studies concerning reform in its educational system, Kuwait modified the educational ladder in 2005 from '4-4-4' to the following new educational ladder:

- Elementary stage   5 years   compulsory

- Intermediate stage   4 years   compulsory

- Secondary stage   3 years   non compulsory

1.2.1 Kindergarten

This stage represents the transition of children from the home to the school environment. Kindergarten is non-compulsory and children usually enter kindergarten at the age of 4 and spend two years learning basic numeracy and literacy skills. In addition, kindergarten provides children with physical training, health education, artistic and musical activities, and moral training to develop children's physical and

mental skills. Teachers in kindergarten are all females and mostly Kuwaitis (Al-Abdelghafour, 2004).

1.2.2 Primary stage

This stage is compulsory beginning at the age of six and lasting for five years. The curriculum in this stage concentrates on writing and reading skills, and an introduction to social studies, national education, mathematics and science. The primary level is the foundation for children to develop their skills and deepen their knowledge to prepare them properly for the next stage. Male and female children are separated as soon as they enter primary level. In 1976/77 the Ministry of Education started to feminize most of the primary schools, and only very few schools are staffed by male teachers (Al-Ahmed, 1995). The Undersecretary of Education, Noreya Al-Subaih, demonstrated that the process of feminizing the schools at the primary level was based on a number of academic studies and educational research which concluded that:

- Students in the new system are becoming more focused and more cooperative in the class.

- The feminization of teaching staff in primary education contributed to an improvement in academic achievement among students and helped to increase communication between home and school.

- The nature of the female teacher in understanding the feelings of students and her ability to provide an atmosphere of care and attention which is not unlike mothers in the home contributed to the development of the educational process.

Al-Subaih added that, up to now, the feminization of the teaching profession has covered 89% of the total number of primary schools, and the Ministry of Education

will continue to apply this system to all primary schools in all districts. According to Al-Subaih, the ministry will consider leaving one school staffed with male teachers in each district for parents if they prefer to register their male children in those schools (Al-Anba, 2008).

Consequently, one could assume that the degree to which parents' participation in their children's education depends as much on the individual parent as on the educational system. In the case of structured and centralized systems such as that seen in Kuwait, however, opportunities for meaningful involvement between home and school might be minimized.

1.3 Women's role and position in Kuwait society

Prior research reported that women take more responsibility in nurturing and raising their children than any other adult at home (Renk et al., 2003; Lareau, 2000). To serve the purpose of the present research, it is important to examine the development of the social structure in Kuwait, as well as scrutinize the status of Kuwaiti women and their roles in society. It is generally believed that the discovery of oil played a significant role in accelerating the process of the socioeconomic development of Kuwait society (Al-Naser, 2005). It is therefore useful to examine the family structure and women's roles before and after the discovery of oil.

1.3.1 Kuwaiti women's status and role in the pre-oil era

In pre-oil times, the pattern of the old Kuwaiti family was a classical extended type. The structure of the extended family is large in size and is usually headed by the grandparents (the oldest household member); it consists of them, their married sons, their wives and their children, as well as unmarried aunts and uncles. The roles of the family members were strictly defined and responsibilities were usually influenced by

5

gender and age. Male members of the family were the breadwinners and the female members were confined to roles dictated by their biological constitution. Their most natural and vital role was that of a mother. Their family was their natural domain, where they were supported and protected by their husbands. Most men and young males participated in the pearl trade, while women were left in the home to work as hard as men, taking on full responsibility for the family (Al-Naser, 2005; Tetreault and Al-Mughni, 1995).

Children were the sole responsibility of the wife; however, at the age of ten, male children were integrated into the male naval community where they would begin their apprenticeship under their fathers' supervision. As for female children, as soon as they reached puberty, they were prohibited to play in the streets with the boys and had to retire with the other females to the secluded courtyard.

In the past, marriage was arranged and young girls were kept in the dark about their coming marriage and had no say in the affair. It was the senior male members of their extended families who would make the arrangements for the wedding, assess the suitability of the bridegroom, and gather information about his family and the price of the dowry. Al-Mughni (2001) stated that not only were women controlled, they were also undervalued. They played no role in the naval economy and lived on the periphery of the male community. The devaluation of women was apparent at the birth of a child. If it was a boy, the men celebrated as it was a source of pride for the family to have many male members. The birth of a daughter, however, was not celebrated. In actual fact, a woman who bore only girls faced the threat of either a divorce or the possibility of her husband taking another wife.

In short, it could be said that Kuwaiti women lived under constraining physical and social conditions. They were secluded, veiled, and overwhelmingly illiterate. They were married at an early age to a male relative, and their social domain was limited to the immediate neighborhood of their homes (Longva, 2006).

1.3.2 Kuwaiti women's status and role in the post-oil era

Since the discovery of oil in the late 1930's, Kuwait has developed and expanded in a relatively short time through the steady stream of high government revenues and heavy public investment. Al-Naser (2005) stated that, with the consequent rise in the standard of living and the development of education and the rise in the economy, the Kuwaiti family, like any other social institution, has undergone significant changes. A nuclear family has emerged and consists of a husband, wife, and their children. Economic independence and the provision of government housing further contributed to the transition of a society controlled by the extended family to one controlled by the nuclear family.

In the transition to a modern state and society, women gained access to education and to work simultaneously with men. Kuwaiti females are offered equivalent opportunities in education, which has been a crucial catalyst in releasing women from their traditional roles in Kuwait. According to Longva (2006), Kuwaiti women now attend universities (many go abroad to study), participate in the labor force and are represented in nearly every professional category. In fact, Kuwaiti working women are not restricted to those jobs conventionally reserved for females such as teaching, they are found amongst deans, lawyers, and doctors. In addition, they hold outstanding positions such as ambassador, minister and undersecretary in the government.

Regardless of women's achievement in education and employment, they were excluded from Kuwait's political sphere, governed by rigid electoral law. However, by 2005, Kuwaiti women were finally granted their full right to vote and stand for office after four decades of women campaigning for full political rights.

Despite the recent attainment of suffrage, Kuwaiti women still face institutionalized discrimination. For example, a husband's permission is required before Kuwaiti women can apply for and receive a passport. In a Muslim court of law, a woman's testimony is given half the weight of a man's; therefore, two women are needed to contradict the claims of a man. In matters of inheritance, Islamic Shariah law grants a daughter only half the share of a son. However, with respect to inheritance, for example, men are given a larger share because they are required by Islam to assume an unequal burden in meeting the financial needs of the family. As for citizenship, a Kuwaiti woman is not an autonomous citizen. She is a Kuwaiti national by virtue of having a Kuwaiti father, but can lose her status and her rights as a Kuwaiti if she marries a foreigner, even if she continues to live in Kuwait. Women married to foreigners cannot pass their citizenship to their children or husband, which is the opposite of what happens when a Kuwaiti man marries a non-Kuwaiti woman. In fact, adult children and non-Kuwaiti spouses of Kuwaiti women are treated like any other expatriate and have no right to remain in Kuwait unless they receive residency permits from the state on the same basis as other foreigners seeking Kuwaiti residence (Tetreault and Al-Mughni, 2000; Casey, 2007)

At the same time, women also face discrimination and inequality in employment. Even though about one-third of Kuwait's women are employed, most in managerial positions for the state, the typical Kuwaiti woman is expected to stay at home and rear

her children. The labor law forbids women from serving as judges, from joining the military or working night shifts, except in hospital or under certain specified conditions (Casey, 2007). Among other issues, Kuwaiti women still continue to suffer from wage discrimination. Even when women have higher educational qualifications than men, their wages still fall below the male average. Kuwaiti working women are also deprived of the social benefits that Kuwaiti men are entitled to. For instance, they do not receive marital and child allowances if their husbands work in the state sector (Shah and Al- Qudsi, 1999, cited in Tetreault and Al-Mughni, 2000, p. 159).

The innovation of the last few decades also added more flexibility in gender roles and family relationships. The old marriage regulations have changed and marriage began to be outside the extended family; however, Kuwaiti social practice regarding marriage and divorce reflects Islamic principles as well as historical patterns. Marriage is commonly arranged by families, although a woman can reject a man selected by her father or uncles. A Muslim woman, regardless of her age, cannot marry without the prior approval of her legal guardian. The guardian is generally the woman's father or, in his absence, her brother, or other old male relative. Under Islamic law, a woman can marry only one husband, while a man may have up to four wives simultaneously. A man can marry a second wife without the permission of his first wife, and in some situations, without her knowledge. Divorce is available to a wife on carefully confined grounds and to a husband on demand. A wife may not appeal for divorce on the grounds that her husband has taken another wife. Women have the right to seek divorce if they are deserted in marriage or subjected to violent treatment that leads to physical injury. A woman is owed financial compensation equal to one year of maintenance if her husband divorces her without her consent (Al-Mughni, 2005).

Opinions about the large family size of the past have also changed. The size of a family is affected by its level of education. Parents with a higher level of education tend to reduce the size of the family in order to focus on teaching a smaller number of children and providing them with the best quality of education. This also applies to highly educated women, particularly if they are employed. However, according to Al-Thakeb (1985), the Kuwaiti nuclear family is still large in size, with an average of seven members. This is because Kuwait government policies have several incentives that promote childbearing such as free education, child allowances, subsidies on housing, and government-financed health care.

To conclude, Kuwaiti women gained more social and political autonomy than women in most Gulf Arab Countries. Education offered Kuwaiti women alternative roles besides those of mother and wife. Many women in Kuwait hold advanced degrees and have careers in medicine, industry and other prominent positions. DiPiazza (2007) believed that, when women received education, participated more fully in the labor force, and obtained their full political rights, it showed that attitudes towards women have begun to alter in Kuwait. However, traditional values still continue to regulate their freedom as they have for centuries, especially when compared to Western lifestyles.

1.4 Research overview

Research conducted over the past two decades has concluded that the significant impact of parental involvement on children's academic success and other important outcomes cannot be underestimated. Parents have the most crucial influence in the personal and educational development of their children. Their involvement can bring change and better instructional opportunities for teachers and children (Mills, 1996;

Berger, 1999). Parents who participate in their children's education in school have an impact in becoming advocates for their children's education. Their advocacy efforts are viewed as essential contributors to the deliverance of good quality in education (Topping, 1986).

While parents play a key role in their children's education, school personnel lie at the heart of any attempts to involve parents. According to Bastiani (1993), in order to establish collaboration between home and school, it is the school staff's responsibility to initiate contacts with parents. Thus, teachers must be informed and trained in the skills required to become active members of the parental involvement process. Accordingly, when teachers guide parental involvement and communication competently, parents become knowledgeable partners in the process of their children's education and show more willingness in their involvement at home and school to promote their children's learning and development (Tomlinson, 2001, Hornby, 2000). School principals on the other hand, set the expectations for involvement and the tone for interaction through providing practical and constant communication between home and school, and a partnership between parents and teachers that is well established and maintained (Spence, 2009; Coletta, 1999). Therefore, when principals and teachers are committed to bring parents into their children's education, positive outcomes could be achieved.

Research conducted in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and other parts of the world has clearly shown that children obtain higher levels of achievement and develop more positive attitudes towards schools when their parents are involved in their schooling.

Evidence abounds that, in addition to the improvement of children's academic success, appropriate parental involvement can result in children's regular attendance, more positive attitudes and good behaviour, higher retention and graduation rates, and overall school improvement. Even the morale of teachers improves and they are rated more highly by parents (Henderson, 1987; Rich 1993; Henderson and Berla, 1994; Miedel and Reynolds, 1999; Wheeler and Connor, 2009).

Despite evidence of the positive educational effects of parental involvement, its potential is still largely ignored in many schools. Research has identified major obstacles that may inhibit effective parental involvement, including school and home barriers (Moore and Lasky, 2001).

1.5 Statement of the problem

Few studies have been conducted in Kuwait concerning parental involvement. Yet, looking closely at the nature of parental involvement in Kuwaiti schools, we can elucidate that despite the attempts of authorities in the Ministry of Education in regulating and encouraging effective family and school partnership, parental involvement in Kuwait is considered to be minimal and there is a deep rift between home and school. According to Al-Houli (1999), the opinion of teachers is that parental involvement is limited and parents are not enthusiastic about their participation in the development of their children's education.

In addition, lack of parental involvement in Kuwait schools has led to various educational problems such as failure and dropping-out, which has notably increased in recent years (Al-Hamdan, 2002). The studies of Al-Ahmad and AbuAllam (1987) and Nemer and Al-Sharida (1989) argued that weak relationships between families and schools are one of the major causes of failure and dropout in Kuwait.

It appears that parent involvement in Kuwait is not fulfilling its goals to the extent that it should. Therefore, it can be argued that, before implementing any programme to develop effective parental involvement in our schools, it would be helpful to study the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals to determine the ways in which schools are engaging parents in their children's education and how parents are responding to available opportunities to become involved.

1.6 Conceptual framework

Due to the limited amount of knowledge about the topic of parental involvement in Kuwait, qualitative and quantitative methods have been used sequentially in this study, taking advantage of triangulation to increase the validity of the results. Qualitative methods were employed first to collect data from teachers and principals to gain more insight into parental involvement practices in Kuwait schools. The initial findings from analysis of the qualitative data revealed that some parental involvement practices mentioned by teachers and principals fall into Epstein's framework of five types of involvement, which will be further explained later in the thesis. This led to the employment of Epstein's theory of overlapping influence (1990a, 1995) in interpreting the types of involvement and interactions found in this study between school personnel and parents. In her theory, Epstein (1990a) points out that, depending on the backgrounds of families and the history of policies and practices in schools, the spheres representing family and school interaction sometimes act separately from one another, while at other times they combine. Based on the evidence above, the reality of home-school relations in Kuwait has not yet been decisively recognized as a sharing of accountability between parents and teachers insofar as children's education is concerned. In order to fill the gap in existing research and to enhance parental involvement in schools, it was decided that this

study would undertake to identify the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning parental involvement practices in kindergarten and primary schools in Kuwait. To pursue its aim, the research combined two sequential and complementary qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The qualitative phase consisted of 12 focus groups of a total of sixty teachers and 14 interviews with principals. The quantitative phase consisted of 430 questionnaires which were completed by parents who had a child attending kindergarten through grade three in primary school.

1.7 The purpose of the study

Data collected from qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to: 1) examine perceptions of parents, teachers and principals concerning the actual ways in which parents were involved at home and school, 2) identify the influence of certain backgrounds factors on parents' current levels of involvement, 3) examine the views of parents, teachers and principals about the types of activities in which they favoured parental involvement, 4) identify the extent to which parents, teachers and principals perceive the effect of some barriers that hinder parental involvement.

1.8 The research questions

This study aims to answer the following general question: *what are the perceptions of teachers, parents and principals towards parental involvement in kindergarten and primary schools in Kuwait?* This question is answered through the following sub-questions.:

1. How do parents perceive the current types and levels of their involvement in the education of their children?

2. How do teachers and principals perceive the current types and levels of parental involvement practices in their schools?

3. Do family background factors influence parents' perceptions regarding their current parental involvement?

4. What types of parental involvement activities in their children's education are desired by parents?

5. What types of parental involvement activities in their schools are desired by teachers and principals?

6. To what extent do parents, teacher and principals perceive the barriers which hinder effective parental involvement?

1.9 Rationale of the study

Parental involvement in education, both at home and at school, has been recognized in previous research as an important factor in improving children's academic success and school effectiveness. However, one of the more noticeable gaps in the parent involvement literature is the lack of data about the attitudes and opinions of key stakeholders (parents, teachers, principals) towards various aspects of parental involvement (Samples, 1985). This study is based on the assumption that in order to enhance parents' participation in children's education and design parental involvement programmes which meet the needs of parents and school personnel, the efforts and concerns of each group must be identified. The rationale behind studying parental involvement in the early years is that parental involvement in children's early education is beneficial. There is increasing evidence that parental involvement in this period produces positive long term outcomes on a child's development and learning (Henderson and Berla, 1994). So far, no study in Kuwait has been found which explores aspects of parental involvement (see section 1.6) from multiple perspectives.

It could be anticipated that, due to its aim of describing patterns of parental involvement from the perspective of parents, teachers, and principals, this research will be a crucial step in establishing practical guidelines to plan meaningful parental involvement programmes in kindergartens and primary schools in Kuwait.

1.10 Organization of the study

The study is organized into six chapters. Chapter one presents an introduction to the subject, its background and a statement of the problem, the conceptual framework, purpose of the study, research questions and rationale of the study. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature on parental involvement. Chapter three describes the design and methodology used in the current study. Chapter four presents the research findings. Chapter five includes a discussion of the findings, and Chapter six summarizes the major findings and offers conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

2.1 Parental Involvement

An increasing body of research continues to illustrate a growing consensus about the need for parental involvement in schools and that there is an urgent requirement for schools to find ways to support the success of our children. One element that contributes to more successful children and more successful schools across all populations is when parents are involved in their children's learning and education at school and at home. Parent and family involvement has become a major component of almost every plan to restructure schools. Proper parental involvement, when it becomes part of teachers' regular practice at school, is considered as a fundamental implication of school effectiveness and competency (Munn, 1993; Decker and Decker, 2003; Risko and Walker-Dalhouse, 2009).

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature which includes information and knowledge about the definition of parental involvement and the nature of parental involvement in Kuwait and the United Kingdom. An understanding of parental involvement from different perspectives is defined. Epstein's six types of parental involvement as well as other typologies are explained. In this chapter the benefits of parental involvement and barriers that impede parental involvement are also highlighted. A review of previous empirical research which brings together information about differences between the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals is also presented in this chapter. Moreover, the impact of family background factors on types and levels of parent involvement is further examined.

2.2 Definitions of parental involvement

Despite the fact that parental involvement has been linked to the quality of children's learning and motivation in school (Stevenson and Baker, 1987), operational definitions of parental involvement have not been clear and consistent. Thus, carefully defining parent involvement in school is a necessary requirement for identifying the factors that influence it (Keith, 1991; Epstein, 1992). Parental involvement has been defined across studies in terms of many different behaviours and practices of parents, including parents' participation in the educational process at home or in school, such as information exchange, decision sharing, volunteer services for schools, home tutoring/ teaching, and child advocacy (Chavkin and Williams, 1985, p. 5).

Sy et al. (2007) have broadly defined parent involvement as parent behaviours aimed at promoting children's educational development across multiple contexts. For example, constructing the home environment so that it is helpful to children's learning, participating in school activities, and enhancing children's educational experience through exposing them to community resources.

However, evidence shows that parents and educators define involvement differently. Parents define their involvement as being responsible for their children's safety and health and preparing them for school, whereas teachers define involvement primarily as parental presence at school. When definitional differences are not recognized, miscommunication can occur that lead teachers to blame the family for a child's difficulties and parents to feel unappreciated for their efforts (Lawson, 2003).

2.3 Parental involvement in Kuwait schools

The government of Kuwait has been influenced by the educational systems in the United Kingdom and United States, and has taken into consideration the value and

importance of parental involvement in the educational development of children. Thus, the Ministry of Education issued a number of directives in 1979 in an attempt to organize the relationship between public schools and parents and to build productive partnership between parents and teachers. This legislation stipulated that schools should encourage parents' participation through parent boards and other parental involvement activities (Al-Ahmed et al., 1985; Al-Houli, 1999). Nonetheless, parents have to a certain extent a passive role in their participation in their children's schooling. Parental influence on children's achievement is recognized through helping with homework and attending parent-teacher meetings and contacting schools when problems occur (Al-Houli, 1999). Due to the ineffective links between home and school, the study of Al-Ahmed et al. (1985) recommended that teachers should be asked to develop new types of communication to increase constructive relationships between home and school.

2.4 Parental involvement in United Kingdom schools

Attention to children's learning is arguably the starting point of current interest in parental involvement in schools globally. The concept of parental involvement has been developed by a number of educational researchers in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the United Kingdom, the benefits of involving parents in their children's education first achieved prevalent recognition from teachers in the 1960s following the publication of the Plowden Report in 1967. Many of its recommendations concerned the gains to be made from developing contact between homes and schools as well as about ways to increase the accountability of schools to parents (Mortimore, 1998; Browne, 2004). Although preliminary progress towards the Plowden recommendations was unsteady and conservative, legislation endorsed in the UK in the last twenty years has given official acknowledgment and contributed to

the present situation where both parents and teachers value the benefits of communication and collaboration to foster children's learning (Wolfendale, 1992; Browne, 2004). Despite this recognition, continued contact and involvement is not always easy to create and maintain. This is supported by a British study conducted by Mortimore et al. (1988 cited in Mortimore, 1998, p. 127) which revealed great variations in teachers' attitudes towards parents' participation in schools. While some schools alienated parents from schools, others used parents as unpaid labour. Only a few schools involved parents in school planning to benefit from their skills and expertise both in the classroom and at home. It could be concluded that no single system can meet the needs of all teachers and parents, and therefore that schools need to create their own comprehensive parental involvement strategies (Browne, 2004).

2.5 Theoretical perspectives on parental involvement

Many relevant theories can be characterized by variations in the degree of responsibility attributed to each key player at school and in the home and the degree of influence of specific environmental and intrinsic personality factors which prevail over the years (Epstein, 1992).

The theoretical perspectives described below currently guide researchers and practitioners in their thinking about schools and families as institutions which promote children's education and development. Divergent assumptions in these theories are found in their attention to the perspectives and practices of teachers and parents, and patterns of family-school relationships. These theories seek to explain different approaches to the connections between family and school.

The first perspective of 'separate responsibilities' was described by Lightfoot (1978), who points to characteristics of family and school life that result in conflict and

distancing between parents and teachers. It is based on the assumption of separating the authority and responsibility of families and schools, whose different goals and responsibilities are best fulfilled independently (Parsons, 1959; Epstein, 1992).

The second perspective of 'sequenced responsibilities' describes a sequence of critical stages in which parents and teachers contribute to child development. Each institution has a crucial but discrete role in the development of the child (Bloom, 1964; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969).

The third perspective, 'shared responsibilities', emphasizes that parents and schools communicate, collaborate and cooperate with each other to benefit their children's socialization and education. Teachers and parents share common goals and responsibilities that can be effectively achieved when they work together. This perspective is based on sociological and ecological theories, models and designs that emphasize the structured characteristics and interrelated behavior of families and schools (Leichter, 1974; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Seeley, 1981). This model influenced the development of Epstein's perspective of overlapping spheres of influence.

2.5.1 The overlapping spheres of influence model

This model is inspired by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model and Leichter's (1974) insights concerning families as educators, which considered the family as being a partner in children's education and learning, in addition to Seeley's (1981) suggestion that parents, teachers and the community all shared responsibility for child development. Epstein (1990a, 1995) proposed a theory considering the home-school relationship that she labelled 'overlapping spheres of influence' to convey the importance and the need to understand the family-school partnership. Productive connections may contribute to improving children's academic skills, self-esteem and

21

positive attitudes toward learning (Epstein, 1992). In figure (1), according to Epstein (1990a), the spheres of influence in the student's life of the school, family and community should overlap, putting the student's learning and development at the centre of the relationships.

Epstein's overlapping spheres
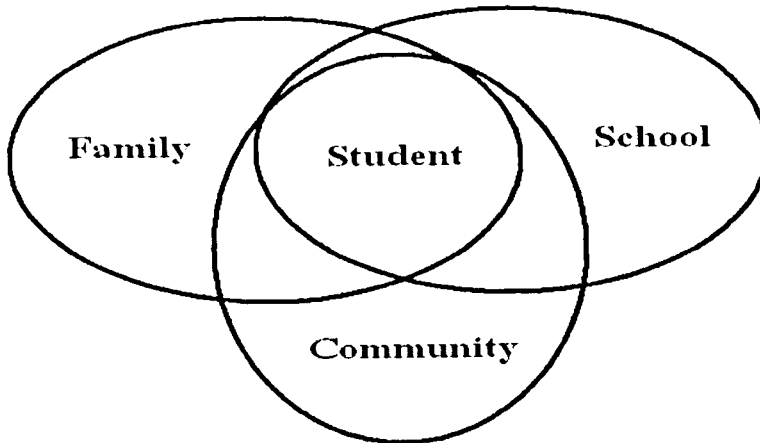
Figure 1 The three overlapping spheres of influence with the student at the centre of the relationships.

This theoretical model makes reference to multiple contexts, both external and internal, that influence the process of home-school and community partnership. External structures include such variables as family backgrounds and the history of policies and practices of schools with reference to families that can act to create conditions that support or pose significant challenges to the process of family involvement.

Within the external structure of overlapping spheres, the model recognizes an internal structure of interactions between and among the various members of school and family organizations in influencing student learning and development (Epstein, 1987a, 1990a). For example, at an institutional level, a school may invite all families to an occasion or send the same communications to all families, while at an individual

level a parent might meet a teacher in a school conference or talk by phone. Connections between schools or parents and community groups, organizations, and services can also be signified and studied within the model (Epstein, 1995).

This theory assumes that families and schools are most effective if they have overlapping or shared goals, missions and responsibilities for children. Collaboration among these educational spheres contributes to efforts towards effective and efficient personal, academic and social success for children (Epstein, 1990a).

2.6 Typologies of parental involvement

Although there are many classifications of types of parental involvement, Epstein's typology appears to be one of the most influential in the literature of parental involvement (Ritblatt et al., 2002; Barge and Loges, 2003). Epstein's framework of parental involvement has helped educators develop school and family partnership programmes, monitor progress in school and family connections, and locate their questions and results in ways that may shape and improve practices (Epstein, 1992). Therefore it is worthwhile exploring Epstein's classification in more detail.

2.6.1 Epstein's six types of parental involvement

Epstein (1987b) developed a widely recognized model that initially identified four types of parental involvement in schools. Subsequently, Epstein (1990a) expanded her typology to include six types of involvement: (a) Type 1: Parenting, (b) Type 2: Communicating, (c) Type 3: Volunteering, (d) Type 4: Learning at Home, (e) Type 5: Decision Making, and (f) Type 6: Collaborating with the Community. According to Epstein (1996) this typology has three main goals: to develop school policies and programmes and teacher effectiveness, to enhance student learning and progress, and

to assist parents to be aware of their roles in different aspects of their children's learning and development such as personal, educational, and social development.

2.6.1.1 Type 1: Parenting

The first pattern in Epstein's framework involves the activities that help families strengthen their parenting skills, for instance parents' responsibility for their children's health, safety and nutrition in addition to preparing children for school and ensuring regular school attendance. Parents can support their children's success by taking responsibility for setting positive home conditions to support their children's learning and behaviour throughout their school years. Schools can assist parents to develop these skills and knowledge through workshops, home visiting, and family support programmes (Epstein, 2001; Mandel, 2008).

Studies have proven that supporting parents in different aspects of parenting benefits student success in school. According to Pratt (1988), desirable parenting behaviours facilitate children's cognitive and conceptual development. Moreover, when emotional guidance is provided and productive social habits are supported, children can participate effectively in the school setting (Swick et al. 1979).

2.6.1.2 Type 2: Communicating

This type refers to the basic obligations of schools to communicate with families about the school programme and children's progress. Communication strategies can be one-way or two-way (Berger, 1999). According to Epstein (1992), two-way communication between teachers and families increases understanding and cooperation between the school and home to help reach certain goals for student success. Similarly, when parents communicate constructively with teachers and participate in school activities, they gain a clearer understanding of what is expected

24

of their children at school and they may learn from teachers how to work at home to enhance their children's education (Dauber and Epstein, 1993). Communication between home and school can take many forms, such as memos, notices, newsletters, telephone calls, conferences and report cards.

Effective and successful communication can help parents to recognize school programmes and policies, monitor their children's progress and respond effectively to their children's problems. On the other hand, the abilities of teachers will be improved in obtaining and understanding parents' views on children's progress, and becoming more aware of their own abilities in communicating clearly with families (Epstein, 2001, Epstein et al. 2002).

2.6.1.3 Type 3: Volunteering

This type of involvement at school includes parents and other volunteers who help teachers, principals, and children in the classroom or in other places at school at different times. For example, parents may serve as language translators, or enrich children's classes through lecturing and participating in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, mentoring, coaching and tutoring children in after-school programmes may expand their skills and keep them safe and properly supervised after school. Volunteering may include family members who come into school to support their children's performance, for example at sports and in recognition ceremonies and other events (Epstein, 2001, Epstein et al. 2002).

According to Epstein (2001), if volunteering tasks are well prepared and organized and schedules and locations are varied then parents can expand their understanding of the teacher's job, and feelings of being more comfortable, welcomed and valued at school are augmented.

2.6.1.4 Type 4: Learning at Home

This type of involvement includes guidance from teachers for parents to help their own children at home with homework and other school-related activities. Recent studies have indicated that learning at home can affect student skills and achievement. Studies have also showed that families want to help their children to learn, but may not know how (Epstein, 1992).

According to Epstein (1995), schools can assist families in helping their children at home by providing information to parents on how to monitor and help children with homework and supplying them with information on the skills required to pass in their subjects and to improve children's grades and behaviour.

2.6.1.5 Type 5: Decision-Making

The fifth type, decision-making, refers to participation in family-directed organizations that engage in collaborative planning with school staff (Manz et al., 2004). This type includes parents' participation in school decisions and developing parents for leadership and representative roles. Parents can become active participants in parent-advisory or parent councils, and other advocacy groups. When involved in decision-making activities, parents might obtain more input into decisions that affect the quality of their children's education, increase their feeling of ownership of school and become more aware of school district and state policies. According to Epstein (2001) and Epstein et al. (2002), schools and families should recognize decision-making as a process of partnership and sharing of views and actions toward shared goals, and not as a power of struggle between conflicting ideas or agendas.

26

2.6.1.6 Type 6: Collaborating with the Community

According to Epstein (1992), in this type of involvement schools collaborate with agencies, businesses, cultural organizations and other groups to share responsibility for children's education and future success. Collaboration with the community consists of school programmes that provide children and families with information on community health, cultural social support and other services. Schools can assist families by providing information on community resources which can help strengthen home conditions and help children's learning and development. Thus, the knowledge that families, students and schools have about the resources and programmes in their community will help students reach desired goals (Epstein, 2001, Epstein et al. 2002).

Epstein (1992) was one of the first to include communities in the family-school partnership because she believed that it is necessary for the community to invest in education by supporting and reaching out to families through a variety of services. When this type of involvement was added to the model as a third overlapping sphere of influence, it opened up a relatively unexplored research agenda in order to determine whether or not it was a separate type of involvement and if it differed from the other types of involvement.

Epstein has extended her development of the six types of parental involvement into a full model of parental involvement that has been commended as an inclusive and well-defined framework which recognizes family activities and behaviours both at school and in the home, allowing the examination of the mutual responsibilities and goals of family members and educators concerning children's achievement (Kohl et al., 2000; Manz et al., 2004).

27

2.6.2 Other types and models of parental involvement

Many researchers have attempted to classify the various types of parent involvement to produce useful models for different types of involvement. Dimock et al. (1996) recognized five categories of parent involvement: (a) school choice, which refers to parents selecting schools and experiences for their children; (b) decision making, which relates to parents' participation in school councils or governance to become involved in the collaborative administration of schools; (c) teaching and learning, referring to parent volunteering inside or outside classrooms when parents communicate with teachers, and at home when parents help their children with homework and discuss other school related practices; (d) the effect on the physical and material environment, which refers to parents' endeavours to ensure that their children are in a safe and comfortable school environment; and (e) communication. Emphasis was given to this type of involvement as being an essential activity when parents contact schools and when they receive any communication related to their children's behaviour and progress or about school programmes and policy.

During their first several years of observations, Comer and Haynes (1991) capitalized on the natural patterns of parent involvement in schools by creating a programme to involve parents in the restructuring of schools. Parents were involved at three levels: level 3 (general participation); level 2 (helping in classrooms or sponsoring and supporting school programmes; and level 1 (being elected by the parent group to participate in school planning and management teams).

According to Comer and Haynes (1991), these levels are reflected in Epstein's five types of parental involvement.

The previous models can describe types of parental involvement, and help educators to understand parental involvement and design activities that are meaningful and

comprehensive. Professionals and educators can analyze and refine their efforts to build strong partnerships with families on behalf of their students. However, it can be considered that family and school partnerships can be accomplished using any specific model, as long as it fits the need of teachers, parents and students. Thus, the approach to interaction is not based on the use of a specific model, but rather specific characteristics. When all participants, teachers, parents, principals and other professionals who work with children can remember to stay child-focused, then issues will be addressed in an objective and efficient way. This means that teachers and professionals will gain the trust and respect of parents, and parents will then be comfortable and willing to share necessary information with teachers. Likewise, working as partners, teachers and professionals will be able to share all types of information with parents because of the mutual trust (Springate and Stagelin, 1999; Christenson and Sheridan, 2001)

2.7 Benefits of parental involvement

2.7.1 Benefits to children

The positive effects of teachers and parents working together are well documented. The evidence for this is readily apparent. When parents are involved in their children's education, children do better in school and their academic achievement is enhanced (Henderson, 1987; Henderson and Berla, 1994). Similarly, Epstein (1992) indicated that students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging, and involved. Swick et al. (1979) added that parent involvement can increase the child's sense of social and emotional constancy. Rich (1985) further clarified that parent involvement in children's education helped to increase their regular attendance, improve attitudes and

behaviour, reduce drop-out rates, and establish positive communication between parents and their children. Henderson (1987) concluded that students at all grade levels are expected to benefit from family involvement. According to Henderson and Berla (1994), the most accurate predictors of student achievement in school are not family income or social status, but the extent to which a student's family is able to: (1) construct a home environment that supports learning; (2) discuss their high expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and (3) get involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

2.7.2 Benefits to parents

It is well documented in the literature that children seem to learn and grow in schools where parents and teachers share similar visions and collaborate on guiding children forward. Partnership between parents and teachers can reduce the distance between the characteristics of their roles. Parents feel at ease and extend positive attitudes toward their involvement in school when they know that teachers share their apprehensions about their children. Thus, parents participate more fully in children's education and learning (Krasnow, 1990).

According to Epstein (1986), involved parents were significantly more likely than other parents to report on:

- receiving ideas and instructions from teachers on how to help their children at home;

- feeling that they should help their children at home;

- knowing what their children are being taught in school, and

- feeling positive about the teacher's interpersonal skills and teaching ability.

Furthermore, Gestwicki (2004) pointed out that parents benefit from positive parent-teacher relationships through: (1) obtaining more support from teachers to help them in the difficult task of parenting, (2) gaining knowledge and skills to help them in child rearing, and (3) enhancing parental self esteem from receiving positive feedback about the effect of their parenting actions in their children's lives. Besides this, involved parents develop higher educational aspirations for their children (Greenwood and Hickman, 1991) and show improved parent-child communication (Henderson and Berla, 1994).

2.7.3 Benefits to teachers and schools

If only children and their families benefitted from parental involvement in school, the investment of the teacher's time would be worth it. However, this is not the case, since teachers and schools also benefit from parental involvement.

According to Diffily (2004), teaching is often an isolating experience. Parental involvement helps in reducing this isolation. Although teachers are still responsible for decisions and curriculum planning, having parents or other adults who are supportive of their educational programme yields opportunities for productive collaboration and partnership (Trotman, 2001).

Parental involvement can provide teachers with information and knowledge from families that make them more effective in their work, given the uniqueness of each child's personality and needs. Typically, the closer the relationship between the teacher and a family, the more information the family is willing to share (Diffily, 2004).

Swap (1993) indicated that parental involvement provides valuable resources in terms of volunteer time and contributes to increased support for the school. For instance,

parents can become a political asset when they advocate on behalf of children and the school at school board meetings and may provide linkages to partnership with businesses, agencies and other resources in the community. Besides this, when there is more parent involvement, a positive school climate is enhanced, teacher morale is improved, and parents rate teachers more highly in overall teaching ability and interpersonal skills (Epstein, 1992; Henderson and Berla, 1994).

2.8 Barriers to parental involvement

Although teachers and parents acknowledge the importance of their reciprocal relationship, they are involved in a relationship that is too often strained and not meaningful (Diffily, 2004). There is a growing body of evidence that parent-teacher partnerships can create bridges of understanding between the home and the school; however there are significant barriers to parental involvement that need to be recognized and addressed. Parental involvement might entail different meanings for parents and teachers depending on variables such as educational position and cultural and social differences (Moore and Lasky, 2001).

Sarason (1995) argued that the structure of schools delineates the nature and scope of parental involvement and can create mismatches between the home and school environments. The failure to recognize parental diversity can also cause barriers within these relationships (Crozier, 2000).

Finders and Lewis (1994) list a variety of reasons that function as obstacles to involvement; for example, difficulty in getting permission from work in order to attend school activities, or psychological barriers due to personal academic failures, which are related to socio-economic status and the educational level of the parent.

Moles (1993) and Grolnick et al. (1997) indicated that poverty and cultural differences present difficult social and psychological barriers for families to overcome

in becoming involved with their children's education. Barriers such as parental efficiency, the existence of pressure and stress at home, transportation problems, the teacher's attitudes and behaviour and childcare issues may all influence parents' participation in the school.

Swap (1993) indicated that some barriers that affect both families and schools need to be addressed in order to develop home-school partnerships. For instance parents and teachers may be uncertain about their roles, or school environments might feel unwelcoming to parents. This is supported by Dunst (2002), who explained that these constraints may be related to schools not supporting family-focused attitudes, and that parent involvement is often disregarded and ignored. For example, parents might be welcomed as volunteers in classrooms, but excluded from responsible positions such as participatory roles in curriculum, budgetary and assessment decisions.

Moore and Lasky (2001) categorized barriers into two generic categories: (1) personal and emotional, and (2) organizational and societal. The personal and emotional kind of barrier could relate to the attitudes of teachers who do not want parents to be involved in school and make negative judgments about parental interest in school activities, parenting styles, and the support provided to children at home. In their efforts to help, and wishing to find out more, parents may be regarded as a source of annoyance (Comer, 1986; Moles, 1993). Another kind of personal and emotional barrier would be a teacher's negative attitude following previous experiences or confrontations with parents (Diffily, 2004). Some teachers also believe that their professional status is jeopardized when parents are involved in their teaching responsibilities (Berger, 1999). Other conflicts may arise from opposing views on education, such as about teaching methods, assessment and the grading of children (Swap, 1993; Gestwicki, 2004).

Sometimes relationship between teachers and parents are uneasy. This could happen when parents bring depressing experiences to school, particularly when they had unpleasant memories of their own early schooling or if they hated school when they were children (Diffily, 2004).

The second category of barriers Moore and Lasky (2001) pointed to are organizational and societal. Family demographic variables such as income and family size or the parent's employment status and level of education will also affect parental involvement (Baker and Stevenson, 1986; Moles, 1993; Reglin, 1993).

Organizational structures and atmospheres could affect the level of parental involvement. Most schools pay only lip service to meaningful involvement. Their unwillingness to turn over part of the educational responsibility and leadership to parents may reflect their unsuccessful attempts to effectively include parents in the educational practice (Carrasquillo and London, 1993; Moore and Lasky, 2001).

School attitudes may also include many hidden suppositions and impressions that are influenced by often isolated experiences and factors. Biased attitudes may exist among school personnel about the appropriateness of parent participation in school. In addition, teachers could be less enthusiastic if they have had negative involvement experiences, or specific situations may prevent them from treating parents as partners, thus discouraging them from forming genuine connections with parents (Becher, 1986).

2.9 Parents, teachers, and principals' perceptions of parental involvement

The importance of examining similarities and differences between the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning parental involvement is essential as differences between the expectations of these groups can influence the success of implementing parental involvement programmes. By exploring similarities and

differences among these groups towards parental involvement, more informed policy decisions may be made in support of parental involvement programmes, and possible conflicts may be avoided that might arise from the differing perspectives of parents and school personnel (Ng, 1999; Barge and Loges, 2003). This is consistent with the belief of Samples (1985) and Coletta (1999) that teachers, parents, and principals greatly affect the academic performance of students. Therefore, the preferences of each of these groups regarding desired types of parental involvement and the identification of the problems that influence effective parental involvement would be helpful in the planning of effective parental involvement programmes (Brown et al., 1994).

One example is the study of Deplanty et al. (2007) which aimed to understand the types of parent involvement that teachers, parents, and students believed would affect the academic achievement of adolescent learners at the junior high school level. Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in this study. The results indicated that parents ensuring that students completed their homework was one of the important themes that needs to be identified. Teachers and staff also stated that they believed that the level of parent involvement for their current students was low. Parents and teachers also rated observing classes and volunteering at school as the least important activities. Results from the surveys suggest that communication between the two groups was not as open as was expected. However, there was an agreement that parent-teacher conferences were the activity that parents were involved in most.

In response to increasing emphasis upon parent participation in elementary schools, Williams and Stallworth (1982) conducted a survey to investigate the relationship of

parent involvement to teacher education. The survey was administered to teacher educators, principals, and teachers. The results indicated that all three groups expressed positive attitudes about parents and toward involving them in education. However, teachers and principals expressed a clear preference for the specific types of parent involvement they saw as desirable. Teachers and principals favoured more participation in the following types of involvement: parents helping children with schoolwork at home and in supporting roles for school activities. In contrast, they would not prefer parents to become more involved in the curriculum and instruction or in administrative decision making. Relevant to this, educators agreed that parents should not be involved in decision-making roles that are usually made by principals in the schools. The findings also revealed that all of the groups agreed that, through in-service education, teachers should be trained to work with parents.

Significant changes in the attitudes of teachers and parents towards their relationships with each other, as well as changes in their perceptions about certain practices, were identified in a case study conducted by Angelides et al. (2006). This study thoroughly investigated the relationships between teachers and parents in two pre-primary schools in Cyprus. The analysis of the data showed that in the two schools there was no active inclusion of parents in school activities. The results clarified that parents and teachers preferred specific types of relationships, and in particular frequent unprepared and shallow contacts instead of more well-organized and in-depth collaboration. It seems that they did not recognize other methods of collaboration beyond the usual modes of oral communication. The findings indicated that when parents asked for more personal contact with teachers, they might be misunderstood and considered as disruptive, or, if they did not show interest they might be considered apathetic. Analysis of the data also showed that in these two pre-primary

schools there were no parents-teachers' associations (PTA), and parents did not participate in decision making.

A descriptive study was carried out by Butler et al. (1992) to determine what parent involvement strategies were being practiced in Mississippi and which were perceived as being important by randomly selected parents, teachers and principals. The findings showed that parent-teacher conferences were overwhelmingly the most important choice of the parents, teachers, and principals surveyed. Open house and parent contacts were also included in the top five selections for all three groups. Parents and principals included participation in advisory committees in the top five strategies.

Another study, which was conducted by Ng (1999), also investigated the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals regarding parents' participation at different levels of school activities in Hong Kong. The findings indicated that parents wanted to know about the school and their children's academic progress. As for teachers and principals, there was agreement on the necessity of having home-school cooperation. However, they still did not welcome parents sharing decision-making power with them. The study concluded that both school personnel and parents perceived their partnership to be weak. The need to establish a parent-school partnership to help parents recognise their rights and responsibilities and to actively take part in their children's education and school activities was also emphasised.

Throughout the previous studies, discrepancies between the views of parents, teachers and principals concerning their relationships with each other have been recognized. In addition, it can be noted that the degree of involvement and participation of parents in schooling varies according to the type of activity. Thus, policy makers and

professionals need to study the divergence of perceptions among those groups in order to set the goals for implementing appropriate strategies and programmes that will encourage and enhance parental involvement in school.

2.10 Family background factors

The influence of family background and socioeconomic status (SES) factors on children's educational outcomes has been widely recognised (Reynolds, 1989; Hoff et al., 2002). According to Suizzo and Stapleton (2007), family background is a group of consistent factors including family size and structure, ethnic origin, and socioeconomic status (SES), each of which may influence parental involvement processes. In addition, Hattie (2009) stated that SES relates to the resources in the home that refer to parental income, parental occupation, and parental education. These factors may hinder or facilitate parent involvement in children's education and learning (Lareau, 1987; Hattie, 2009). Several studies have proposed that parent involvement, when positively related to SES, improves the student's attitudes towards school and school attendance, and generally increases the level of academic performance (Lareau, 1987; Muller, 1993).

Variation in cultural context may also have an impact on parent's beliefs towards their involvement in their children's education. In fact the degree and the ways of involvement vary from family to family and from culture to culture, as families of different races, classes, and religion utilize different methods of conveying and socializing literacy, hold different perceptions of families and school roles in their children's education and employ different ways of involvement in children's academic learning (Guofang, 2006). Thus, the relationship between family background factors and parental involvement should not be interpreted to mean that

all families sharing certain demographic features are identical in any dimension. In addition, it is useful to keep in mind that different families often have distinct perspectives about what their involvement should be. For instance, some families may be unenthusiastic in expressing their concerns or they may be unsure of how to communicate with school personnel because of cultural beliefs associated with the authoritative position of the teacher. Others may consider parental involvement to be disrespectful of the teachers' authority. A few families may fear that questions or criticism will put their child at a disadvantage in school (Clauss- Ehlers, 2006; Katz et al., 1996). Thus, those who recognise the importance of parental involvement and look to encourage it should be aware of the challenges that some families face in attempting to be involved in their child's schooling (Swap, 1993; Gestwicki, 2004; Waanders et al., 2007). Parental involvement may be best enhanced when schools identify the characteristics of parents such as their needs, interests, and abilities.

The influence of social class on parental involvement has been well documented in prior research. Lareau (1987, 2000) described social class theory and the differences in the level of parental involvement between parents of upper-middle-class and those with lower SES. Lareau (1987) borrowed Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and linked it more directly to parental involvement approaches to emphasize on the cultural differences of the communities the two schools served (working-class and upper-middle-class) in relation to the role of both school and parents. In her research, Lareau (1987, 2000) explains that schools are largely upper-middle-class institutions which reproduce upper-middle-class values, patterns and forms of communication. Children and parents who are from upper-middle environments have a form of cultural capital that enables them to adapt more easily in school and communicate effectively with teachers because they share similar beliefs. However, parents of

different social class, such as working-class parents who have distinct values and forms of cultural structure, lay less emphasis on the importance of schooling. In addition, they preserve larger distances between their roles and those of schools than do upper-middle-class parents because they find it difficult to meet teachers' expectations. Lareau concluded that both classes of parents wanted to be supportive to their children's learning; however, upper-middle-class parents were more likely to become connected and involved in school activities, whereas working-class parents were more likely to have a more distanced relationship with the school. As a result, the purpose and meaning of parental activities differ between the two communities studied, which can replicate different types of relations among families and schools. The study suggests that the concept of cultural capital can be used successfully to understand social class differences in children's school experiences.

Agreeing with Lareau (1987, 2000) is the study of McNeal (2001), which investigated the relationship between involvement and outcomes according to socioeconomic status. The results indicated that parent involvement is more effective for higher SES students. In other words, while higher socioeconomic status is generally effective at reducing the likelihood of truancy and dropping out (for example via parent-child discussion, PTO involvement, monitoring) and occasionally at raising levels of science achievement, it appears to be much less effective for parents of lower socioeconomic status.

Additionally, the study of Okpala et al. (2001) indicated that students from high socioeconomic families tended to achieve better than did students from low socioeconomic families. The results support the notion that economic circumstances affect academic achievement. According to Okpala et al. (2001), children from high-

income backgrounds are more likely to have academically supportive home environments than are most children from low-income homes. Similarly, Yamamoto et al. (2006) examined the relationship between parental involvement and maternal beliefs and family SES in preschool in Japan, and found that higher SES mothers were more likely than mothers with lower SES to report that they engaged in daily reading with their children.

In contrast, Entwisle and Alexander (2000) found that low income children made similar grade increases in reading and maths during the academic school year as did middle income children. As for differences in achievement between low- and middle-income students, they were moderately small at the end of kindergarten. Additionally, Ho and Willms' (1996) findings provided little support for the conjecture that parents with low socioeconomic status are less involved in their children's schooling than are parents with higher socioeconomic status

Another similar construct of social capital was developed by Coleman (1988), forming the basis of another theory related to parental involvement. Coleman stated that social capital is a fundamental cause of a child's success in school when it is integrated with family background. He further argued that one of the factors that may affect a child's achievement in school is family background, which consists of at least three different components: financial capital (family income), human capital (parent education), and social capital (relationship among actors: parents and children). To Coleman, family social capital includes both parents' nurturing activities and their efforts to constrain a child's inappropriate behaviour. Coleman affirmed that parental involvement in their child's schooling, for example participating in school activities, discussing school with the child, and helping children with homework, contributes to

41

the child's notions of the importance of school and education. Likewise, communications with other parents and teachers through volunteering at school or attending PTA meetings can also help parents gain access to valuable information or resources available in the social network produced by those parents and teachers. However, the educational benefits related to social capital gained through parent involvement at school cannot support a child's achievement unless parents are capable of dedicating their time to engage in their children's education (Yeung, 2004; Lee and Bowen, 2006).

Yeung's (2004) cross-sectional data analysis of the father's social capital supports Coleman's concept of social capital. The results showed that the children of parents who are warm and supportive and spend time with children tend to have higher levels of achievement and fewer behaviour problems. The father's relationship with the mother as co-operant and the extent to which a father monitors a child's behaviour benefits a child more than the father's income. Similarly, Dika and Singh's (2002) review of fourteen studies confirmed that social capital seems to be directly associated with children's educational outcomes.

Aspects of parental education and family size were also shown to be related to the extent and nature of parents' involvement in their children's education. Manz et al. (2004) found that the number of children living in the home was significantly related to the ways in which families were involved in their children's education. Caregivers in households with a large number of children, for example five or more children, reported less home-based involvement and home-school communication than those in households with fewer than five children. Similarly, Samadoni (1991) studied parental expectations towards the education of preschoolers and their relationship to family

factors in Egypt, and revealed that a higher number of children in the family was significantly negatively correlated with the quality of the environment families provided in rearing their children.

Research on gender differences in the quantity and quality of involvement between mothers and fathers has also gained increasing recognition in recent decades. There is a general propensity for parents to engage in household tasks, with mothers taking main responsibility for home and child care more than fathers (Lareau, 2000). This may prompt the following questions: what are the reasons for the differences in responsibilities of raising children between mothers and fathers? Why are mothers often seen as the primary caregiver in the family? One possible approach to answer these questions is to understand how cultural context may influence the type and level of mothers' and fathers' participation in the care of their children. More explanation of the issue will be presented later in the thesis.

Evidence of the disparity in the level of involvement between mothers and fathers is revealed by Parke (2002), who indicated that mothers and fathers vary in their degree of responsibility for management of family duties. From children's infancy through middle childhood, mothers are more likely to involve in the supervisory role than fathers, for example, arranging day care, taking the child to the doctor and directing the child to have a bath or to eat. Parke (2002) added that both mothers and fathers are equally competent of this type of supervisory behavior; however, fathers are less likely than mothers to perform this supervisory role. In contrast with the view that fathers are distancing themselves from the family, Cowan et al.(2008, p.50) indicated that other scholars assert that today's fathers are more actively involved with their children than ever before, especially in the earliest months of their children's lives. A

small but considerable number of married fathers care for children while mothers are at work, while other fathers meet in small groups to address their concerns about parenting. Moreover, an increasing number of single fathers have asked for and been granted custody of their children. Based on what has been mentioned earlier, it could be articulated that there is no single type of father. Some fathers remain uninvolved, others are active participants, and some fathers even rear children by themselves (Parke, 1996).

The association between achievement and family size has also been examined. Data from Blake's (1989) study of family size and achievement revealed a significant negative relationship between family size and educational achievement, where the higher number of children in the family, the lower academic achievement obtained. This is supported by Fraser (1959), who showed that children from large families tended to do less well academically. It has been suggested that children coming from large families do not obtain the same amount or the same type of oral encouragement from adults which children from smaller families receive (Telford and Sawrey, 1981).

Kohl et al. (2000) conducted a study of parents of kindergarten and first grade children from high risk neighborhoods to measure the influence of some demographic factors on parental involvement. Parental education was revealed to be significantly related to parent–teacher contact, parent involvement in school activities, and parental involvement at home. These findings suggest that parents of high levels of education were more involved than those with low levels of education. Similarly, Abd-el-Fattah (2005) found that parents' education level was an important factor in directly affecting students' academic achievement and school disengagement. It was apparent

that highly educated parents could assist their children at school and at home and communicate more effectively with teachers and school administration staff.

Additional demographic factors may complicate things even further. For example, variables such as child grade level, child gender, and family structure have been shown to affect parent involvement. For instance, parental involvement declines as children progress to higher grade levels (Snodgrass, 1991). In comparing rates of parent involvement between elementary and middle schools, Eccles and Harold (1996) found that there was a major drop of parent involvement between elementary and middle school. This fall in involvement was also identified among the grade levels of elementary schools. Izzo et al. (1999) found that the frequency of parent-teacher contacts, quality of parent-teacher interactions, and parent participation at school all declined between grade levels one to three. In contrast, Manz et al's (2004) study revealed that family involvement in elementary school did not vary significantly according to the children's grade level.

The gender of the child has also been found to relate to parent involvement. The study of Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) showed that daughters usually experienced more parental involvement than did sons. Daughters were more engaged in discussing educational matters with parents than did sons. However, parents of boys had more parent-school contacts and checked their sons' homework more than their daughters. This was because their sons experienced more school-related behavioural problems (Ho and Willms, 1996).

Family structure has been found to impact on parental involvement. Fantuzzo et al. (2000) indicated that two-parent families reported higher involvement than single parent families in home-based involvement and home-school communication.

On the other hand, Epstein (1990b) found that single parents reported that they were more often engaged in helping their children at home with schoolwork than two-parent families. Further, Manz et al. (2004) revealed in their study that no significant differences between single- and two-parent families emerged in their involvement in their children's education.

As for the impact of family structure on children's achievement, Eagle (1989) found that students living without either parent had significantly lower attainment compared to those with otherwise similar backgrounds.

Ethnic background also influences how families interact with external systems such as schools. This is another example of how variation in cultural context may affect parents'beliefs towards their involvement in their children's schooling. Therefore, it is important for school professionals to keep in mind that not all members of an ethnic group are similar in their lifestyles, values, or achievement (Lambie, 2005). For example, Asian American parents showed lower levels of contact across all grade levels, with relatively high contact rates only if children exhibited extremely low grades, because they felt that parents are not supposed to interfere (Schwartz, 1995; Desimone, 1999).

Huss-Keeler (1997) indicated that reasons for parents from ethnic and minority groups not being actively involved in the school context include difficulties in communicating with teachers due to language differences, a lack of understanding of the school system, and divergences of opinions in recognizing the different roles of parents and teachers.

Some cultural patterns may hinder parental involvement, which is also a challenge for many teachers. According to Nicolau and Ramos (1990) and McCollum (1996), many parents from diverse ethnic and cultural groups such as Latino families believe

that it is not proper to intervene in the school system or question teachers' methods, but instead a deferential distance should be maintained from school. Similarly, Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) stated that Mexican American parents often believed that the roles of the home and school should not impede each other and that the academic progress of the children was the responsibility of the school.

While there seems to be a positive relationship between parental involvement and socioeconomic status (SES), Epstein's (1990a) review of research indicated that the most constant predictors of parent involvement at school and at home were the specific practices of teachers and school policies that encouraged and guided parent involvement, regardless of socioeconomic status, family size, social class, marital status or ethnicity.

2.11 Summary

Parental involvement is multifaceted and includes a wide range of behaviours, such as monitoring and supervising children, communicating with schools and helping and supporting children at home. Parents and teachers are partners in helping children to learn, given that parents are their children's first teachers and their responsibility continues even after their children enter school (Miller, 1996). In the past, parental involvement was limited, and home and school cultures performed separately. Parents were not, on the whole, encouraged to be involved in their children's schooling except to ensure their regular attendance at school and perhaps visiting school occasionally to attend teachers' conferences or children's classes to hear about the child's progress at school (Atherton, 1991; Gordon , 2003; Venn and Jahn, 2003).

Moreover, parent-teacher communication can also be hard, especially when parents feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in schools or come from different cultural

backgrounds to the teachers. In addition, barriers such as parents' work schedules and time constraints make it difficult for parents to be involved in their children schools, particularly during normal school hours.

Fortunately, these kinds of obstacles can be overcome. Both parents and teachers have developed ways to gather and share information and make communication easier (Brewer, 1988). The idea of parents working with teachers has now obtained worldwide professional acceptance. In fact, involving parents in children's education both in school and at home has become a crucial issue. The results of a large number of studies and extensive research indicate the necessity of implementing parental involvement programmes in schools at all stages, from Head Start through to secondary schools (Ng, 1999; Barge and Loges, 2003).

Chapter Three: Methodology

'Educational research is a systemic process of discovering how and why people in educational settings behave as they do' (Anderson, 1998, p.8)

This study intends to investigate the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning some aspects of parental involvement in kindergarten through grade three in primary schools in Kuwait. The methodology implemented for conducting this study represents an essential aspect of this research. This chapter describes the methodology and procedures that were applied in the current study to serve its objectives. The chapter also addresses some epistemological and methodological considerations in the two philosophical approaches used in the research. The choice of research design, data gathering methods and procedures for carrying out this research are rationalized. This involves the criteria for selecting the study instruments, and sampling issues. Procedures used in the administration of the instruments, their validity and reliability, and the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data are also explained.

3.1 Epistemological and methodological considerations

Although educational research has many different traditions, there are a variety of considerations which arise in the process of conducting any research. It is important to recognize that every researcher brings sets of epistemological assumptions into the research process, and that these influence how we understand and interpret data concerning the question of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Bryman, 2004). According to Henn et al. (2005), there are two broad views about the nature of knowledge which can be categorised as positivism and interpretivism.

Essentially, the two positions of positivism and interpretivism hold contrasting epistemologies. They differ in terms of their views about the status of different claims to knowledge and about how to judge knowledge claims.

A central issue in this context is the question of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as used in the natural sciences. The assumption that asserts the importance of replicating the natural sciences is related to the epistemological standpoint known as positivism (Bryman, 2004). Positivists believed that all propositions about the world are only meaningful if we can show how they can be verified. They believed that observation and measurement could show a theory to be wrong and the theory should be discarded, but if instead it was verified, then it counts as valid knowledge. Positivists, then, believed that true knowledge were the result of rigorous, unprejudiced, scientific, and generally empirical methods (Williams, 2003).

Interpretivism, on the other hand, emerged in contradistinction to positivism in attempts to understand and explain human social reality (Crotty, 1998). According to Henn et al. (2005) interpretivism explains human behaviour such that social researchers need to understand the meanings and interpretations that people attach to phenomena in the social world. Thus, social research cannot proceed by simply applying the methods that are used in the natural sciences. Rather, research is designed to explore the motivations, perceptions, and experiences of social actors. The purpose of social research under this position is to build an understanding of the motives and intentions that underpin social behaviour. Interpretivists criticize positivism for ignoring the importance of individual subjectivity and the role of consciousness in shaping the social world. As House and

Howe (1999) stated, 'there is no chance that researchers may escape their contingent and self referential predicament and attain a wholly detached perspective' (p.56). Thus, to avoid individual subjectivity, the researcher needs to see things from those individuals' point of views without prejudicing or imposing any inappropriate conceptual framework (Bryman, 2004).

The two methodologies that are utilized to undertake social research are quantitative and qualitative approaches which are inclined to follow the two divisions of the epistemological positions mentioned above. According to Kumar (2005), quantitative and qualitative research methodologies differ in the philosophy that underpins their mode of enquiry as well as, to some extent, in methods, models and procedures used. Quantitative methodology which is related to positivist epistemology is usually considered as having two aspects, assigning numbers and the meaning of numbers referring to the collection and analysis of numerical data. On the other hand, qualitative methodology, generally associated with interpretative epistemology, tends to be utilized to refer to forms of data collection and analysis which is based on understanding and emphasizing meanings (Hanson, 2008; Bryman, 2004).

Quantitative research is based primarily on utilizing a deductive approach from logic and theories to seek general descriptions or to test causal hypotheses in a cause-effect order. The goal of quantitative researchers is to generalize to other persons and places, and thus sampling strategies and experimental designs are carefully described to be easily replicable by other researchers. However, care is taken to keep the researchers from influencing the data through personal involvement with the research subjects (Thomas,

2003; Bryman, 2004). Thus, objectivity is of utmost concern. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stressed, 'proponents of quantitative studies claim that their work is done within a value-free framework' (p.10). However, the author does not agree entirely with Denzin and Lincoln's statement, since researchers usually select the questions of the quantitative methods (e.g. questionnaires) and the place and people of the study, which eventually may reflect some personal bias. Therefore, quantitative studies may not be accomplished within a value-free framework.

On the other hand, qualitative researchers tend to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the different meanings and experiences people bring to them using the inductive approach to data which emerge from informants (subjects) rather than being identified a priori by the researcher. The emphasis is placed on generating theories and suggesting possible relationships (Thomas, 2003; Bryman, 2004).

Some techniques that are used to collect data in qualitative studies include interviews, focus groups, participant observation and informal conversation. These techniques are commonly used in ethnographic research, case studies, phenomenological research, and grounded theory (Morse and Richards, 2002). In the case of quantitative methods, Yates (2004) stated that there are a number of ways of collecting data, the two main ones being surveys and experiments, both of which make use of measures.

To conclude, the key criteria differentiating the two paradigms are that in positivism the researcher is independent and may use large samples to test theories, while the interpretivist researcher is involved, uses small samples and focuses on generating

theories. Clearly both qualitative and quantitative practices endeavor to render their research of general interest; however they approach this differently (Hanson, 2008). In the same vein, Henn et al. (2005) and Dowson (2002) support the notion that each approach is particularly suitable for a particular context. The approach adopted and the method of data collection selected will depend on the nature of the enquiry and type of information required and whether qualitative or quantitative research is more convenient for the chosen study.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Types of inquiry

Although past research has persisted in demonstrating the academic benefits of parental involvement in education (Henderson and Berla, 1995; Henderson and Mapp, 2002), yet little is known about the readiness of parents, teachers, and principals for certain types of parental involvement practices or their willingness to establish ongoing two-way communication to foster children's success at school. To accomplish the present research aims and answer the research questions, various routes of investigation could have been followed. Research could be used to explain, evaluate, explore, and/or describe the research material (Cargan, 2007). The present research is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Exploratory research is used when a researcher has a limited amount of knowledge about a topic. The purpose of exploratory research is intertwined with the need for a clear and precise statement of the recognized problem in order to generate new ideas for future research or to seek new ideas. The emphasis is on discovery (Cargan, 2007). Descriptive research attempts to obtain facts, attitudes, opinions and the structures of situations as well as involving elements of comparison and finding relationships of one

kind or another. It produces qualitative and quantitative data to describe the nature of a situation at a point of time. The interpretation of the meaning or importance of what is described is the main focus of the whole process (Verma and Mallick, 1999; Cargan, 2007).

3.2.2 Mixed methods

The research strategy employed in this study combined qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. One of the reasons for employing mixed methods in the present thesis is that all of the previous studies which were reviewed in the Kuwaiti context employed one single method, focusing on the quantitative approach and using the questionnaire as their research instrument. Another reason is that the use of mixed methods in order to capitalize on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative strategies, as each can help to compensate for the weaknesses of the other, has been recommended by a number of researchers. According to Green et al. (1989), a mixed methods approach seeks convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results from the different methods by means of triangulation. This type of approach could provide confidence in results and a fuller and more complete picture of the nature of parental involvement in Kuwait. Although the utilization of a multiple methods design can be challenging and requires additional time and effort, it was a valuable research strategy in the current thesis for:

- the development of one of the research instruments (parents' questionnaire),

- minimizing bias in the research methods used in this study (the focus group, the interview and the questionnaire), and

- validation of the findings through triangulation.

Having said that, this study will expand the body of knowledge about parental involvement in kindergarten and primary schools in Kuwait by probing intensely into the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals of parental involvement in children's education and learning, which may add originality to the current study

The discussion of the procedures mentioned earlier, as well as the literature and inquiry pertinent to the mixed methods design, will be discussed and explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

There is much debate in social research literature about whether qualitative and quantitative approaches should or even can be combined. Some writers argue that the approaches are so different in their philosophical and methodological origins that they can not be effectively blended. Others, in spite of the differences in the ontological and epistemological bases of the two paradigms, suggest that there can be value in bringing two types of data together (Snape and Lewis, 2003).

Researchers use different terms for this mixed approach, for example integrating synthesis, qualitative and quantitative methods, multi-methods, and multi-methodology (Creswell, 2003). However recent writing uses the term 'mixed methods design' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003 cited by Creswell, 2003, p. 210).

Axinn and Pearce (2006) stated that there are merits in combining qualitative and quantitative methods within the same study since the researcher can use the strengths of one method to counterbalance the weaknesses of the other. Moreover, Fielding and Fielding (1986) and Greene et al. (2005) pinpointed that mixed method approaches were more advanced and uniquely competent to provide the opportunity to develop

completeness, depth and elaboration to the understanding of the research enquiry than studies bounded by a single methodological tradition. Johnson et al. (2007) provided a new definition for mixed methods research by describing it as 'an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research which offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results.' (p.129)

Green et al. (1989) identify five major purposes of mixed methods designs: triangulation, complementarity, initiation, sequential development, and expansion. In the current study a mixed methods design was used for triangulation, complementarity, sequential development, and expansion.

3.2.2.1 Triangulation

This study relies heavily on a triangulation design. The triangulation of research data refers to methods of checking their validity by approaching the research questions from different directions and employing redundancy in data collection (Denzin, 1989). In social science, the best meaning for triangulation is to observe an object of study from different angles (a mixture of sources of data) in which findings deriving from one type of method are verified with those derived from another to help to eliminate bias and enhance the validity of the study (Anderson, 1998; Grix, 2001).

3.2.2.2 Complementarity

This refers to clarifying and illustrating results from one method with the use of another method for the purpose of seeking elaboration, enhancement and illustration (Green et al., 1989). In this research both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to measure

different aspects of parental involvement from the points of view of parents, teachers and principals in order to gain more clarification and understanding of this phenomenon.

3.2.2.3 Sequential development

This involves using the results from one method to help develop or shape the other method or steps in the process of the research, for example in implementation, sampling, and measurement decisions. According to Creswell (2003), in a sequential approach a researcher could obtain themes and specific statements from qualitative data collection and use them as specific items for scales to create a survey instrument. In our situation, the qualitative methods (teachers' focus groups and interviews with principals) were implemented first, and the results emerging from data analysis were utilized to develop the questionnaire items for parents.

3.2.2.4 Expansion

According to Green et al. (1989), expansion provides illustration and breadth to the study by using different methods for different parts of the research inquiries. In this study, qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated to add more depth, scope, and richness during the interpretation of the results to give a fuller picture of the issue under study (perceptions of parental involvement in the early years in Kuwait schools). These outcomes could be obtained if the results were combined and both methods mutually supported and confirmed conclusions drawn or if the results were divergent and contradictory (Flick, 2006). However, it is worth acknowledging that inconsistencies in findings should not be regarded as weakening the trustworthiness of the results, but rather

as presenting opportunities for deeper insights into the relationship between the inquiry approach and the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2002).

Three sequential and complementary (quantitative and qualitative) methods were deemed appropriate for the present study. The first method comprised of the utilization of a focus group to collect data from the teachers; the second method comprised of the utilization of an interview to collect data from the principals; and the third method comprised of the utilization of a questionnaire to collect data from the parents. The use of these three methods could provide confidence in the validity of the research as it helps to examine the validity of any data collected that are not confirmed by means of another method through triangulation. Thus, bias, subjectivity, or preconceptions could be minimized through the increasing richness of information the researcher may obtain when employing multiple methods research. (See Figure (2) which demonstrates the design of the research investigation and the way in which data analysis from each method fed in to the design of the next data collection tool.)

It is worth noting that in mixed methods research, qualitative or quantitative components can predominate or both can have equal status (Muijs, 2004, p.9). In this research the qualitative or quantitative components were given equal weight with respect to addressing the research questions.

3.3 Population and sample

As was mentioned earlier, the state of Kuwait consists of six districts. However, for the present study public kindergarten and primary schools in Hawally district were chosen because of the limited time and resources available for data collection, which often

constrains studies of entire populations. Hawalli district in particular was chosen because I live in this district and I am quite familiar with the locations of most of its schools.

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│ groups               │ │ interviews           │ │ Questionnaires       │
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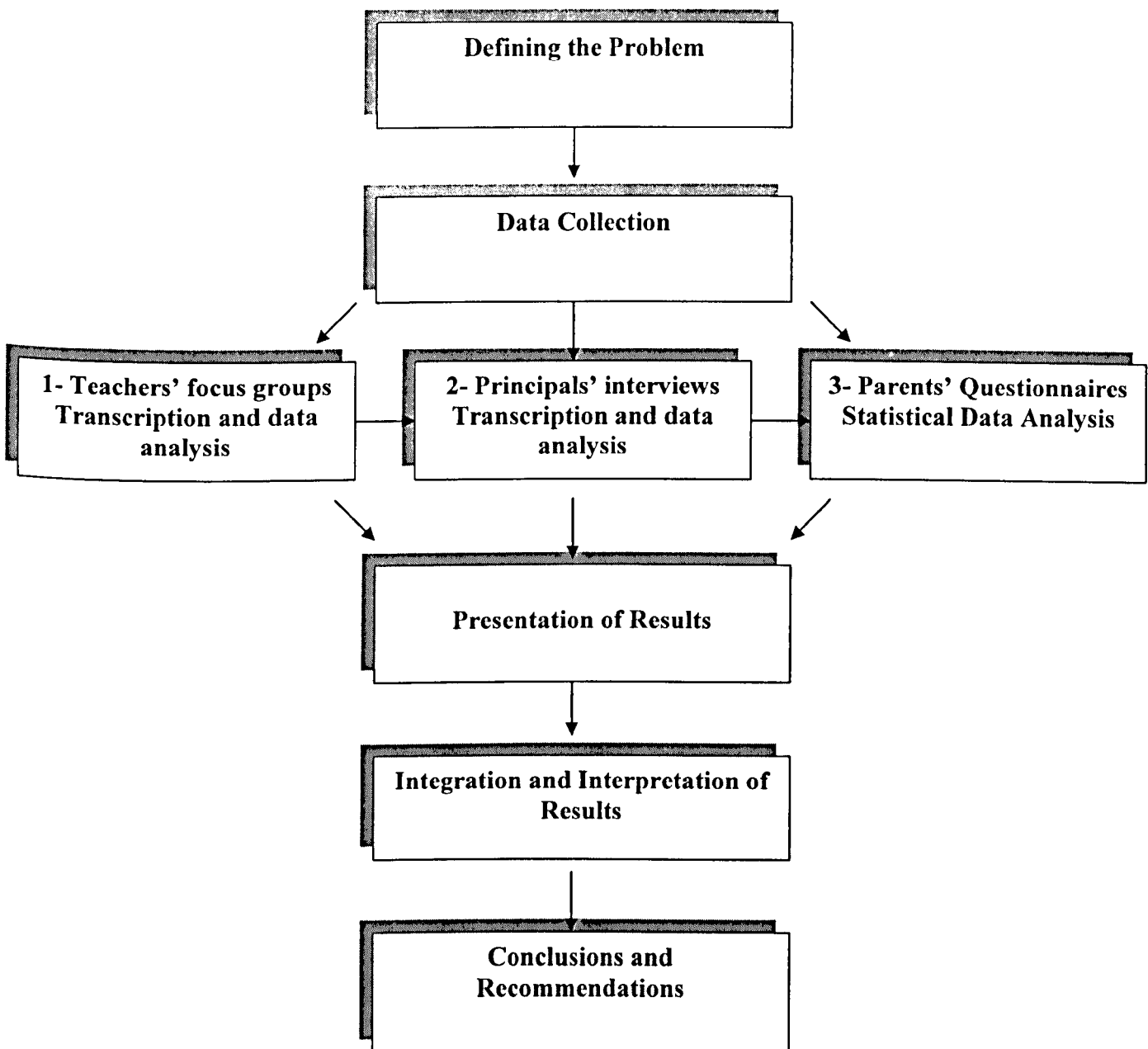
Figure 2 The design of the research investigation

Therefore, the procedure of contacting these schools would take less time than in unknown place. The participants in this study consisted of three groups: teachers and principals who worked in kindergartens and primary schools in Hawally District. The third group was parents who had a child attending kindergarten through grade three in primary school and whose ages ranged from 4-8 years old. Table 1 (in Appendix A) shows the total number of schools, teachers, principals and children in this district from kindergarten through grade 3 (excluding male schools). Two male schools which are taught by male staff were not included in this study due to religious and cultural restrictions which posed various constraints on the researcher.

3.3.1 The selection of teachers

To select teachers for the focus group, purposive sampling was employed to serve the purpose of the present study. According to Kleiber (2004, p. 99), 'sampling for focus group research should be done purposefully from the target population. Participants should have experience with the topic or research questions and feel comfortable sharing what is on their mind.'

Permission to carry out the study in the schools was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to provide the information needed and the assistance necessary to conduct this study (see Appendix B). Recruitment letters which included the objective of the research and a plan of the focus group procedures were sent to kindergarten and primary school principals requesting permission to conduct the focus group interviews with teachers at their schools. Teachers were then contacted by the principals and their permission was granted to indicate their willingness to volunteer and participate in the study.

Twelve schools volunteered to participate in focus group interviews, including six kindergartens and six primary schools. Each teacher in the focus group was assigned with a code number to refer to the direct quotes of the teachers from the transcripts as well as to ensure the anonymity of respondents. Homogeneity and heterogeneity with respect to gender and years of experience were taken into consideration in planning the focus group to cover key topics in depth and maximize the likelihood of the desired outcomes. Teachers who participated in the focus group interviewing in each school were all females from different departments such as English, mathematics, Arabic, science and Islamic education. Each focus group consisted of 5 teachers, totaling 60 participants in all groups (see Appendix C for teachers' codes and backgrounds). The ideal number of people who should take part in a focus group is unclear, although the literature emerging from market research stipulates that the ideal number of participants is between 8 and 12. However, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) argue that this number is too large for many sociological studies and it would be appropriate to work with groups of five or six participants, or even as few as three. According to Carey (1994), with a small group of 4 to 6, a person is more likely to feel comfortable and has a greater chance to talk. As for generalization, the concerns with focus group data analysis are similar to those in other areas of qualitative data analysis. Krueger (1988, cited in Morse, 1994, p.233) suggested that generalizations are more likely to be appropriate for people in settings similar to those of the focus group members. Thus, the group must consist of representative members of the larger population. In addition if the research question is related to the responses of specific types of individuals, then the composition of the group must reflect this type of individual (Morgan, 1997).

3.3.2 The selection of principals

Letters were sent to the principals explaining the purpose of the research and requesting their permission to conduct interviews. Fourteen principals volunteered to participate, seven of whom were from kindergartens and the others from primary schools. It was not possible to interview more than this number, because most of the principals were greatly occupied at the end of the summer term. Two tables (in Appendix D) give information concerning the codes and background characteristics of the principals in kindergartens and primary schools.

It is worth noting that the background characteristics of both principals and teachers were not intended to be tested in this study, nor were they examined for their influence on responses regarding perceptions about parental involvement. The aim was to provide a comprehensible description of the respondents who agreed to participate in this study.

Another issue needing clarification concerns the number of focus group and interviews required in a study. In this study, since the participation of teachers and principals was voluntary, thus no new focus groups or interviews were added other than those determined earlier. In fact, qualitative data from teachers and principals provided productive results and covered all of the main objectives of the study. According to Vaughn et al. (1996), the number of focus groups is determined by continuing until the findings tend to be repetitive and no new information is obtained.

3.3.3 The selection of parents

The third group of subjects who participated in this study was parents of kindergarten and primary school children aged from 4-8 years in Hawally district. Random sampling was

adopted in order ensure that each person selected had a completely random chance of being selected. This is called probability sampling, and its main advantages are to obtain unbiased samples and ensure representativeness (Miller, 2003). A sample size guide table provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was employed to determine the size of an adequate sample with a 95% confidence level and +/- 5% sampling error. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), one can refer to the sample guide table to obtain the sample size required to be representative as long as the population is of a defined size (see Appendix E). The table revealed that the sample size needed to represent a population of 15,000 people was 375 participants.

Schools were contacted and 40 out of a total of 45 schools agreed to participate. For the purpose of random sampling, parents participating in this study were reached through the names of the children in the schools after obtaining the permission from the Ministry of Education and the principals of the schools. With the help of an expert in computer applications, a computer program was used to generate 550 random numbers, which was more than the determined number to ensure a high return rate. A copy of the questionnaire was given to the targeted children who were instructed to give it to their parents and return it the next day to their classroom teacher. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter explaining the objectives and importance of the research and the questionnaire, in addition to requesting the parents' collaboration. Participants were not requested to write their names on the questionnaire, in order to assure parents that their responses would be anonymous.

Three weeks after the distribution of the questionnaire, 430 questionnaires were collected which is more than was required of the determined sample size of 375. The administration of the questionnaire started in the second semester on March 2007 to ensure that parents could develop partnerships with their children's teachers during the academic year.

3.4 Research methods

3.4.1 Focus group

The first method which was used in this research is the focus group to investigate teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. Although teachers and parents are considered to be the two most important elements in establishing partnerships between home and school, teachers were chosen as the participants in focus groups rather than parents. This is because teachers are easier to approach and group in their school settings than parents. The reason for choosing the focus group as a research instrument is that it is ideal for exploring people's experiences, opinions, and attitudes. In addition, they are particularly useful in helping develop questions and key issues to be used later using quantitative methods (Anderson, 1998). The aim of the focus group is to initiate discussion between group members, and it is this interaction that makes the data distinct (Bloor et al., 2001).

The focus group interviews provided opportunities for the teachers in kindergartens and primary schools to share their views and experiences throughout group interaction. The purpose of the focus group in this study was to: 1) provide rich insights about parental involvement as perceived by teachers in kindergarten and primary schools; 2) search for and develop an appropriate questionnaire instrument for the parents; and 3) provide

logical clarification of the results generated from the parents' questionnaire. According to Morgan (1997), researchers sometimes use focus groups for the purpose of generating survey items as well as giving them new ideas. The focus group results in this study illuminated some key points on how to start with the preliminary stage of the data analysis, in addition to the preparation and the development of questions in the interviews with principals and the parents' questionnaires.

A focus group, sometimes referred to as a focus group interview, is a group of people invited to meet and discuss issues related to a particular topic guided by the researcher (Robson, 2002). Focus groups are usually run by a facilitator or moderator who starts the discussion with prepared questions to elicit participants' feelings, attitudes and perceptions about a selected topic in a tolerant and non-threatening setting (Vaughn et al. 1996).

The advantage of focus group interviews is that this method is socially oriented and studies participants in a natural and more relaxed atmosphere, and therefore participants reveal more of their opinions and emotions (Stewart et al., 2006). They are more economical in terms of time and highly flexible, providing quick and easy access to a number of interviewees and allowing the researcher to observe a large amount of interaction on the topic based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct the session (Morgan, 1997; Burgess et al., 2006).

On the other hand, and most importantly, a researcher should be aware of their methodological limitations. Burgess et al. (2006) stated that some disadvantages of focus group interviews are that they can sometimes be hard to manage and that some group

members may dominate the discussion, hence discouraging others from expressing their views. Another disadvantage is that recording and transcribing data afterwards may be time consuming. Robson (2002) stated that confidentiality can be a problem for participants when interacting in a group situation.

Despite these limitations, focus groups are still a valuable data gathering tool. Some of their problems can be overcome through adequate planning and preparation as well as skilful moderating of the groups (Stewart et al., 2006).

3.4.1.1 Procedures of focus group interviewing

The process of interviewing teachers was conducted in their own schools because the participants were not able to leave their schools due to work commitments there. An interview guide (see Appendix F) for the focus groups was prepared in advance to provide a general agenda for the discussions. As a moderator of the focus group I introduced myself to the group and explained in general the aim and purposes of the research project. Discussions in groups did not follow a strict agenda and teachers were told that no fixed responses would be required, and thus that there were no right or wrong answers. During the sessions detailed notes were also taken to summarize the main points of the discussions at the end of each session as well as to distinguish between who said what during the transcription process. All sessions took approximately 60 to 80 minutes and were undertaken between mid-April to mid-May 2006.

3.4.2 Interview

The interview was the second qualitative method utilized, to collect data from principals. It is probably the most commonly used method of data collection in educational research and consists of oral questions by the interviewer and oral responses by the research participants (Anderson, 1998). Interviews appeared to be a convenient method for this study to collect data from principals. The reasons for choosing this type of method rather than any other qualitative or quantitative method were that the interview is undertaken individually, and therefore principals could provide their in-depth knowledge and honest answers without hesitation in a non-threatening atmosphere.

The purpose of interviewing the principals in this study was to: 1) verify the results and findings from the teachers' focus groups and parents' questionnaire; 2) identify some aspects of parental involvement which were not fully probed during the focus group interviews, such as the involvement of parents in decision-making roles; and 3) investigate the actual role of the principals in establishing policies and activities which may either encourage or hinder parental involvement in their schools.

According to Kochanek (2005), principals might mediate relationships between parents and teachers and encourage the growth of trust between the two groups, or they can establish boundaries for interactions between teachers and parents preventing them from building effective modes of communication and partnership.

DeMarrais (2004) clarified that interviews typically involve individual respondents with the interviewer in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. These questions ask participants for their thoughts, opinions, perspectives or descriptions of

specific experiences. Interviewers can repeat or rephrase questions for clearer understanding or even modify the interview structure to better effect with more complicated and eventuality questions (Cargan, 2007).

One advantage of the interview is that it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection (Cohen et al. 2000). Another advantage of the interview is its flexibility and adaptability which allows the interviewer to clarify questions or any ambiguities or vague replies and to probe the answers of the respondent, providing more complete information which the questionnaire can never do (Anderson, 1998; Leonard, 2003; Bell. 2005; Burgess et al. 2006).

However, the advantages of the interview method are offset by some limitations. One is that it is time consuming, particularly in transcribing data (Bell, 2005), where tape-recorded interviews can be particularly laborious. Another limitation is that it is difficult to standardize the interview situation so that the interviewer does not influence the respondent answering the questions in a certain way (Gall et al., 1996). Another problem is that the respondents must reveal their identity to the interviewer, and thus interviews cannot provide anonymity for the respondents. The interviewer can overcome this problem by analyzing and reporting the interview data in such a way that the identity of the participants is not revealed (Gall et al., 1996).

Even so, the interview can yield rich materials and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses (Bell, 2005).

3.4.2.1 Procedures of principals' interviews

The interviews used in social research fall into three categories. These are the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, and the unstructured interview.

From the comments, short notes and preliminary analysis obtained from the teachers' focus groups, a semi-structured interview schedule for the principals was drawn up, and an interview guide of open-ended questions (see Appendix G) was prepared in advance.

The interviews were carried out in the place of work of the interviewees, usually in the principals' own offices. An attempt was made to regulate the interviews in that all the interviewees were given the same information regarding the objectives of the study, the purpose of the interview, and why they were chosen to be part of this study. Most interviews took approximately 70 to 90 minutes to address all the questions on the list. The interviews with principals were conducted between mid-May and mid-June 2006.

To ensure that the participants in the focus groups and interviews fully understood the questions asked, probing questions were applied when necessary; for example, 'Can you tell me more about ...?' or 'Would you explain further?'

Focus group and interview sessions were managed smoothly in a friendly and non-threatening atmosphere. Teachers and principals displayed their interest and enthusiasm in sharing their perceptions and experiences of parental involvement activities in their schools.

3.4.3 Questionnaire

A written self administered questionnaire survey is the third instrument which was used in this study to collect descriptive data about parents' perceptions regarding their involvement in their children's education. A questionnaire, according to Kumar (2005, p. 126) 'is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. In a questionnaire respondents read the questions, understand what is expected and then write down the answers'. In the questionnaire the questions may require respondents to write out answers using their own words in (open-ended questions) or to select from a list of responses the one that best reflects their answers (closed-ended questions).

The reasons for choosing a questionnaire survey is that it is considered to be one of the most commonly-used means of collecting information from a large number of people in a quick and inexpensive manner (Anderson, 1998). In addition, it was found difficult to exploit qualitative methods in collecting data from parents because of their unavailability due to work and responsibility constraints. Given that qualitative methods were used for teachers and principals, using descriptive quantitative methods via such a questionnaire for the parents seemed to be justifiable.

One of the main advantages of using the questionnaire is that it allows data to be collected from large numbers of people, in contrast with interviews which cover only a small number of people. Besides this, it is economic in time and cost and does not need the presence of the researcher, particularly if the questions are clear and comprehensible (O'Leary and Miller 2003). Another advantage of using a questionnaire is that it can be anonymous, allowing researchers to receive replies without talking to respondents; and

therefore there is a sort of detachment and objectivity between researchers and respondents (Walliman and Baiche, 2001).

On the other hand, the use of questionnaires poses some serious disadvantages. First, the motivation of respondents is difficult to check. Without knowing how motivated respondents are, the validity of their responses is difficult to judge. Thus it may emphasize scope rather than depth. A second disadvantage of the questionnaire is that respondents can misunderstand or skip over some questions. The low response rate is another disadvantage of the questionnaire because each copy that is not returned may increase the likelihood of biased results. Thus, every effort should be made to obtain high rates of return (Oppenheim, 2001)

Despite the drawbacks of the questionnaire, if well constructed it permits the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data in a simple, cheap and timely manner (Anderson, 1998).

3.4.3.1 The development of the questionnaire

The objectives and research questions of the present study influenced the planning and structure of the questionnaire's focal points. The questionnaire was designed based on the inputs and findings which were collected from the focus groups of the teachers and the interviews with the principals. In addition, relevant literature and pertinent existing studies and measures of parental involvement were carefully reviewed and taken into consideration before and while the questionnaire was being developed (Stallworth and Williams, 1983; Epstein and Salinas, 1993; Ng, 1999;). The objectives and the questions of the current study were continuously referred to while the questionnaire was being constructed, keeping in mind the advantages and disadvantages of this method.

Moreover, the likely level of understanding of respondents about parental involvement issues was taken into account, as their opinions and perceptions are one of the vital elements in drawing conclusions in the study.

The construction of the questionnaire in this study was based on two sources: a parent questionnaire developed by Epstein and Salinas (1993), which was used as one of the instruments for a survey of teachers and parents in public elementary and middle schools in Baltimore, USA, as well as the rich contextual qualitative data which emerged from the focus groups of teachers and interviews with principals. By reviewing the results of qualitative data analysis and the relevant literature it was found that most parental involvement practices mentioned by teachers and principals fall into the categories of Epstein's typology of parental involvement, since that the educational system in Kuwait has been quite strongly influenced by the USA educational system.

Epstein's categories of parental involvement are a comprehensive typology that is widely used to develop communicative relationships between home and school to improve school programmes and family support (Barge and loges, 2003). Epstein (1987b, 1995) has articulated six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. It ought to be noted that the last type (collaborating with the community) was not included in the present study because it is neither widely recognized nor practiced in schools in Kuwait.

The literature review has cited various typologies of parental involvement. However it was decided that parental involvement practices which have been summed up in

Epstein's questionnaire would be convenient for the purpose of this research and the problem under study. The parent's questionnaire in Epstein and Salinas (1993) includes ten questions with over 100 items on different aspects of parental involvement. Only two parts of their original questionnaire have been adopted here which serve the purpose of the current study. Some items in Epstein and Salinas' questionnaire which were adopted for the two parts of the questionnaire in the current study were modified and adjusted to correspond to Kuwait's culture and educational system.

The questionnaire (see Appendix H) in this study was designed to survey parents if they had a child in kindergarten or through grade three in primary school. It was a self administered questionnaire consisting of five parts, including 47 closed-response items which inquired about various aspects of parental involvement and four open-ended questions to obtain more in-depth information from the respondents.

A Likert-type scale was used for the four parts of the questionnaire; however the scale varies in format for the different parts. The following sections describe the five parts of the questionnaire.

- **Demographic background**

This part was designed to collect demographic data about the child, including gender, age, school level and number of children in the household together with demographic information about the guardian including age, marital status, level of education, family monthly income and employment status. Some of these demographic background measures are independent variables in this study chosen to test their influence on the current involvement of parents in their children's schooling in order to address one of the

objectives of this study. The independent variables in this study are six family background factors: child grade level, family composition, parent's gender, parent's level of education, family income, and employment status. The dependent variables are the group means of parents' perceptions of their current involvement in their children's education. A thorough illustration of this part is presented in the next chapter. It is worth noting that marital status variable (whether married or divorced) was excluded from the analysis, because they represented a very small proportion of the sample (3.3%). Nevertheless this factor was tested and no significant difference was found between married and divorced parents concerning their current level of involvement. (These results are not included in the present study). This is because divorced parents in Kuwait usually return to live with their parents after divorce; and therefore their children are mostly taken care of by their grandparents and other relatives in the family.

- **Parents' current level and type of involvement**

The second part which was adopted form Epstein and Salinas' questionnaire (1993) included 21 items about different parental involvement practices to explore how parents perceived their current level and type of involvement in children's education at school and at home. Parents were asked to indicate how many times they had done certain activities with their children. The list of activities included those that could be performed at school and those at home. Each item on this scale was scored on a four point Likert-type scale: (4) often; (3) sometimes; (2) rarely; (1) never.

- **Parents' desired types of parental involvement practices**

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of eighteen statements to determine how parents would like to be involved and was also adopted from Epstein and Salinas' (1993) questionnaire. Each item on this scale was scored on a four point Likert- type scale: (4) does not do; (3) could do better; (2) does well and (1) does not apply. If parents chose that schools either *could do better* or *doesn't do at all*, these responses would serve as indicators of areas in which parents would like more involvement. As for the choice for the items under *does well*, these would indicate that parents are satisfied with the way schools are involving them in the specified activities. The choice *does not apply* would mean that this activity did not occur in the child's school. The reason for adding this item was to avoid confusion and forced answers since this questionnaire was also administered to parents of kindergarten children. Some of the items in the questionnaire do not apply to kindergarten activities, such as grading and testing.

- **Barriers to effective parental involvement**

The fourth part of the questionnaire concerned the impediments that may hinder the participation of parents in their children's schooling. The items in this part of the questionnaire were derived from the questionnaire survey in the study by Carey et al. (1998) on parent involvement in elementary schools and the analysis of the qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews in this study. Eight items (barriers) in this scale were scored on a four point Likert-type scale: (4) to a great extent, (3) to a moderate extent, (2) to a small extent and (1) not at all. Parents were asked to indicate to what extent these barriers may influence their participation in their children's education and learning.

- **Open-ended questions**

The last part of the questionnaire was used to ask parents four optional open-ended questions to obtain more in-depth information concerning their opinions and beliefs on various aspects of parental involvement and participation in school decision-making.

3.5 The translation procedures

Once the questionnaire was designed it was translated into Arabic (see Appendix I). Since the spoken language in Kuwait is Arabic, therefore the Arabic version was administered to the targeted sample of parents. After the editing of the translation, it was sent to the Arabic Language department at Kuwait University to ensure the suitability of the language used for the topic and the respondents.

3.6 Validity of the study

The validation of qualitative and quantitative methods has undergone several procedures in order to minimize any subjectivity and bias the researcher may have brought to the conduct of the study. According to Gray (2004, p. 219), 'validity means an instrument must measure what it was intended to measure.'

3.6.1 Face and content validity

The judgment that an instrument is measuring what is supposed to is primarily based upon the logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study. Each question or item on the scale must have a logical link with an objective. The establishment of this link is called face validity. The assessment of the items in this respect is called content validity. That is, each aspect should have similar and adequate representation in the questions or items. Content validity is also judged on the basis of the

extent to which statements or questions represent the issue they are supposed to measure as judged by the researcher and a panel of experts (Kumar, 2005).

In order to ensure that quantitative and qualitative instruments in this study accurately reflect the concepts that they were intended to measure, a thorough review of the literature relevant to the study was carried out before the preparation of the instruments, in order to increase the likelihood that they covered all aspects of the research topic. Once the instruments were constructed, the guided questions for the teachers' focus groups, interviews with principals were then reviewed in interviews with two doctoral members from Kuwait University, two teachers and two principals. The main purpose of this process was to check the clarity of the questions, their relevance to the main topic of the study, and if there were any other questions pertinent to parental involvement that needed to be added. Questions were altered and clarified throughout these meetings.

As for the questionnaire, before conducting the pilot testing it was necessary to consult several specialists from outside of the field of the present study to provide more objective evaluations of the development of the instrument. Thus, copies of the questionnaire were administered to three expert judges from different departments in Kuwait University who were asked to provide their feedback to help to identify defects or any shortcomings in the instrument that might otherwise go unrecognized by the researcher.

The English version of the interview guide questions and the questionnaire were also given to the present research supervisor for comments and suggestions. Eventually, all of the comments were taken into account and consensus was reached on any required

modifications, after which the final drafts of the questionnaire and interview guide questions were designed for pilot testing.

3.6.2 Interpretive validity

Maxwell (1992) stated that interpretive validity is related to the way in which the research process permits concepts, thoughts, and meanings to emerge from the perspective of participants. Otherwise research results could in fact be based on the assessments and decisions that the researcher imposes on the situation being studied. The aim as Maxwell (1992, p.289) put it is 'to comprehend the phenomena not on the basis of the researcher's perspective and categories, but from those of the participants in the situations studied'. Since the researcher is considered to be the primary data collection instrument, particularly in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003), it is often researchers who bring to the inquiry their own personalities and life experiences which may imperil the validity of the study. Being a mother whose perceptions of parental involvement have been shaped by personal experience, the present researcher has been made conscious of parental involvement problems and concerns, and other related issues. This could bring some bias to the study, and thus caution was exercised in avoiding hinting at desirable or undesirable responses from the teachers and principals, and further efforts were devoted to ensuring validity. For instance, two colleagues (one from the same field and the other familiar with qualitative research) assisted in coding and categorizing the transcripts. Meetings were held on a regular basis for the purpose of discussing and determining differences in the discussion and interpretation of the data to overcome any deficiencies not otherwise identified. According to Maxwell (1996), feedback from insiders and outsiders will provide the researcher with different perspectives and comments; however,

both are valuable and important. Member checking was also utilized to increase validity, which is one way of identifying the researcher's bias when the possibility of misinterpretation may occur (Miles and Huberman, 1994, Creswell, 2003). This was accomplished through sending the transcription and the final summary of the results to some of the participants in the focus groups and the interviewees, to review their personal responses and ensure that their language and the original discussions were accurately displayed in the transcripts and the final summary. In this case, participants had the opportunity to add additional information and remark on the data collected concerning their perceptions and views about parental involvement.

3.6.3 Pilot testing

Pilot testing can function as one technique for increasing the validity and reliability of the instrument of a study by trying it out on a small representative sample of the targeted population (Cohen et al. 2000). In the planning for the development of the qualitative instruments in this study, one focus group comprising of six teachers and one interview with a principal were pretested (the results are not included in the thesis). The purpose of the piloting was, first, to obtain feedback from participants regarding problems associated with specific questions, their sequence and timing. Based on the feedback, modifications were made which ensured that both the focus groups and the interviews were carried out efficiently. Nevertheless, the pilot testing of the focus groups for teachers and interviews with principals revealed some considerations need to be taken into account before collecting the data for the present study. These were as follows:

1. Timing was vital and it was preferable to conduct the interviews with the principals at the end of the school day to avoid interruptions from teachers or school visitors.

2. It should be ascertained that teachers were not committed to any teaching tasks for at least 90 minutes so that they would not leave the discussion while the focus group was in process.

The parents' questionnaire was piloted after being carefully designed. A group of 70 parents of kindergarten and primary school children who met the criteria for inclusion in the current study completed the questionnaire in November 2006 (these results are not included in this thesis).

Parents were asked to make comments about what they didn't understand or were unsure about on the back of the questionnaire and to say whether the items were clear or ambiguous. They were also asked to judge the length of items, the amount of time required to answer the questionnaire, and the representation in the questionnaire of the relevant levels and types of parental involvement practices. The feedback was very useful. Modifications were made on the basis of the feedback obtained from the parents and were reconciled to produce the final version of the questionnaire before the time of actual field distribution.

3.6.4 Triangulation

Four types of triangulation were identified by Denzin (1989, p.313). In the current study three types of triangulation were utilized to increase the validity of this study: data triangulation, investigator triangulation and method triangulation.

- Data triangulation refers to the use of different data sources at different dates and places and from different persons. In this research data was obtained from multiple informants (parents, teachers and principals) to give a richer and more elaborate understanding of that phenomenon being studied.

- Investigator triangulation entails different researchers or evaluators being employed to collect and examine data to minimize biases resulting from one researcher. This research utilized peer debriefing and member checking at different stages during the conduct of the study to examine qualitative and quantitative methods and analysis procedures. According to Creswell (2003), peer debriefing and member checking can assist the researcher to identify bias in the procedure of interpreting qualitative data and thus to enhance the accuracy of the explanation of the findings from the data analysis.

- Theory triangulation approaches the data using multiple theories to compare and contrast interpretations, which means that theory can also be advanced and revised.

- Method triangulation is a process in which the researcher uses two or more research methods to investigate the same phenomenon. The current research employed both qualitative methods (focus group and interviews) and quantitative methods (questionnaire).

3.7 Reliability

For a research instrument to be reliable, Gray (2004) indicated that it must substantially measure what it sets out to measure. According to Bell (2005), reliability is the capability of a test or procedure to produce similar results under regular conditions over time, place

and occasions. Reliability was tested by measuring the internal consistency of the score of each part of the questionnaire through utilizing the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient measure for the given instrument. The reliability coefficients of the three parts of the questionnaire of the current study are 0.816, 0.789, and 0.713, and complete results of the score consistency of the questionnaire of the pilot and main studies are presented in Appendix J, which demonstrate an acceptable and satisfactory level of reliability. It has further been noted above that the reliability of the questionnaire in the current study increased after the necessary modifications obtained from pilot testing.

3.8 Ethical considerations

According to Oppenheim (2001, p. 83), 'the basic ethical principle governing data collection is that no harm should come to the respondents as a result of their participation in the research.' Decisions about ethical issues and protecting rights and welfare need to be carefully thought through in advance of the field work (Mason, 2002).

Following the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2004), all participants were informed about the process in which they were to be engaged, including why their participation was necessary, how it would be used and to whom it would be reported. For instance, before conducting the research, an informed consent form was signed by the participants, permission to audiotape interviews was granted, and honesty was displayed about the proposed use of the research. Interviewees were assured that they were not going to be harmed physically, emotionally, or financially, and that all data collected from all participants would be handled confidentially and anonymously. In addition, all participants were notified that

their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time without any penalty.

3.9 Quantitative data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the comprehensive statistical package for researchers in the social and behavioral sciences (SPSS). For the first research question factor analysis was applied to data from the second part of the questionnaire to reveal a summary of parental involvement patterns for the twenty one items describing parents' current involvement in their children's education at home and school.

In order to assess the third research question and examine the effect of the six family background factors on parents' perceptions of their current involvement in their children's education, the Kolmogrov-Smirnov test was employed in this study. The purpose of this test is to examine the assumption of normality for all of the questionnaire variables. The analysis indicated that none of the questionnaire's research variables were distributed normally. Therefore, non-parametric tests were resorted to in order to answer the research questions. To identify significant differences in the influence of the six family factors on the dependent variable of parents' current types of involvement, the Mann-Whitney Test was utilized in case of two independent groups (for example, (female-male). On the other hand, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was employed for more than two independent groups. It is worth mentioning that all decisions on statistical difference taken in this thesis are made at the 5% level of significance.

A descriptive approach was used to address the first, fourth, and sixth research questions. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations which were organized and summarized in tabulation for all of the questionnaire data.

3.10 Qualitative data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. This involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. In other words, it is the process of making meaning (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative data were used to address and answer the second, fifth, and sixth research questions of the study.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10) suggested the following three elements in analyzing qualitative data: data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing and verification. These procedures were adopted for the qualitative data analysis in the current study.

3.10.1 Data reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying and transforming the data in the transcripts in order to manage the data. This involves, the need to transform data so they can be made intelligible in terms of the issues being addressed.

3.10.2 Data display

This step goes beyond data reduction to provide an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusions to be drawn and action taken. Display can take many forms, such as extended text, matrices, graphs and charts, all of which are designed to assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form.

3.10.3 Conclusion drawing and verification

Although this step logically follows data reduction and display, it can be noted that it takes place more or less concomitantly with them. This is because initial conclusions may

be identified early in the analysis; however, these may be unclear and poorly formed at this stage. Thus a competent researcher should hold these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and skepticism until the data collection and analysis is complete.

Data analysis began when the first transcription was obtained from the tape recordings. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative analysis can start as soon as the researcher has planned and started data collection. Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious and overwhelming in terms of the total amount of material that needs to be processed (Merriam, 1998).

Each transcript and the observational notes of focus groups and interviews were read many times while focusing on the research questions and concentrating on key phrases and words in order to highlight the main issues. According to Creswell (1998), the researcher seeks from data a group of instances hoping that issue-pertinent meaning will emerge. The task here was to contrast one component of information with another; for example, examining kindergarten and primary school teachers' responses to look for frequent regularities in the data in order to group similar phrases, relationships between patterns, themes and common sequences.

This led to the clustering of data into segments so that they could be displayed. For example, after reading the transcripts and observational notes from both kindergarten and primary school teachers and interviews with principals, differences and similarities in major quotes and themes between their perceptions emerged and were highlighted in different colors. These themes and quotes were then coded. According to Merriam (1998), coding assigns some sort of shorthand name or title to various aspects of the data

so that specific pieces of data can easily be retrieved, assisting further analysis and interpretation. As the process of analysis progresses, further categories emerge and are classified. During this process regular reference was made to the pertinent literature. Categories were all organized and then assembled according to the research questions and the interview topic guide questions.

The next phase included starting to distinguish between criteria for assigning data to one category or another by moving all similar categories that consisted of themes, patterns and quotes from discussions with teachers and principals into broader themes. Subsequently, themes, categories, and subcategories emerged which were compared with the relevant literature concerning parental involvement. Suitable quotes were also chosen to provide richness in data for the emergent categories and subcategories.

The final phase was to go through the findings again many times to edit categories and eradicate any redundancies. Once the categories were revised, all findings from the focus groups and interviews were put into a report which was interpreted in a theoretically appropriate method that was consistent with the purpose of giving voice to the participants in the research.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has described the research approach and methodology and the mixed method design of this study. The rationale for choosing this approach for the current study has been explained. This chapter has also shed light on the selection of samples, methods and procedures of data collection, which include focus groups, interviews and a questionnaire survey. Pilot testing, and the validity and reliability of the instruments have been

thoroughly discussed. Data analysis procedures used for quantitative and qualitative data were also discussed.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Results

This study investigates the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals regarding parental involvement in kindergarten and primary schools in Hawalli district in the state of Kuwait by analyzing data gathered using qualitative and quantitative methods. The study aimed to investigate current types and levels of parental involvement practices and to identify areas of strengths within which school and family communication could be enhanced as well as impediments that need to be overcome. This chapter reviews the results of the data analysis to provide answers to the research questions and serve the objectives of this study.

This chapter is divided into two parts: qualitative and quantitative results. The qualitative part consists of two sections: the first section analyses data from 12 focus groups involving a total of 60 kindergarten and primary school teachers. Emergent themes from the focus groups helped to answer the research question of the study through understanding the perceptions of teachers about parental involvement practices. The second section analyses data gathered from interviews with 14 principals of kindergarten and primary schools. Themes emerging from these interviews provided more richness and detail to the study from informants other than teachers and helped in understanding the principals' perceptions concerning parental involvement practices in their schools.

The quantitative part of this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reviews the statistical procedures used in the analysis of the questionnaire administered to parents and reports the statistical findings on their perceptions of parental involvement practices. The second section presents the analysis of the open-ended questions at the end of the

questionnaire which allowed more elaboration and amplification of parents' needs and demands for specific types of parental involvement practices.

It is worth noting that the analysis of the qualitative data in this chapter is based on the thoughts the researcher obtained from the responses given by teachers and principals. Therefore numerical figures (frequencies and percentages) which are shown in the qualitative commentary in this chapter are given to illustrate differences and commonalities in tendencies between kindergarten and primary schools. As Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.6) indicated that to some extent, all methods of social science research deal with qualities, even when the observed qualities are counted. Similarly, many methods of analysis use some form of numbers or words that describe a limited amount of quantification, such as tend, most, some, all, none and so on. Hence, it may be appropriate to quantify the frequency with which certain themes occur in the qualitative data.

4.1 Qualitative phase (focus group findings)

Twelve schools volunteered to participate in this study. A total of 60 participants, 30 teachers from kindergartens and 30 teachers from primary schools, undertook the focus group interviews. Each focus group consisted of five teachers. Two primary schools were schools for male children and four were for females, but all were taught by female staff. Data obtained from the focus group interviews provide depth and detail about teachers' perceptions illustrated through quotations and careful descriptions of their views, beliefs and attitudes about different types of parental involvement and practices. The relevant questions for the focus groups centred around 5 major themes: 1. how teachers and parents interacted; 2. how parents were involved in their children's education; 3. how teachers would like parents to be involved in their children's education; 4. what kinds of communication methods were utilized to reach out to parents; and 5. what impeded parents in becoming more involved in their children's schooling. The following sections present the emergent themes and categories of the focus group data analysis.

4.2 Teacher-parent relationship

Most of the teachers (about 52% of the sample) expressed the view that parental involvement is important and advantageous both to children and the school. They agreed that parental involvement improves the performance of children at school, and in addition the effectiveness and quality of the school. One teacher supported these ideas as follows:

> 'Not only does it [parental involvement] increase academic achievement but it also improves children's behaviour and attitudes positively towards school. You may observe an obvious difference between a child whose parents are involved in school or at home and a child whose parents are not.' (PT 15)

Considering parents as their vital partners in their children's education, and in order to

increase and encourage parental involvement, teachers emphasized that they were

concerned to provide a welcoming, friendly and informal atmosphere for parents in the

school. One teacher confirmed how their efforts are joined with those of the school

administration to encourage parental involvement:

> 'The school staff are approachable and sincere and parents can have easy access to the school
> at any time, and do not forget that our principal and vice principal also provide a welcoming
> atmosphere by having an 'open door' policy to encourage parents to visit school at any time
> with their enquiries and concerns.' (PT 24)

Teachers also explained how they prepare activities to actively involve parents in their

school by planning school activities throughout the year to encourage parents to

communicate with their children's teachers and the school principal on a regular basis

with significant approaches.

4.3 Parents' current participation at home and school

Two types of involvement were perceived by teachers: home-based involvement and

school-based involvement.

4.3.1 Home-based involvement

All of the teachers in primary schools explained that helping at home and with homework

is one of the current activities that parents are involved in at home. According to them,

not all the parents help and monitor their children's homework. They noticed that

children with higher level of achievement are more likely to come to school with their

homework checked and completed than children with lower level of achievement. When

helping at home, teachers requested that the role of parents should be limited to

monitoring and supervising their children's homework, and children are discouraged from becoming completely dependant on their parents when they do their homework.

One of the teachers described the way parents neglect to check homework:

> 'Some children come to school and their homework is not checked or completed, and if I try to write some notes on the child's book requesting parents to follow up unfortunately I may get no response. This is particularly noticeable with students who have weak points ... On other occasions when one or two parents have responded to my notes and the child comes the next day with his homework completed ... I have been shocked to find that the homework has not been completed by the child but by other adults, because the handwriting is different ... This is really unhelpful for the child's progress.' (PT6)

Kindergarten teachers also complained that some parents are indifferent about their children's homework. They stated that sometimes, parents come to school and express their discontent when they give their children homework to complete at home. According to some kindergarten teachers, some parents argue that homework at this stage is not important and they are already busy with their other children in higher grades.

4.3.2 School-based involvement

Teachers indicated that parents are involved in different types of activities at school; these activities are related to communication with the school, volunteering and school decision making.

4.3.2.1 School communication

Two types of school-based activities were reported by teachers as part of the school's communication with parents: attending meetings and participation in school events and programmes.

4.3.2.1.1 Attending parent-teacher meetings

Nearly 73.3 % of the primary teachers reported that parents are mostly engaged in attending parent-teacher conferences or individual meetings with teachers to inquire about their children's performance and progress in school. According to them, these meetings are scheduled in advance. Teachers noticed that the frequency of parental visits to school increased after exam results or the distribution of children's assessment reports. Teachers explained that, through these meetings, parents are able to know their children's teachers better. During the meetings parents can discuss with the teachers their children's progress and gain a clearer idea about their children's work at school. Teachers complained that some parents do not attend parent-teacher meetings regularly and are definitely missing out on the advantages of these meetings. One of the teachers argued that:

'It is important that parents check on their children's performance. However, I have noticed parents whose children are excellent in my class come to ask about their progress frequently, and I can feel that those parents really care about their children. As for the children with low levels of achievement, I rarely see their parents, though we try to call them or send them letters ... after many attempts at contact only a few such parents respond.' (PT4)

The mothers' annual meeting is one of the activities that mothers of kindergarten children attend to watch their children's activities in the classroom. Teachers asked for more attendance from mothers due to the importance of these meetings. They also added that it would be preferable that mothers attended this meeting and not fathers, for religious reasons. One teacher elaborated on this point.

'We sometimes have difficulties when fathers attend this meeting, because some of the teachers wear the hijab and veils on their faces and our curriculum demands that the teacher sings and dances with the children, so it is rather embarrassing for the teacher ... because of religious reasons. However there are some teachers who wouldn't mind fathers attending.' (KT5)

4.3.2.1.2 Attending school social events and performances

Attending ceremonies and school programmes were also discussed by teachers as one of the school-based activities. They reported that parents usually attend these activities when they are held at school. Those activities include honouring distinguished children, music and gymnastic performances, and celebrations of special events such as Ramadan and Eids. However, most of the teachers indicated that parents' participation and attendance in social events increases when their children have active roles in these activities.

On the other hand, teachers reported that parents tend to avoid attending seminars and lectures, particularly if they think that the topic is not interesting. According to some teachers, parents are only concerned with topics that are closely related to their children's development. One teacher complained about parents' attendance:

> 'We set preparations and arrangements for a specific seminar and we contact the lecturer to come to our school. However we are shocked that only one or two parents attend, which causes embarrassment for us when the lecturer sees no audience ... So we quickly ask other teachers who are free to fill in the empty seats.' (KT12)

4.3.2.2 Volunteering

About 78.3% of the teachers reported that few parents participate in volunteering; however teachers have to ask parents to volunteer. Teachers stated that some of the parents ask teachers if they need any help, especially at the beginning of the school year; yet, still only a small number of parents actually offer their help. Some teachers in kindergartens reported that some parents provide extra hands for the teachers, for instance helping in field trips or other projects offering children new knowledge and experiences and assisting teachers in organizing and supervising parties, open days and ceremonies.

Several teachers described some volunteering activities that have been carried out by some parents in their school. As one teacher mentioned,

'Some mothers offered to decorate the classes and paint the hallways in our school. Children were amazed at the new colours of the walls.' (PT21)

Teachers also talked about parent participation in extracurricular activities as one type of voluntary activity. This kind of activity mostly existed in kindergartens, but as teachers stated, 'few parents are involved in this activity.' Some kindergarten teachers illustrated some of the ways mothers participated in their school in the following extra curricular activities: helping children with the Holy Quran recital, performing some cooking lessons for the children and reading stories with children.

As for fundraising, teachers revealed that few parents contributed. Teachers encountered difficulties when asking for contributions of money because some parents may complain that they are overloaded with other financial issues. In addition, teachers stated that the Ministry of Education inhibited schools from asking parents for funds because of parent complaints, thus the schools decided that this activity should be voluntary.

4.3.2.3 Participating in school decision-making

Around 75% of the teachers reported that inviting parents to become members of PTAs and parents' boards is one of the current activities that schools utilize to engage parents in decision-making roles. However, some teachers explained that not all of them participate in parents' boards and PTA meetings, and thus some teachers recommended that the principal would be more helpful in providing further clarification for parents'

participation in this type of activity. However, the rest of the teachers who were members of parents' boards and PTAs provided some useful information about this activity.

Teachers stated that at the beginning of the school year, the principal, vice principal and the head teachers met to choose the members of the parents' boards. What they have noticed is that most of parents apologized for not participating, and most of their excuses revolved around work obligations which made it hard for them to attend meetings. To overcome this problem, principals always try to choose parents who do not work or are retired. Nevertheless, few parents agree to become members of these boards. Teachers revealed that sometimes schools do not have parents' boards or PTAs because parents abstained from participating in these boards or associations.

Several teachers (about 48.3%) noticed that parents did not attend parents' boards and PTA meetings regularly. Teachers complained that the number of parents declined after each meeting. One of the teachers who was a member of parents' boards disclosed that:

> 'We noticed that parents usually attend the first and second meetings; however, after these meetings, parents act indifferently and their numbers start to drop until no parents attend the meetings ... Sometimes we are obliged to send the minutes of meetings to their houses for them to sign.' (PT11)

Approximately 70% of the teachers emphasised that the role of parental participation in parents' boards and PTAs was mostly focused on volunteering and fund raising. Teachers clarified that parents are not authorized to participate in decision-making roles. As stated by the teachers, parents are prohibited from taking decisions about the curriculum, budget and the assessment of children or teachers. Even principals, as teachers indicated, do not have the right to change the curriculum and have little say in issues such as budgets, child

assessment or the timing of exams. These issues are already set up and arranged by the Ministry of Education.

One teacher explained that parents have been informed of this exclusion:

'During parents' board meeting, we usually notify parents that we are not permitted to make decisions on the curriculum or child assessment or any associated matters. Sometimes parents ask us to take notes of their remarks in regard to the curriculum and send it to the Ministry of Education, and we do send them, but unfortunately we never get a response from them ... At least we try, even though we know it is not going to work.' (PT11)

Several teachers (about 47%) mentioned that parents usually participate by giving their opinions and suggestions. According to teachers, principals always welcome suggestions from parents and encourage them to participate in PTAs and parents' boards. Sometimes parents share their ideas and opinions in trying to solve problems in school such as absenteeism and children's misbehaviour. For example, one teacher described one of the parent's suggestions:

'That we honour the children who were never absent during the month, so that children will be enthusiastic about attending school, and the level of absences may be decreased.' (PT4)

4.4 Teachers' perceptions of types of desired parental involvement practices

In their discussions, teachers indicated certain types of activities that they would like parents to be part of in the education of their children, both at home and at school. The following sections describe the emergent categories for these desired types of parental involvement activities as cited by teachers.

4.4.1 Helping children and the appropriate procedure

Despite their encouragement and appreciation of parental involvement, teachers emphasized that there should be some restrictions on parental participation in their schools, particularly in curriculum matters and teaching methods. Nearly 60% of the teachers in primary schools were concerned about how parents help their children at home rather than what to teach them. Teachers desired that parents are involved in the correct way when it comes to helping at home and checking homework. A maths teacher explained how parents' teaching at home might conflict with their teaching at school when she said:

'We love parents to participate, but as a maths teacher I do not want parents to participate in teaching their children mathematics because I teach children in a certain way and parents might use a different method, though both of them may reach the same results. This could be noticed when the inspector attends my class and observes the differences in methods which children are applying. Instead of teaching them, parents could practice with their children what they have learned at school.' (PT5)

Almost 43.3% of the teachers stated that they did not wish for parents to interfere with their teaching methods at school. Moreover, they refused parent criticisms of what teachers were teaching and how they were teaching, because they were following the curriculum already laid down by the Ministry of Education.

One teacher enlarged on her refusal of parents' intrusions into teaching, saying that:

'Parents have a clear idea about what we are teaching and how we are teaching children, but to come in and judge that we do not teach their children in the right way is not acceptable. '(PT7)

A consistent point raised in the discussions was that most of the teachers in primary schools (about 70%) wanted parents to monitor and supervise their children at home.

98

They stressed that parents should not teach their children, because this is the teacher's job. They only wanted them to follow up with their children what they have learned at school. They requested that parents should concentrate on children of low levels of achievement and not to neglect them. This could be achieved through frequent communication with the teacher to discuss the problems children were encountering and to try to identify suitable solution to overcome them as early as possible.

Teachers wanted parents to follow up with their children on a daily basis and not to put pressure on them before exams. They also wanted to encourage children through developing enthusiasm for school, readying them for participation in school and providing other learning reinforcements.

4.4.2 Increasing attendance at school meetings (non-involved parents)

Due to the importance of parent-teacher meetings, approximately 73.3% of the primary school teachers stressed that parents should acknowledge the importance of these meetings. In the teachers' opinions, through these meeting parents could have the chance to identify a student's progress and investigate in depth their children's strengths or weak spots and discuss any behavioural problems with the teachers. However, they argued that the parents of children who were excelling mostly visited school to ask about their children's academic progress. Thus, they wanted higher attendance and engagement from non-involved parents whose children were manifesting academic and behavioural problems. According to them, when the efforts of converged teachers and parents, those problems could be addressed with appropriate instructional materials and the child's achievement could be improved.

One of the primary school teachers explained how they want parents to participate in parent-teacher meetings:

> 'Parents should not ignore the importance of parent-teacher meetings; we want all the parents to attend ... the parents of distinguished children and those of average and slow learners. I have some parents who stop attending these meetings when their children receive excellent grades in their assessment reports. On the other hand, parents of children who have weak points do not show up and I never see them from the beginning of the school year till the end of the year. Those parents should pay attention to the benefits of these meetings for the development of their children's achievement.' (PT28)

4.4.3 Kindergarten stage: shifting parents' attitudes

Parents' negligence concerning the kindergarten stage was the main issue which was discussed by kindergarten teachers. They complained that parents are apathetic with regard to their participation in kindergarten. Nearly 63.3% of kindergarten teachers believed that parents do not consider kindergarten as an important stage in the life of their children. According to them, parents think that in this stage children spend their time playing, thus they give more attention to their other children in higher grades. Most kindergarten teachers stated that they wanted parents to change their ideas about the kindergarten stage and start to recognize it as a vital stage for their children's academic progress in later years. Some kindergarten teachers sought to change the false idea that parents had formed about this stage by explaining to them how essential it is to be involved in the child's early years' education. According to them, parent participation in kindergarten can detect a child's weak points earlier, which can be tackled with the help of the teachers and overcome with the supervision of the parents. In addition, when parents are involved in kindergarten, children will value school and display positive attitudes toward their later school years.

A teacher in kindergarten expressed her preference for how parents can help their children at home:

> 'We usually send parents a letter every two weeks which includes the experiences that the children will have through the next two weeks. I would love it if parents would look at this letter and try to read it with his/her child. Parents can help us by introducing basic information to their children about the new experience. Few parents do that, but we really feel enthusiastic when children participate in the class and share with us what their parents taught them at home.' (KT16)

They also emphasized that parents need to monitor their children's homework at home or prepare them for the next teaching experience. Teachers explained that homework sent home is extremely simple and does not consume much of the parents' time. However, parents sometimes object and complain about the homework because they regard kindergarten as an unimportant stage.

The teachers, and particularly those in kindergarten, asserted that they wanted to see more involvement in extracurricular activities They wanted parents to come to school and present talks or share their expertise, knowledge or skills. They believed that children would feel happy to see their parents participating in school and thus, they would feel secure and value the school. Teachers also indicated that parents can also share their careers with schools which would be of interest to children. Teachers assumed that it would be a great idea if children were brought into contact with the types of jobs their parents did, in order for them to think of what might interest them in the future.

4.4.4 Initiative volunteering

Some teachers from kindergarten and primary schools (about 48.3%) wanted parents to show initiative and be spontaneous in volunteering. They preferred parents to help them in classes and at school, for example, assisting in providing the classroom with

equipments, photographs, or books to support the new skills and experiences being taught in the classroom. They could even help the school in repairing school utilities.

One kindergarten teacher commented:

'It would be a great idea if parents could assist the school when there is anything in short supply ... as long as the parents are capable financially.' (KT15)

4.4.5 Encouraging non-academic learning

Discussions about teachers' perceptions in regard to the desired parental involvement raised the issue of the importance of parents' roles in controlling and adjusting children's behaviour and morals at school, particularly at primary school. This was mostly expressed by primary school teachers who taught male children. Most of these teachers complained about children's behaviour at school. They explained that the level of respect shown for teachers is decreasing year after year. According to them, as the child gets older his/her respect for the teacher diminishes. Most of those teachers reported that parents are better able to teach their children in non-academic aspects such as morals, values and respect for others. Therefore, they argued that lack of education at home lay behind this problem. They stated that parents are not paying attention to this problem. Although teachers spared no effort in trying to overcome this problem, they did not succeed and the problem persisted because parents were not cooperating effectively with them. One of the teachers expressed her displeasure at this phenomenon when she said:

'I want parents to stand with me and not against me. If parents do the opposite, children will gain strength and feel that teachers are weak, and thus start to disrespect us.' (PT 27)

Another teacher asserted with regard to this issue that:

'To find a true solution for this problem, parents should impress permanently on their children respect for teachers. What I see is that all the problems in the school are caused by disrespecting the teacher. If a teacher complains about a child's misbehaviour in the class, the parent should not go to the child and tell him/her that the teacher is wrong. It would be better to hold the child responsible for misbehaving and stand with the teacher ... I believe it is impossible for children to learn at school if they do not show the teacher respect.' (PT18)

Teachers wanted parents to address this problem seriously by reinforcing the proper behaviour. Moreover, they should seek the teacher's help and cooperate with the school so that their joint efforts prevail over this problem.

4.5 Types of communication activities to engage parents in children's schooling

Most schools used various communication activities to build and sustain connections with families in order to promote parental involvement at school and at home. Of the two main types of communication, the first is one-way or written communication: sending information from the school to parents about school events or classes without the chance to exchange ideas. The other type is two-way communication or verbal communication, which is designed to yield dialogue between parents and school personnel (Gestwicki, 2004).

4.5.1 One-way communication

4.5.1.1 Homework

Nearly 77% of the teachers in the primary school focus groups indicated that they used homework to link school with home. They explained that with homework, the parent's role should only focus on monitoring and checking that their children's homework is completed. On the other hand, some of the kindergarten teachers (60%) indicated that

they rarely used homework because of complaints from parents about giving their children homework to complete at home, even though the kindergarten teachers explained that they gave children only very basic homework. Only a few teachers in kindergarten engaged children with homework. Two of the kindergarten teachers explained why parents of kindergarten children wanted them to do homework at home:

(KT16): We usually give children homework, which is actually very basic. This is because parents encourage us to do this, they sometimes come to school and ask us to give them more, they even want us to give their children daily homework.'

(KT19): 'Parents told me to give homework so that their children would be familiar with homework in order to prepare them for primary school.'

4.5.1.2 Newsletters

Some of the teachers in kindergarten and primary schools (about 67%) reported that their schools usually sent newsletters to inform parents about school events. These newsletters may include invitations to special events and activities in schools such as ceremonies and seminars, and reminders about school trips and schedules. Sometimes schools used newsletters to inform parents about current classroom activities, for example special projects that have been completed by children. Most of the teachers in primary school reported that they sent newsletters to the children's parents at the beginning of each academic year. This letter would include the curriculum content which was going to be taught to the child during the year. Kindergarten teachers explained that they also sent letters to parents before a child started to learn new experiences that were part of the curriculum. However, they disclosed their disappointment at the apathy of parents, as not

all of them even read the letter. This then explained why children sometimes came unprepared for the new learning experiences.

4.5.1.3 Child card reports

Most of the teachers in kindergartens and primary schools (nearly 90%) agreed that schools sent home child card reports. Parents are usually informed of their children's progress through these reports. Teachers in kindergarten reported that they usually sent this report at the end of each semester, while teachers at primary schools clarified that child card reports were sent three times per semester. Teachers in primary schools also indicated that report cards did not require the parents' signature. When teachers were asked how they could know that the parents had received the report cards, most of them explained that parents knew that children received their report cards within one week after each period of examinations. One teacher at a primary school explained the advantages of this report:

'Child card reports are sent frequently to parents, approximately six times per academic year. The main advantage is to help parents to monitor their children's performance and to provide them with their children's results and assessments so that they would understand their children's needs and progress.' (PT23)

Almost 40% of the teachers at primary schools indicated that they sent parents memos from time to time about the child's performance in class. However, these memos were usually used when a child's performance had declined.

4.5.2 Two-way communication

4.5.2.1 Telephone calls

Teachers in primary schools agreed that they usually contacted parents by telephone. They indicated that they mostly contacted parents when the child's academic performance had fallen off, or if a problem in a child's behaviour arose.

On the other hand, some teachers in kindergarten (about 67%) reported that they usually called parents if something urgent happened. Most of them indicated that they called parents directly. Some of them kept records of the telephone numbers of parents rather than having to go to school administration to get the numbers. One kindergarten teacher explained when parents were contacted.

'Most of the time we call parents if something critical has happened, for example if the child is tired or not feeling well or if the child gets injured in an accident and there is an urgent need for the parent to come. Sometimes we contact the parents if the child is absent for more than three days, in order to check that there is no serious or urgent matter behind the child's absence.' (KT14)

When teachers were asked if they contacted parents about issues other than problems with the children themselves, most indicated that they only contacted parents when children encountered problems at school.

4.5.2.2 Parent-teacher meetings

Four types of these meetings were identified in the focus group discussion: orientation meetings at the beginning of the academic year, scheduled parent-teacher conferences, scheduled weekly meetings, and the mothers' annual meetings.

Teachers in primary and kindergarten schools agreed that they held orientation meeting at the beginning of the academic year. These meetings were held for new parents who had children entering at the first level. In these meetings, school staff usually described the school's goals, child assessment and grading procedures, and gave a brief introduction mainly about the curriculum and teaching methods used.

Another type of meeting was the scheduled parent-teacher conference, which is utilized in most primary schools. According to teachers in the primary schools, this conference was usually planned by their schools to follow the distribution of children's report cards. The main purpose of this conference was to discuss the children's performance according to the assessment results in their reports. In order to encourage parents to attend these conferences, teachers revealed that their schools usually sent invitation letters to parents well before organizing the conference, so that parents would have the opportunity to make the necessary arrangements.

Most of the primary school teachers (about 77%) reported that they also scheduled weekly meetings for parents. These teachers indicated that each school allocated specific parent-teacher meeting days for each grade level every week. These meetings were usually held during the school recess and lasted approximately 15 minutes. These meeting are organized for parents to meet teachers in case of any urgent enquiry regarding their children's performance.

The mother's annual meeting was held only once per academic year in kindergartens. According to some teachers, fathers were welcome to attend these meetings, but the reason for specifying it as a meeting for mothers was because the teachers preferred

mothers to attend due to religious reasons and curriculum demands, as mentioned earlier

in this chapter (section 4.3.2.1.1). Although kindergarten teachers reported that they only

had this type of meeting once a year, the schools also welcome informal meetings with

parents, and the school doors were always open for parents' enquiries. One kindergarten

teacher described her enthusiasm for talking to parents about their children:

'Parents are welcome to come at any time to ask about their children. Sometimes parents ask about their children in the morning or at the end of the school day when they take their children home. We are glad they do that. At least we feel they are concerned about their children, though it is only kindergarten to them …We welcome their enquiries to encourage them to recognize the importance of kindergarten.' (KT7)

4.5.2.3 Ceremonies and school events

Most of the teachers in kindergarten and primary schools (about 78.3%) agreed that they

organized various ceremonies and social events for parents to attend. These ceremonies

included honouring distinguished students, celebrating social events such as Ramadan,

Eids, the National Day, and Mother's Day. Sometimes teachers invited parents to

organize these events. The focus group discussions revealed that kindergartens held more

of these activities than primary schools, since they were part of their curriculum activities

and practices. One Kindergarten teacher quoted:

'We nearly celebrate all of these occasions in order to bring parents in to watch their children … Children will also feel happy to see their parents watching them, and we do that because we know children at this age need to be close to their parents, since kindergarten is the first step of their transition from home to school, and thus parents and children will feel they are part of the school.' (KT9)

4.5.2.4 Workshops and seminars

Teachers in both kindergartens and primary schools indicated that the numbers of seminars had decreased to merely once per year due to the low attendance of parents. This was because parents wanted seminars that are closely related to their children's education. The teachers indicated they could not afford to provide these types of topics more frequently. According to them, these types of seminars require specialist lecturers who were not available to attend school regularly. As for workshops the teachers indicated that arrangements for workshops are time-consuming and teachers are already preoccupied with their teaching tasks. One teacher quoted:

'What we have noticed is that very few parents attend seminars. Sometimes we encourage them to attend, send them invitations, or give presents, but it seems to be useless. Parents avoid attending seminars if they decide that the topic will not be interesting or is not related to their children's schooling. This is why we have decreased the number of seminars during the year to just once a year and sometimes we do not arrange any. As for workshops, we were able to organize them for teachers, but for parents it needs a lot more effort and coordination which we cannot offer.' (PT17)

4.5.2.5 Fundraising

Almost 75% of the teachers in kindergarten and primary schools reported that they rarely engaged parents in volunteering. The teachers explained that they used to ask parents for help in fundraising; however the majority did not respond. The teachers felt embarrassed and uncomfortable about asking parents frequently for contributions. According to them, they asked parents only at the beginning of the year.

4.5.2.6 Assisting at school and classroom

Most of the teachers in primary schools (about 70%) indicated they usually asked parents to volunteer but parents rarely became involved in volunteering activities in school.

Teachers interpreted this as being because the parents themselves were already occupied with their work in the morning, and if parents were asked they seldom responded to the teachers.

'We used to asking for the assistance of parents at school, for example assisting our school in organizing ceremonies, participating in decorating the school or classrooms, supervising children during particular activities such as school trips. However, few do participate, and therefore, we have stopped asking them. Perhaps it is due to their engagement with their work and other responsibilities in the mornings. Instead, we started to ask retired parents for their assistance, and they are helpful but unfortunately they are very few of them in our school.' (KT14)

As for parents' attendance in the classroom, teachers revealed that parents were only allowed to watch their children's performance in class if they had been invited. The teachers in primary schools reported that inviting parents in to assist them in teaching or instructing children in the classroom is not allowed by the Ministry of Education's rules and regulations.

Discussions during the focus groups revealed that kindergarten teachers involved parents more than primary school teachers in volunteering activities. The reason for this variation is that kindergarten schools assigned one hour per week for parents to participate in extracurricular activities. These types of activities provided opportunities for parents to participate in informal teaching under the supervision of teachers. A teacher in kindergarten described the reasons as follows:

'We want parents to be close to their children at this particular stage, and that is why we invite them to participate. Mostly it is mothers who participate, though sometimes they feel shy and timid but I encourage them. I have had some mothers who have presented some activities in a fascinating way. However there is still little participation of this kind because, nowadays most of the mothers are committed to their work, so it is hard for them to attend school activities in the morning unless they get permission from work, which I think is also difficult to ask for frequently.' (KT25)

4.5.2.7 Attending a lesson in a classroom

Only five teachers (16.6%) in primary schools indicated that they regularly organized visits for parents to attend lessons in the classroom, and this was mostly for parents who had children at the first grade level. Many teachers in primary school reported that they used in the past to employ this type of communication activity to engage parents in watching their children's performance in the classroom, but that it is no longer practised in their schools. According to them, they do not have time, since they are already overburdened with schooling duties. Kindergarten teachers reported that parents were only allowed to attend lessons in their children's classroom once a year during the annual mother's meeting.

4.6 Barriers to parental involvement

A number of obstacles have been identified through the focus group discussions. It seemed that most of these are related to the personal circumstances and attitudes of parents; for example, work schedules and time conflicts, language differences, and parents' fear of being criticised by teachers.

4.6.1 Work schedule and time conflict

The reason most often reported by teachers for parents not engaging in school activities was their work obligations. Time constraints and the work schedules of parents have been found to be one of the main problems that may hamper parental involvement in school. According to the teachers, work obligations and time conflicts limited the availability of parents to attend school activities, particularly if both parents worked. One teacher explained that:

'Activities at school are sometimes scheduled at times that interfere with parents' work or other obligations. That is why we send letters a few days earlier before the event is held.' (KT23)

4.6.2 Language differences

Language barriers seemed to be one of the reasons for low levels of parental involvement. This was particularly identified in kindergartens. The teachers believed that differences in language prevented parents from participating even if they wished to do so. According to them, even if the mother spoke English, their schools were not prepared to translate newsletters or invitations into English. This may lead parents to not actively participate in their children's education, as teachers reported that those parents usually only came to school when problems occurred. One teacher assumed that parents who did not speak Arabic or English would have difficulty in communicating with school personnel and also may not understand the school's newsletters or attend school meetings. The teachers experienced tremendous difficulty when parents spoke languages other than Arabic or English. One teacher in kindergarten commented:

'Some mothers in our school area are foreigners and do not speak Arabic or English, and sometimes the father is illiterate and even their children do not speak Arabic correctly. So we face a complicated situation concerning how to communicate with the mother when she visits the school. Sometimes mothers bring relatives for translation purposes ... This is really helpful and convenient for both of us ... But if there is no translator, then we are in a complex position.' (KT27)

4.6.3 Parents' fear of being blamed by teachers for a child's low academic achievement

About 43.3% of the teachers in primary schools reported that some parents avoided attending meetings because they believed that teachers may relate their children's failure

or low achievement to parents' lack of involvement or carelessness. Therefore the parents backed off and took a passive role. However, in their explanation, teachers clarified that they did not criticize or blame parents, and they only concentrated on how to encourage parents to participate more in their children's education and help parents to find solutions to overcome this problem. According to one of the teachers:

'I have some parents who avoided meeting me, because their children obtained lower grades ... I could sense their disappointment and how uncomfortable they become when they discuss with me their efforts to help their children which eventually were not successful. That's why, whenever I meet parents, I always start with their children's strong points and slowly reveal the weak points in a way that parents would not feel disappointed in their children, and encourage them more in their involvement' (PT6).

4.6.4 Parents' level of knowledge

Some teachers of primary schools (about 53.3%) pinpointed that levels of knowledge among parents about school work could be one of the barriers that may hinder parental involvement. For example, parents may lack knowledge about school procedures or how to help with school work. They believed that parents may see themselves as unqualified to help their children with homework or schoolwork as the children move to higher grades. The teachers believed that this was mostly a concern with parents who themselves achieved lower levels of education. However teachers did mention their efforts to assist parents to perform their roles of educating their children at home properly, particularly when parents expressed a need for the teacher's assistance.

4.7 Summary of the focus groups findings

Throughout the focus group meetings, teachers from kindergarten and primary schools discussed their views and beliefs about parental involvement practices in their schools.

Teachers viewed parental involvement as an important factor in developing children and school efficiency. They welcomed and appreciated parental involvement and revealed their willingness to maintain a productive relationship between parents and school.

The teachers revealed some types of practices that parents were currently involved with in children's education at school and at home; however, their involvement varied according to each type of activity. Parents were more involved in activities that were related to their children's education, such as helping with homework and attending parent-teacher meetings.

Teachers preferred that parents help their children at home through monitoring their homework and other school work while not interfering with their teaching methods. Some of the teachers wanted parents to concentrate on their children's behaviour and moral conduct at school and to try to alter their behaviour for the better. They also wanted parents to be committed to attending parent-teacher meetings due to their importance, particularly for parents of low achievers. Some teachers also requested more participation in volunteering and extra curricular activities. Moreover, they desired parents to display more commitment to attending parents' boards and PTAs.

Barriers that may affect parental involvement were discussed. Work obligations seemed to be one the main barriers that may hinder parents from participating in school. Language barriers, fear of teacher's criticism, and parents' lack of knowledge were also mentioned as barriers that may influence parental involvement.

4.8 Qualitative phase (principals' interviews)

Individual interviews were conducted with fourteen principals who had volunteered to participate in this study. The participants were seven kindergarten principals and seven primary school principals. In this section, the reflections of principals and their responses to issues related to parental involvement are examined, analysed and discussed in depth. This will support the evidence and enrich the findings from the other two methods that have been employed in this research (teachers' focus groups and parents' questionnaire). Moreover, the presentation of the qualitative findings is categorised into groups to address the research questions, offering rich insights into the interaction between principals and parents as they collaborate in children's education.

The guide questions for the interview were organised around the following themes and categories: (1) principals' perceptions of parental involvement, which consist of the outcomes of parental involvement and the principal's role in involving parents; (2) principals' views of the relationship between parents and teachers in their schools and how motivated they are to involve parents in school activities; (3) principals' perceptions of the types and frequencies of activities that are currently used to involve parents at school and at home; (4) principals' opinions of and levels of satisfaction with the participation of parents; and (5) barriers which hinder parental involvement.

4.9 Principals' views of parental involvement

In their interviews the principals were enthusiastic about the primary role of parents in children's achievement. The principals revealed their commitment to drawing parents

into their children's education through collaboration between home and school and involving parents in a positive way to support children's learning at home and school.

4.9.1 Outcomes of parental involvement

When principals were asked for their perspectives concerning parental involvement in children's education, all 14 of them described the importance of parental participation in children's schooling both at school and at home. Their discourse portrayed the significance of home and school partnership as two-way communication which could increase student success and school effectiveness. Nine of the principals (64%) asserted that parents taking a dynamic role in their children's education may reduce the risk of academic failure and allow problems to be tackled as early as possible.

The following quotation describes the importance of parental involvement from one of the principal's point of view:

> 'I believe that engaging parents effectively in school can release opportunities for children to succeed. For example they can achieve better school performance, show more positive attitudes towards school and be assisted to prevent grades falling. Therefore extending efforts to build partnerships between the school and parents can be helpful to students and beneficial to school staff as well as to parents themselves.' (PP7)

Although all principals expressed the importance of parental involvement, five of them (29%) mentioned reservations regarding this involvement, particularly when parents teach their children at home. They preferred parents to monitor and observe their children at home when they were doing their homework but not to interfere with the teaching methods through which the children are learning at school.

> 'We want parents as helpers, I don't want them to interfere with our teaching, what we need is simple monitoring at home ... There are some parents who exaggerate when they help their

116

children to the extent that they do everything for them … For example sometimes we find out that they do their children's homework which makes their children dependent on them … This isn't what we aimed at, we would rather want them just to guide and supervise their children's learning at home.' (PP1)

It seems that the descriptions and criticisms principals gave of the way parents help their children at home was based on their previous experience when they were teachers.

4.9.2 The principal's role in supporting parental involvement

Responses from the principals concerning this issue showed that all of them played a vital role in supporting and encouraging parental involvement in their schools. The focus of their roles was in terms of both helping teachers and encouraging parents to take part in school activities.

4.9.2.1 Helping teachers in school activities

The majority of the principals (86%) stated that they always cooperated with their teachers in the planning process for developing parental involvement activities at school. This process usually started with discussions between the principals and their teachers in organised meetings. Ideas and remarks would be exchanged until agreement was reached about the appropriate activities. The principals then allocated financial support where needed.

One of the principals described her role in helping teachers in the preparation of parental involvement activities:

'When we want to involve parents in our activities, we set up preparations in advance … We meet and I exchange ideas and thoughts with my teaching staff. I always encourage them to suggest their own ideas which might be new and different from mine … Sometimes the activities may need to be supported financially, such as in printing invitations and providing refreshments … I never let them pay … I always take responsibility for financing activities . Consequently we establish an activity that attracts parents to attend.' (KP5)

117

4.9.2.2 Encouraging parents to attend school activities

Almost (78.5%) of the principals said that attracting parents to attend school activities and welcoming them were priorities for them. Their main plan was to create activities that attract parents to attend school activities.

Five principals (35.7%) explained that sometimes they asked parents for their ideas and views about desirable activities that may increase the attendance of parents at school in order to have a range of activities that accommodate different schedules, preferences and aptitudes. One principal of a primary school described parents' assistance in school activities:

> "I try to choose a variety of activities each year with the help of my teachers ... I sometimes ask some parents to assist me in choosing a desirable activity. Some parents volunteer to organise activities or assist us in a particular activity ... One parent offered to video tape an activity in order to broadcast it on the Kuwait Television Channel ... We were all thrilled when we watched it on television ...' (Laughs) (PP5)

Some principals of primary schools (42.9%) enthusiastically pointed out that they attended most of these activities in their schools, for instance, the parent-teacher meetings which are usually held after the distribution of children's assessment reports. They indicated that they insisted on attending these activities in order to welcome parents and solve any problems that may arise.

Most of the principals (85.7%) also stated that they also participated personally in activities with parents and teachers, as in competitions and open day activities.

One of the principals from a kindergarten stood at the entrance to the reception room to welcome parents and children at the beginning of each academic year.

> 'I try to memorise the children's family names, particularly the new children, and to give the parents quick directions where to take their children directly to their classes.' (KP5)

4.10 Principals' perceptions of the relationship between parents and teachers

Most of the principals (86%) generally described the relations between parents and teachers as positive. From their point of view, their teachers collaborate with parents, they support and listen to each other and exchange opinions as they work together towards the general goal of developing children's performance. The atmosphere in their school is open and welcoming: 'Teachers really do want to include parents in the life of the school' (KP1). According to principals, their teachers always plan opportunities to engage parents in school as well as always appreciating parents' help and assistance.

Five of the principles (35.7%), particularly those in primary schools stated that they always discussed with their teachers during school meetings the basis for constructing a positive and successful relationship between parents and teachers. In addition, they explained their immediate intervention when confrontation between parent and teacher arose. One principal gave an example:

> 'We have some cases of highly educated parents; they sometimes come to school to criticise the teacher's way of teaching, and start to lecture her ... like on how to teach and how to talk to the children ... When I feel that a parent has this intention ... I don't let her/him meet the teacher. I try to make him/her realise that we have our own methods of teaching which come from the Ministry of Education which we are obliged to follow ... You see, this kind of confrontation may make the relationship between parents and teachers tense and may generate negative attitudes ... Neither side will feel comfortable.' (PP3)

As for parents' participation at schools and at home, principals indicated that parents were motivated to support their children's learning, particularly when they received clear invitations and support from the school. The principals indicated that some parents sent 'Thank you' letters in recognition of the efforts of teachers in facilitating communication between the school and families.

Four principals from primary schools (28.6%) described the existence of negative relationships between parents and teachers, and gave various reasons. They explained that some parents treated teachers rudely at school, because 'they have no respect for the teachers' (PT7). And 'they speak inappropriately particularly to non-Kuwaiti teachers' (PT30).

Despite the motivation of their teachers and their appreciation of parental involvement in school activities, some principals, particularly from primary school, placed some restrictions on parental visits to school. They preferred that parents visited schools for urgent enquiries or when problems occurred. They explained that the schools had already set specific days for meetings with parents, and that teachers could not spend too much time meeting parents because they are fully occupied with other activities such as preparation, marking and teaching.

4.11 The prevalent parental involvement activities

In the interviews the principals indicated that parents participated in two ways: 1) at home, and 2) at school. However, the principals noted that parents were only really interested in activities that closely related to the teaching and learning of their children.

4.11.1 Parental involvement at home

That parents are actively involved with their children's education at home was revealed by nearly most of the principals (86.7%). The principals indicated that there was an increased involvement of parents in helping their children with homework and monitoring it. Parents seemed to have positive reactions in terms of their requests for help and ideas from their children's teachers. The issue of sending their children to school ready to learn also emerged from the analysis of the principals' responses.

However, principals commented that not all the parents in their schools were involved in their children's education. There were some cases of parents who were not involved either at home or at school. They seemed not to be aware of the importance of their role at home in reinforcing what children learned at school, as some principals indicated. The principals concluded that the involvement of parents tended to occur most in the teaching of academic skills, and in monitoring and assisting their own children at home with learning activities that were synchronized with the classroom teacher. One principal in a primary school illustrated this:

'When children have a presentation on a particular issue, parents help them; they even use the internet to gain extra information about the topic ... Children usually tell us how parents helped them in their presentations.' (PP4)

On the other hand, five principals in kindergartens (35.7%) reported that only some parents had a little involvement in their children's education at home. In fact, some parents occasionally argued about children having homework in kindergarten. Encumbering them with homework appeared to them to be undesirable, particularly when they had other children at higher levels (in primary and high schools).

4.11.2 Parental involvement at school

In their interviews, the principals described three types of parental involvement in school: communication, volunteering and decision-making. However, the degree of participation of parents varied from one type to another.

4.11.2.1 Communication: parental involvement and child-centred activities

Twelve of the principals (85.7%) confirmed that parents were also involved in school activities. Their attendance was concentrated on participation in teacher-parent meetings to discuss their children's report cards, and visiting their children's classes to attend lessons whenever invited. In addition, they attended weekly scheduled meetings with teachers particularly if they had specific enquiries or remarks to make about their children's progress. Another activity which showed some level of involvement was attending and participating in ceremonies and school events, for example honouring distinguished students and open days. As long as these activities were related to their children's performance, more attendance could be recognised. One principal pointed out that:

> 'I have noticed that parents are only concerned in activities that foster their children's academic performance and progress at school ... They only attend activities that children are taking part in ...' (Laughs) (KP7)

However, the principals had also noticed a lack of inclination among parents to attend seminars and lectures, particularly if the topic was general. However, as one principal indicated, if these activities addressed issues relevant to their children's education, an increase in attendance was often recognised.

4.11.2.2 Volunteering

All of the fourteen principals indicated that volunteering and financial contributions seemed to represent the lowest levels of parental involvement at school. The principals commented that parents made no initiative in this type of involvement. Despite frequent attempts by principals to encourage parents to volunteer, they were only rarely involved in this activity. The principals wanted parents to come forward spontaneously to

volunteer. According to them, although a few parents did contribute, their contributions were not sufficient and their rate of volunteering was very disappointing.

As for volunteering in extracurricular activities, only two kindergarten principals (14%) were pleased with parent participation in this activity. The remainder of the principals commented that parents were rarely involved in extracurricular activities, although this type of activity permits parents to be close to their children as well as fostering positive relationships between parents and teachers.

4.11.2.3 Participation in school decision-making

All fourteen principals agreed that they had PTAs and parents' boards in their schools. However, the majority of principals (93%) reported that parents rarely participated in attending PTA and parents' boards meetings. From most of their responses it seems that parental involvement in the past had been better than more recently. Although the principals urged and encouraged parents to attend PTA and parents' boards, they had noticed that parents are neglecting this type of activity and their rate of attendance seemed to decrease immediately after the first meeting until eventually only members who were school staff attended the meetings. On the other hand, only one primary school principal reported a high level of parental participation in this activity.

When principals were asked about the types of parental input in the decision-making process at school, volunteering and donations were perceived by most of the principals (71%) as a common type of involvement in PTAs and parents' boards. According to their responses, these activities are wide-ranging.

Four of the principals (29%) stated that some parents donated money to the school in order to buy equipments and utensils that the school could not afford.

Three principals (21%) stated that parents who were members of parents' boards and PTAs volunteered in preparing and organizing ceremonies and programmes that were held in their schools. In addition, they were in charge of activities such as catering. Moreover, some of the parents took responsibility for encouraging other parents to attend these activities and became networking links between the school and other parents.

Another three principals in kindergarten (21%) identified parents' volunteering through bringing to school used equipment from home to support experiences that their children were going to have in the learning, or participating in construction projects in the class that were useful for the children's knowledge and experience.

Some of the principals (57.1%) said that parents could also participate in parents' board meetings by offering their opinions and suggestions. The principals added that, during these meetings, common problems in schools were addressed by a group of members who consisted of parents, the principal and some teachers. These problems were discussed and eventually appropriate solutions were reached and shared by those members. Nonetheless, principals concluded that parents were unenthusiastic in attending those meetings.

One principal enlarged on parents' participation in decision-making roles, saying that:

'We have stopped asking for monetary contributions in our school, as we thought it might be embarrassing for them, even though it was voluntary and not compulsory. We are content with bringing up ideas and opinions, and always ask them what they want us to do ... how this idea can be achieved ... and who can help us? ... It is just a way of bringing together these ideas and helping each other ... So the idea becomes explicit ... however, unfortunately, we have noted that parents are still reluctant to attend.' (KP4)

4.12 Principals' preferences concerning parental involvement activities

When principles were asked to what extent they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the level and type of involvement, nearly 35.7% of the principals indicated that parental participation at home and school was generally satisfactory. On the other hand, about 64.3% reported their desire for changes in the levels and types of involvement of parents. Their preferences for this involvement varied from one principal to another.

4.12.1 Increased participation in volunteering

Many principals seemed to focus on parents' volunteering. Six principles (43%) wanted more involvement in volunteering and fundraising. They would have liked parents to show initiative and not have to be prompted in this type of involvement, for example by offering their assistance at school more frequently, helping in ceremonies and special events by taking parts in organisation, supervision or financing. The principals wished that parents could help them in fundraising in order to provide the schools with educational equipment that they needed. Attempts to enlighten parents about the importance of partnerships between families and the school were endorsed in meetings. Sometimes principals held celebrations to honour parents who had volunteered and helped in fundraising. However, their participation in these activities was not satisfactory as expected. One principal said:

> 'I wish that parents would volunteer and contribute in our school spontaneously ... Sometimes our school needs computers, videos, televisions ... not all of our classes are fully equipped ... our budget is limited and donations from parents would really be appreciated and helpful at the same time.' (PP2)

4.12.2 Restrictions on parental interference

Some principals (36%) from primary schools revealed their preferences concerning parental involvement in a different way. They wanted parents not to interfere with their teaching methods at school. They requested that parents should respect the teachers' assessment of their children, and to accept their remarks since they were assessing children according to their levels of achievement. In addition, principals urged parents and their children to respect the teachers and the school's rules and policies. One principal quoted:

> 'Parents come to school and ask me to teach their children specific things, however we have a curriculum that we are committed to follow and we can't change any thing ... Sometimes they complain about the frequent absence of a teacher and they come and blame us that their children's performance has tumbled ... as if it is our fault, when it is the responsibility of the educational authorities to provide alternative teachers' (PP3)

4.12.3 Parents' participation in decision-making roles: some boundaries

Most of the principals (85.7%) wished that parents regarded their participation in PTAs and parents' boards as more important, which could be achieved by showing more commitment to and attendance at meetings. They explained that most parents persistently apologized for failing to attend meetings due to job restrictions or time conflicts.

On the other hand, all of the principals reported that parents could not participate in decision-making roles related to curriculum planning and development, children's assessment, budgets, and the times of exams. They explained that, although some parents would want to be involved in these activities, they were not allowed to since such decisions had already been made by the Ministry of Education. According to the latter, even the principals could not interfere with these decisions. However, the principals pointed out that parents sometimes came to the school to share their opinions and observations about the curriculum or children's assessment with them, but this was not

considered to be part of a decision-making process. According to them it was an exchange of opinions and ideas.

When principals were asked whether they would welcome the participation of parents in decision making roles, eight of the principals (57.1%) wanted parents to participate in decision making, but at school level. The principals showed appreciation for recommendations and views from parents to assist the school to establish new types of activities and projects which could be advantageous both for the children and the school's effectiveness, particularly from parents who were professionals in the field of education.

Those principals stated that if they felt that they had the authority to take decisions on these issues, meetings could be held with parents and decisions could be reached after productive discussions.

On the other hand, the rest of the principals (42.9%) did not want parents to participate in decision making processes. They clarified that they did not want them to interfere with administrative issues in schools because 'they are not experts' in this field. These principals preferred that decisions relating to school should be reached between them and the teaching staff in their schools. One of the principals described her disapproval of parental participation in decision-making, saying that:

> 'We wouldn't want parents to participate in decision making. It is true that we don't have the authority to change the curriculum, for example, however there are some administrative issues that we can make decisions about ... but we don't want parents to interfere, because we are in the field and we have more experience than them ... I suppose it would be better to keep it within the school administration.' (PP6)

4.13 Impediments to successful parental involvement

In reflecting on the importance of parental participation in school activities, the principals noted how certain barriers may interfere with the involvement of parents in schools. Throughout their discussions, most of the barriers mentioned concerned the parents. According to their experience, principals encountered two main barriers which have been found to hinder parents' level of participation.

4.13.1 Work and time constraints

When principals discussed barriers to parental involvement, all of them agreed that the work responsibilities of parents were one of the main barriers that may compete with their efforts to be involved in their children's education. The principals explained that some parents may not be able to get time off from work, have less control over their working hours, or sometimes scheduling conflicts with their work occurred at the time of attending a particular activity at school. Furthermore, maintaining balance between work and family is quite a hard task. To solve these problems all of the principals stressed that they tried to reschedule by offering other more convenient dates for parents who could not attend a school meeting.

4.13.2 Language barrier

Five principals (35.7%) from kindergartens stated that language differences were another barrier to parental involvement. According to them, this barrier was mostly found in kindergarten. They pointed out that some parents, specifically mothers who had different nationalities and did not speak English or Arabic, made the situation complicated for them. Those principals added that even their children did not speak Arabic accurately,

particularly if they lived with their divorced mothers. One principal explained the situation as follows:

'This occurs when Kuwaiti men get married to foreign women, then they get divorced and the mothers are left alone with the children. Those mothers usually send their children to kindergarten; subsequently they are obliged to enrol them in private schools when they move to primary schools. Thus, the children face difficulties in studying and learning at school and at home because the foundation of their language acquisition has been their mothers, who are not native Arabic speakers.' (KP5)

Another principal described how helpless they become when they have such mothers in their schools:

'Many mothers avoid coming to us if they do not speak Arabic ... I mean, if they speak English we can understand each other, but other languages we can't ... However if a mother speaks neither Arabic nor English, you can't imagine how desperate we feel about not understanding them ... We sometimes use hand signals ... Even the miserable children are also suffering, they can't speak Arabic correctly ... That is why those mothers rarely come to school.' (KP2)

Principals experienced considerable difficulties in overcoming this problem, especially since they do not have translators in any language other than English. They explained that they do not face problems with mothers who speak English. However, for mothers who do not speak Arabic or English, the principals stated that they sometimes contacted the father or any other relative who could speak an understandable language.

4.14 Summary of findings from interviews with principals

The majority of principals recognized the importance of parental involvement for the success of both the children and the school. Most of them valued parental involvement in their schools. That the principal's role in facilitating and encouraging parental involvement was fully recognized in their discussions. Their responses indicated that they

did not spare any effort in order to motivate parents and teachers towards parental involvement.

Principals expressed the opinion that parents were only interested in their responsibility for their children's education. They noticed that parents participated more in activities that their children were taking part in, such as helping at home and attending lessons and ceremonies. The principals desired parents to become more involved in other activities, for instance volunteering, fundraising and attending parents' board meetings, to share their remarks and opinions regarding any problems facing their children at school.

Barriers that hinder parental involvement such as work pressure, time constraints and language differences, were understood, and the principals expressed their readiness to overcome them and described their endeavours to do so.

4.15 Quantitative phase (presentation and analysis of the questionnaire data)

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals concerning parental involvement in kindergartens and primary schools in the State of Kuwait. The findings from the parents' questionnaire are presented in this part of the chapter. The questionnaire data were collected from 430 parents, and are presented in the order of the questionnaire sections. Thus, the analysis of the questionnaire data is conducted in the following sequence:

1. Demographic data.

2. Parents' perceptions of levels and types of activities in which they are currently involved at home and school.

3. Parents' perceptions regarding their types of desired parental involvement activities in their children's education.

4. Parents' perceptions of the extent to which specific barriers may hinder their effective involvement in children's teaching and learning.

4.16 Demographic characteristics

Data in the first part of the questionnaire were split into two parts relating to the demographic characteristics of the child, and those of the guardian so that some background information on the parents who participated in this study could be collected.

4.16.1 Demographic characteristics of the child

Table 1 displays frequency and percentage information on the children's gender, age, school level and number of children in the house.

131

Table 1: The distribution of the sample according to the demographic characteristics of the child

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
Child gender		
Male	185	43.2
Female	243	56.8
Total	**428**	
Child age		
4 years	53	12.4
5 years	102	23.8
6 years	93	20.7
7 years	67	15.9
8 years	114	26.6
Total	**429**	
School level		
Kindergarten (level one)	60	14.0
Kindergarten (level two)	109	25.3
Primary (grade one)	95	22.1
Primary (grade two)	68	15.8
Primary (grade three)	98	22.8
Total	**430**	
Number of children		
One child	25	5.9
Two children	76	17.9
Three children	131	30.9
Four children	104	24.5
Five children	65	15.3
Six children or more	23	5.4
Total	**424**	

Note: Sample size is **430**. Inconsistencies in the sample size are due to missing data.

The respondents in this study were the parents of 185 male children, who represented 43.2% of the sample, and 243 female children who represented slightly more than half of the sample (56.8%). Regarding the distribution of the children by age and school level, the sample included 169 (39.3%) parents who had children in kindergarten at levels 1 and 2, and 261 (60.7%) parents whose children were in primary school from grades 1 to 3.

The children's ages ranged from 4-8 years old. These two sets of distributions represented the target sample that the research focused on.

With regard to the number of children in each family, the categorization of family size in this sample ranged from one child to more than six children. The data show that only 5.4% of the families had one child, whereas families with six or more children represented 5.9% of the sample. Families who had two children made up 17.9% of the sample; however families with three or four children represented more than half of the sample (55.4%).

4.16.2 Demographic characteristics of the guardian

The second set of demographic data related to the children's guardians who took part in the study. Table 2 demonstrates frequency and percentage data on those guardians who usually contacted the schools about their children, including the guardian's age, marital status, level of education, family monthly income, and employment status.

The questionnaire specified that the person who most often contacted the school should complete it. Although different categories of guardian appeared in the sample, for example mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, the majority of respondents (94.6%) were mothers. This indicates that responsibility for child care and the child's teaching and learning fell primarily on mothers. Fathers also participated in this study, but represented only 5.4% of the sample.

Table 2: The distribution of the sample according to the demographic description of the guardian

	Frequency	Percentage %
Child guardian		
Mother	405	94.6
Father	23	5.4
Total	**428**	
Age		
Less than 30	145	35.9
30- less than 40	206	48.0
40 and more	69	16.1
Total	**429**	
Marital status		
Married	412	96.7
Divorced	14	3.3
Total	**426**	
Parent educational level		
High school or below	51	11.9
Diploma	116	27.0
University certificate or higher	262	61.1
Total	**429**	
Family monthly income		
Less than 1000 KD	95	22.1
1000-1500 KD	212	49.3
1500-2000 KD	100	23.3
More than 2000 KD	23	5.3
Total	**430**	
Job status		
Employed	405	94.2
Unemployed	25	5.8
Total	**430**	

Note: Sample size is **430.** Inconsistencies in the sample size are due to missing data.

Respondents' ages were split into three categories. Participants in the sample fell within the following three ranges of age groups: 35.9% were under 30 years of age, 48% were

between 30 to 40 years of age, and 16.1% were 40 years of age or over. The marital status of those in the sample revealed that the majority of participants (96.7%) were married, and divorced parents represented only a small proportion of the sample (3.3%). Parents were also asked to indicate one of five educational levels that best described their own. However, for statistical purposes they were recorded and categorized into three levels. The data showed that more than half of the sample (61.1%) were university graduates or had undertaken postgraduate studies. 11.9% of the parents had completed high school or did not finish their secondary education, and 27.0% had a diploma, which is two year course after high school. Family income level was split into four categories in the questionnaire ranging from less than 1000 KD per month to over 2000 KD. Nearly half of the families (49.3%) had a monthly income between 1000-1500 KD, while 23.3% earned from 1500-2000 KD per month. 22.1% of the families earned less than 1000 KD per month and only 5.3% of the respondent parents reported a monthly income of more than 2000 KD. As for parent's employment, most of the respondents (94.2%) were employed outside the home, and only 5.8% of the respondents were unemployed. Part-time jobs were not included, since a full-time job is the most common pattern of employment in Kuwait involving roughly 6-8 hours work per day.

It is worth mentioning that data on some of these demographic characteristics are employed to examine their influence on parents' perceptions concerning their participation in their children's education at home and school. More explanation of this topic will be introduced later in this chapter.

4.17 Parents' perceptions of their current types and levels of parental involvement

In this section the results from the questions concerning parent involvement are presented. The second part of the questionnaire presented the first subscale used to

answer the first research question about how parents perceived the levels and types of activities in which they were currently involved at home and school to facilitate their children's education. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 21 items describing specific types of parental involvement activities. These activities included types of parental involvement that are best described by Epstein's typology of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and decision making. Each item on this scale was scored on a four point Likert- type scale: 4 (often); 3 (sometimes); 2 rarely; 1 (never). The first phase of the analysis included descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) which were computed to provide a thorough description of the parents' responses.

430 parents were asked to indicate their perceptions regarding their current level and type of involvement during the academic year. As shown in Table 3, the activity that showed the greatest degree of parent involvement was item # 17. A large number of parents (95.1%) in this study reported high levels of involvement in nurturing their children's good morals and values and to behave well and respect the teacher. Additionally, the responses indicated that 92.8% of parents also helped their children to get ready for school through providing them with lunch boxes, appropriate and clean clothes and fully equipping them with school materials.

Table: 3 Parents' perceptions of levels and types of activities in which they are currently involved at home and school

Item	Statements	Scale of measurement				Statistical summary measures	
		Often %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Talk to my child about what he/she is learning at school	70.7	27.9	.7	.7	3.69	.521
2	Help my child with homework	58.1	37.2	2.3	2.3	3.51	.661
3	Tell my child how important school is	81.6	17.0	.2	1.2	3.79	.490
4	Set up a place and a time for my child to study at home.	42.6	46.3	3.3	7.9	3.23	.849
5	Talk to school personnel on the phone	5.6	28.8	17.0	48.6	1.91	.996
6	Attend parent-teacher conferences regularly	59.8	31.9	4.4	4.0	3.47	.759
7	Attend a lesson at my child's class	13.7	16.3	54.7	15.3	2.28	.887
8	Attend ceremonies and special events at school	25.0	50.5	12.6	11.9	2.89	.917
9	Ask the teacher for specific advice on how to help my child at home with home work.	27.2	40.0	7.0	25.8	2.69	1.131
10	Talk with my child's teacher at school to discuss the progress of my child	53.6	33.8	6.8	5.8	3.35	.845
11	Volunteer in school when possible with activities that are related to my profession and hobbies	9.1	28.8	10.7	51.4	1.96	1.080
12	Volunteer to help school with field trips and special events and ceremonies.	5.6	12.1	8.4	73.9	1.49	.911
13	Help with fundraising	7.4	30.9	18.8	42.8	2.03	1.018
14	Participate in parents' boards and PTA meetings	10.5	15.6	5.3	68.6	1.68	1.077
15	Participate in extracurricular activities (e.g. craft work, library aid) under the supervision of the teacher	2.8	9.5	7.4	80.2	1.35	.766
16	Talk, listen, and read to my child at home	63.0	35.8	.7	.5	3.61	.529
17	Teach my child to behave well and respect the teacher	95.1	4.9	-	-	3.95	.216
18	Check that my child's homework gets done regularly.	76.7	19.3	2.3	1.6	3.71	.592
19	Talk to the teacher about the problems the child faces at home	22.1	45.3	11.4	21.2	2.68	1.041
20	Help my child get ready for school (good nutrition, appropriate clothing, school materials)	92.8	6.5	.7	-	3.92	.295
21	Participating in decision making roles at school.	12.8	22.1	11.4	53.7	1.94	1.127

Note. Mean was calculated as follows: 4:00 = often; 3:00 = sometimes; 2:00 = rarely; 1:00 = never.

Another indicator of frequent involvement was found in answers to item # 18, indicating that 76.7% of parents regularly monitored their children's homework to ensure that it was done. Talking to children about what they were learning at school showed that 70.7% of parents sought to gain better knowledge of what their children were being taught at school. Nearly 63.0% of the parents reported their frequent involvement in other types of help at home which were related to their children's schooling, such as talking, listening and reading to their children. The responses showed that parents also attended parent-teacher conferences regularly. More than half of the sample (59.8%) often engaged in this activity as a means of obtaining feedback on their children's progress. In addition, more than half of the sample 58.1% helped their children with homework which indicates their concern about supporting their children's outcomes. As for parents' participation in attendance at school events and ceremonies, half of the sample 50.5% reported they sometimes engaged in this activity.

On the other hand, the results from the questionnaire indicated that parents were rarely or never involved in the following activities: participating in extracurricular activities, volunteering to help at school with field trips and special events and ceremonies, participating in parents' boards and PTA meetings, and participating in decision making roles in school, with percentages of 80.2%, 73.9%, 68.6%, and 53.7% respectively. This implies that parents were rarely engaged in some types of school-related activities which involved volunteering and decision making roles.

It is worth mentioning that another school related activity, item #7, was rarely practiced by parents, though it is related to children's performance in the classroom. The results

indicated that more than half of the sample (54.7%) seldom attended lessons in their children's classrooms.

4.18 Factor Analysis

Although the descriptive statistics analysis presented earlier described parents' participation in their children education, it was decided that data summerisation would be an appropriate method which would provide a more comprehensible pattern of parents' current level and type of involvement at home and school. It would be interesting to identify the hidden dimensions or concepts in the original variables and reduce the number of variables of parents' perception into less number of conceptual factors. Therefore factor analysis has been utilized for this part of the questionnaire data to provide an adequate explanation to the research questions.

According to Hair et al. (1995) factor analysis is used to examine the essential patterns or relationships among a large number of observed variables and to decide whether or not the information can be recapitulated into smaller sets of constructs. In other words, the factor analysis technique was employed to remove any redundancy in the data and also to investigate the presence of any pattern that may exist between these variables. It will also help to summarize variables that have fundamental similarities or common variance into dimensions or factors. Factor analysis begins with the original observed variables as measured above. Then the correlations between them are identified (Bunch, 2005; Cooper, 2003). The analysis ends with a smaller number of derived or unobserved variables called factors. Once the mathematical calculations have been completed, the result will show the factors that have been derived, and the relationship of each factor to the original variables. This can be recognized through factor loadings. The researcher

then can interpret the meaning of each extracted factor by means of these loadings, usually after rotation. These factors could have a minimum of two interpretable and meaningful variables (Bunch, 2005).

Hair et al. (1995) stated that factor analysis can be used from either an exploratory or a confirmatory perspective. In this research the second perspective has been used since that Epstein's five types of parental involvement activities provided an actual structure of the questionnaire data .With the present data, factor analysis was able to reduce the 21 items to only seven suggested conceptual dimensions (factors), which provided rich insights about the actual involvement of parents in their children's education in Kuwait schools. See the ranking of factor's items by factor loading and variance extracts in Table 8 (Appendix K).

4.18.1 Factor analysis interpretation

In the following paragraphs, factors' names, factor loading, and variance extracts are presented and further explanation is provided for the content of each factor.

Factor 1

Factor 1, with 29.109% of variance, represents parents' role in supervising their children's readiness for school as well as being aware of the importance of moral values which involve respecting others and particularly teachers. Thus, this factor was named **'Parents' supervision of children's readiness and behaviour'** and includes the following two variables:

Q 17- Help my child get ready for school - factor loading: 0.835

Q 20-Teach my child to behave well and respect the teacher - factor loading: 0.571

Factor 2

Factor 2 is the second factor generated by the factor analysis, with 22.332% of variance. This factor concerns the parents' role in providing a rich learning environment at home to prepare children for effective learning. However, the variables clustered in this factor do not tend to require the parents' involvement with classroom issues. In fact, Factor 2 illustrates parent's role in assisting teachers at home by preparing their children for school through monitoring homework, discussing school matters at home, and being aware of the importance of providing an appropriate atmosphere for studying at home. In addition to these variables, communicating with teachers to seek their help when problems are faced with their children at home is also included. Factor 2 reflects the attitudes of parents towards school which, if acted upon positively, would help to ensure their children's success at school. The second factor includes the following variables:

Q24 - Set up a place and a time for my child to study at home - factor loading: 0.765

Q18 - Check that my child's homework gets done regularly - factor loading: 0.692

Q19 - Talk to the teacher about problems the child faces at home - factor loading: 0.570

Q3 - Tell my child how important school is - factor loading: 0.511

Variable Q24 had the highest loading within this group, which therefore had an impact on the name of this factor which was called **'Parents' support of children's home learning environment'**.

Factor 3

The third factor, with a variance of 34.373%, demonstrates parents' efforts in communicating with teachers by attending parent-teacher conferences regularly to follow their children's progress at school. This factor was named as **'Parent-teacher**

communication.' It includes the following important practices that help to build up a successful relationship between parents and teachers:

Q6 - Attend parent-teacher conferences regularly - factor loading: 0.855

Q10 - Talk with my child's teacher at school to discuss the progress of my child - factor loading: 0.673

Factor 4

Factor 4 with a variance of 20.701% represents the parent's communication with the school. This factor clusters variables that demonstrate the parents' communications with school personnel as well as attending activities such as school events and lessons in the child's classroom which are mostly activities initiated by the school. When parents attend such school activities they become more familiar with the school, its programmes, and children's work and performance, all of which will aid in the progress of the children's education. This factor was named - **'Parent-school communication'** since it focused mostly on communication with the school, and it includes the following variables:

Q5 - Contact school personnel on the phone - factor loading: 0.731

Q7 - Attend a lesson at my child's class - factor loading: 0.645

Q8 - Attend ceremonies and special events - factor loading: 0.506

Factor 5

This factor with a variance of 55.123% congregated variables that are related to parents' volunteering at school. It suggests what help and services parents could offer in order to promote a fruitful and close partnership with school. However, parents cannot participate as volunteers in school unless the school takes the initiative and fosters volunteering activities. Factor 5 includes volunteering activities that vary from simple help, as in

parents helping in field trips and fundraising, to a diverse range of activities based on parents' knowledge, expertise or talents. Thus, this factor was given the name of **'Parent-school help and volunteering'** and it includes the following variables:

Q12 - Volunteer to help school with field trips - factor loading: 0.810

Q11 - Volunteer in school when possible with activities related to my profession - factor loading: 0.751

Q15 - Participate in extracurricular activities- factor loading: 0.750

Q13 - Help with fundraising - factor loading: 0.650

Factor 6

Factor 6, with a variance of 45.619% grouped variables that emphasized the role of parents in helping children at home. It is worth noting that this factor completes the role of parents in factor 2, which also describes parents' support of their children's learning environment at home. Factor 6 is mostly concerned with the role of parents in providing their children with the necessary guidance at home related to classroom activities. Aspects in Factor 6 include helping with homework, requesting advice about homework from teachers, and being aware of what their children were learning at school, all of which could mean that parents have productive relationships with their children. These variables shaped the name of this factor and was named **'Parents' role in assisting their children's school education'**. It includes the following variables:

Q16 - Talk, listen, and read to my child at home- factor loading: 0.705

Q2 - Help my child with homework - factor loading: 0. 690

Q9 - Ask the teacher for specific advice to help my child at home with homework - factor loading: 0. 654

Q1- Talk to my child about what he/she is learning at school- factor loading: 0.652

Factor 7

The last factor, with a variance of 75.037%, which emerged from the factor analysis integrated variables that are related to parents' involvement in decision making in school. Schools which initiate an open dialogue and increase opportunities for parents to promote their inputs in school decision-making communicate the idea that parents are appreciated as full partners in the education of their children. The broad meaning underlying these variables influenced the name of this factor, which was named **'Parent-school involvement in decision-making'**. Therefore when the activities under this factor are achieved in collaboration between parents and schools, sharing powers and mutual respect could be established which will positively influence children's achievement.

This factor includes the following variables:

Q14 - Participate in PTA and parents' board meetings - factor loading: 0.866

Q21 - Participating in decision making roles at school - factor loading: 0.866

4.19 Means comparison of the seven factors

A comparison of means was performed for the 7 factors in order to identify parents' perceptions of their current level and type of involvement in their children's schooling. Figure (3) describes the total mean score for each factor. Mean scores measuring parents' current participation in their children's education were compared to the mid point (2.5) of the scale, so that mean scores of more than 2.5 would indicate that overall, parents reported that they often or sometimes participated in those activities thus reflecting their positive perceptions. Mean scores of less than 2.5 would hold for parents who rarely or never participated in these activities thus reflecting their negative perceptions

Figure 3: Total mean scores of the seven factors representing parents' perceptions of their current involvement in children's schooling
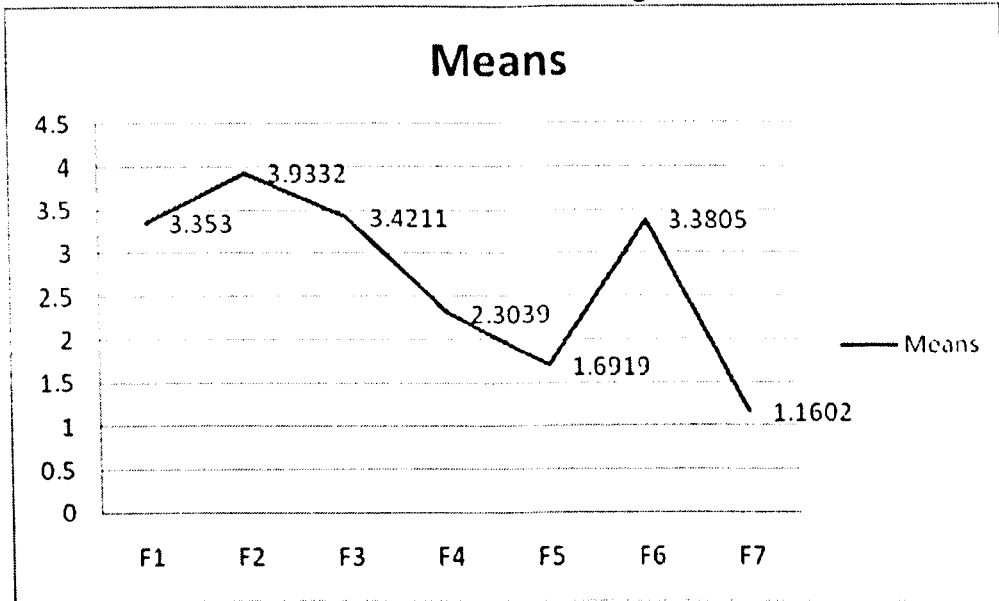
The comparison of total mean scores indicates that parents were highly involved in Factor 2 (mean = 3.9332), which emphasizes the parent's role in supporting their children's home learning environment and indicating that they had positive perception concerning their performance of the activities within this factor. The results also show that the parents were usually involved in communicating with their children's teachers, since Factor 3 had a total mean score of 3.4211. This pinpoints that parents had positive perceptions in regard to their participation of the activities within this factor. In addition, parents were usually involved in Factor 1 with a total mean score of (3.3530) and Factor 6 with a total mean score of (3.3805), revealing that parents had positive perceptions in activities associated with supervising their children's readiness and behaviour as well as assisting in their children's education and learning at home. On the other hand, the total mean score of Factor 4 (2.3039) showed that parents seldom participated in communicating with school. Similar results were displayed in Factors 5 and 7. The total mean score for Factor 5 (1.6619) indicated that parents were rarely involved in activities

related to volunteering and helping at school. The same pattern was exhibited for Factor 7, revealing that parents were rarely engaged in decision making roles at school, with a total mean score of 1.1602. Based on these results, it appeared that parents had negative perception towards their level of participation in the activities related to Factor 4, 5, and 7.

In the next stage of the analysis, family background factors were tested against the seven emergent factors discussed above which represent parents' perceptions concerning their involvement in their children's schooling in Kuwait schools.

4.20 Testing family background factors against parents' perceptions of their actual involvement

In order to answer the third research question concerning whether or not family background factors have a significant influence on parents' current type and level of involvement in their children education, two types of analysis have been utilized. Firstly, factor analysis was employed in this research, resulting seven factors which provided rich illumination into parents' perceptions of the current types and levels of their involvement in Kuwait's kindergartens and primary schools. Secondly, two types of non-parametric tests were conducted to test the influence of family background factors against the seven emergent factors to answer the research question. One of these tests is the Mann-Whitney Test which is used to test two independent groups, for example female-male. The other test used is the Kruskal-Wallis Test which is employed to test more than two independent groups. It is worth mentioning that all decisions on statistical significance were taken at the 5% level.

Six family backgrounds variables (independent variables) were tested against the seven factors (dependent variables) of parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's education. These are: child grade level, family composition, parent's gender and level of education, family income, and employment status.

Before going further, some explanation of the six family factors needs to be given. The first family background factor of child grade level refers to parents of kindergarten and primary school children in regard to their participation in their children's education. This variable was classified into 5 categories: kindergarten levels 1 and 2, and primary school grades 1, 2 and 3. The second family background factor is family size, which was categorized according to the number of children in the family into six groups ranging from one child to more than six children. The third family background factor is parent's gender, which is divided into the two categories mothers and fathers. The fourth family background factor is parent's level of education, which is divided into three categories: high school or below, diploma, and university or higher. The fifth family background factor is family monthly income, which is split into four categories: less than 1000 KD, 1000-1500 KD, 1500-2000 KD, and more than 2000 KD per month. The final family background factor refers to parent's employment status which was divided into two categories: employed, and unemployed.

4.20.1 Factor 1: Parents' supervision of children's readiness and behaviour and family background factors

Factor 1, 'parents' supervision of children's readiness and behaviour', was tested against the six family background factors to identify whether or not these factors had a significant impact on parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's

education. As mentioned earlier for this purpose, two types of analysis utilized the Mann-Whitney Kruskal-Wallis Tests.

Table 9 (in Appendix L) shows the mean scores, standard deviations, a summary of the total mean scores and the significant influence of parent-child supervision broken down by the six family background factors.

The results show that the highest total mean score of these variables is 3.3530, and the lowest total mean score is 3.3505, which generally indicates that parents within these groups were usually involved in supervising their children's behaviour and readiness. In reviewing the six categories of family background factors, it may be observed that there was no significant difference in family size and family income. However, child grade level has a significance influence on this factor. Difference between the mean scores within these five groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$). Parents of primary school children at level 3 were more involved in supervising their children's behaviour and readiness than were the other parents. Results from the mean scores revealed that parents' supervision gradually increased as children move from kindergarten to primary school.

The parent's gender also seems to have a significant impact on this factor. Differences of the mean scores between mothers and fathers are statistically significant ($p < 001$). Mothers were more concerned to supervise their children's behaviour and readiness than fathers.

Parents' level of education exerted a significant influence on parents' supervision of their children's readiness and behaviour. Comparisons between the mean scores of the three levels of parents' education were statistically significant ($p < 0.006$). The findings revealed

that university graduates and postgraduate parents were more involved in supervising their children's readiness and behaviour than the other groups. The pattern of responses revealed a gradual increase in this type of activity as the level of education increased. Parents' employment also showed a significant influence on parents' supervision. Although the mean scores of these two groups are only slightly different, comparisons between the mean scores of employed and unemployed parents are statistically significant (p=0.046). The results show that employed parents were more involved in supervising their children than were unemployed parents. Employed parents appeared to be more concerned about their children's behaviour and readiness for school.

4.20.2 Factor 2: Parents' support of children's home learning environment and family background factors

The second factor consists of 4 activities centred on parents' efforts in supporting their children's learning environment at home. The range of the total mean scores from 3.9331 to 3.9328 is impressive and supports the idea that parents of all groups were highly involved in supporting their children's learning environment at home. See Table 10 in (Appendix M).

Analyzing the family background variables for this factor showed that neither child grade level, family size, parents' level of education or employment status, nor family income had any significant influence.

On the other hand, the parents' gender was found to have a significant effect on Factor 2. Differences between these two groups are statistically significant (p=0.004). This suggests that mothers were more involved in carrying out the responsibility for supporting their children's learning environment at home than fathers.

149

4.20.3 Factor 3: Parent-teacher communication and family background factors

Parent-teacher communication includes attending parent-teacher conferences regularly and talking to the child's teacher to discuss their progress in school. This factor was tested against the six family background factors to identify any significant differences between the groups.

The data analysis presented in Table 11 (Appendix N) shows that within these groups the highest total mean score is 3.4224 and the lowest total mean score is 3.4184, indicating that parents in these groups were usually involved in communication with their children's teachers.

Results from data analysis show that family size, parents' gender, level of education employment status, and family income did not have any significance influence on parents' communication with their children's teachers. However, child grade level was found to have a significant effect on Factor 3. Differences between these groups revealed statistical significance (p=0.044). Parents of primary school children in grade 1 were significantly more likely to participate in attending parent-teacher conferences and discussing their children's progress with the teachers than the other parents.

4.20.4 Factor 4: Parent-school communication and family background factors

Parents communicating with school (Factor 4) combined the following activities: attending ceremonies and special events, attending a lesson in their children class, and contacting school personnel on the telephone.

The results in Table 12 in (Appendix O) showed that the highest total mean score is 2.3040 and the lowest total mean score is 2.3009. Total mean scores less than the mid-

point of 2.5 implies that most of the parents were less often involved in communication with their children's school. The analysis testing the family backgrounds factors against Factor 4 showed that parents' level of education and employment status and family income had no statistically significant influence on Factor 4. However, child grade level was found to have a significant effect on Factor 4. Comparisons between the means of these five groups showed that parents of kindergarten children in level 1 reported significantly higher participation in communicating with the school than those in the other groups ($p=0.013$).

Parents' gender also displayed a significance influence in relation to communication with school. Differences between these two groups are statistically significant ($p=0.013$). Mothers were more involved than fathers in communicating with their children's schools and attending school-based activities.

Family size appeared to affect parents' involvement in Factor 5. Comparisons of mean scores within the six groups of family size revealed a statistically significance effect ($p=0.04$). This suggests that families who had one child tended to participate in school-based activities more than the other groups. The implication is that small family size corresponds to more involvement in school activities.

4.20.5 Factor 5: Parent-school help and volunteering and family background factors

An attempt was made to determine if there were significance differences between parents helping and volunteering at school in relation to the six family background factors. This type of involvement consists of four types of activities ranging from simple help in fundraising and field trips to parents' varied participation in extracurricular activities. The

results presented in Table 13 (in Appendix P) revealed considerably less involvement in Factor 5. The highest total mean score within these groups is 1.6947 and the lowest total mean score is 1.6919. Apparently, the results reveal that parents are rarely involved in these types of activity within Factor 5.

While the results of the data analysis for Factor 5 revealed that differences in mean scores for parents' gender, level of education and employment status as well as family income were not significant, child grade level was found to have a significant influence. Differences between the mean scores of parents of kindergarten children and those at primary school were highly significant (p<0.0001). The results showed that parents of kindergarteners in the first level reported significantly more involvement in volunteering and helping in school than those in the other groups.

Differences of mean scores within the six groups of family size were also highly significant (p<0.0001). Based on this finding, it appears that families who had one child were more involved in helping and volunteering in schools than the rest of the groups, indicating that as the number of the children in the family increases, the parent's participation in volunteering activities decreases.

4.20.6 Factor 6: Parents' role in assisting their children's school education and family background factors

The type of involvement in Factor 6 covers the role of parents in helping their children in schoolwork-related activities. The results in Table 14 (in Appendix Q) revealed that the highest total mean score is 3.3823 while the lowest total mean score is 3.3783, meaning that all of the groups irrespective of family background were usually involved in helping their children at home.

Data analysis from testing the family background factors against Factor 6 revealed that family size and income, and parents' level of education were statistically insignificant in terms of their effect on parents' perceptions regarding their involvement in helping their children at home.

Conversely, differences in the mean scores for child grade level within the five groups were found to have a significant impact on parent's involvement in assisting their children with schoolwork at home. Comparisons of means within groups revealed a highly statistically significant effect ($p<0.0001$). The results suggested that parents of primary school children in the first grade reported more frequent involvement than the other groups.

Parent's gender was also found to have a significant effect on Factor 6. Although fathers were also engaged in helping their children with schoolwork at home, the results showed statistically significant differences ($p=0.001$) between the mean scores of mothers and fathers. This suggests that mothers are more engaged than fathers in fulfilling their responsibility in assisting their children with schoolwork and other curriculum-related activities at home.

Parents' employment status also shows a significant influence on parents' assistance of their children with schoolwork at home. Comparisons between the mean scores of employed and unemployed parents are statistically significant ($p=0.034$). Unexpectedly, the results showed that employed parents were more involved in assisting their children with school learning activities at home than unemployed parents.

4.20.7 Factor 7: Parent-school involvement in decision-making and family background factors

The final factor, which focuses on participating in decision-making roles in schools and attending parents' boards and PTA meetings, was broken down by the six family variables in order to identify any significant differences between those groups. The results in Table 15 (in Appendix R) revealed that the highest total mean score of 1.8184 and the lowest total mean score of 1.8093 within these groups indicated that parents were rarely involved in decision-making roles as well as participating in parents' boards and PTA.

The results for family factors against Factor 7 demonstrated that child grade level, parents' gender, level of education, or employment status did not have a significance influence on parents' participation in decision making roles in school.

However, comparisons of the mean scores within the six groups of family size did reveal statistical significance ($p=0.035$). The results showed that parents who had one child were more involved in participating in decision making and attending parents' boards than the other five groups.

Family income was also found to have a significant influence on Factor 7. Differences of the four group mean scores revealed statistical significance ($p=0.008$). Surprisingly, the results revealed that families with the least income among the groups (less than 1000 KD per month) were more involved in participating in decision making roles in school than the other groups.

4.21 Parents' perceptions of their desired types of parental involvement activities in their children's education

The third part of the parent's questionnaire presented 18 items for the second subscale which was designed to answer the fourth research question concerning parents' perception of how they would like to be involved in their children's education. Each item on this scale was scored on a four point Likert- type scale: (4) does not do; (3) could do better; (2) does well and (1) does not apply. Parents were asked to choose on the scale of four those items where parents felt schools either could do better or doesn't do. Those two scales would represent as indicators of areas in which parents would prefer more involvement. As for the choice for the item does well, it would indicate that parents are satisfied with the way schools were involving them in the specified activities. The choice 'does not apply' would indicate that this activity does not exist at their child's school. The descriptive analysis of the relevant data is presented in Table 4, which includes frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

The results showed that parents reported that schools did not allow them to share authority in decision-making positions. A large majority of the sample of 86% of the parents would like more involvement in participating in decision-making roles such as participating in curriculum development and children's assessment. Parents also wanted to share their opinion and views with schools, but nearly 44% reported that schools did not welcome their opinions and views concerning school development. More than one third of the sample (35.6%) indicated that schools could do better with parents' boards and PTAs through having active, effective and well-organized parents' boards and PTA.

155

Table 4: Parents' perceptions of the types of desired parental involvement activities in their children's education

Item	Statement	Scale of Measurement				Statistical summary measures	
		Does not do %	Could do better %	Does well %	Does not apply %	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Sends personal notes or memos about how my child is doing at school	20.7	29.3	48.4	1.6	2.69	.813
2	Tells me what learning experiences and skills my child needs to learn in each subject.	12.4	21.0	66.0	.7	2.45	.714
3	Has parent-teacher conferences with me more than once a year	4.7	30.1	64.8	.5	2.39	.584
4	Explains how to check my child's homework	25.6	28.8	27.4	18.1	2.62	1.055
5	Runs weekly meetings with my child's teachers at an appropriate time	19.5	26.5	22.8	31.2	2.34	1.115
6	Gives me information about how report card grades are earned	12.8	14.7	35.0	37.5	2.03	1.018
7	Contacts me if my child is having problems	26.3	22.6	50.7	.5	2.75	.852
8	Invites me to school events and programmes	7.2	18.8	74.0	-	2.33	.606
9	Contacts me to let me know about my child's advancement at school	63.3	16.5	17.2	3.0	3.40	.876
10	Encourages me to volunteer at the school	21.4	27.2	32.3	19.1	2.51	1.030
11	Asks me to help in fundraising	11.6	15.3	47.7	25.3	2.13	.925
12	Welcomes my suggestions and views for school improvement	44.0	28.8	25.1	2.1	3.15	.869
13	Allows me to participate in decision making (curriculum development and assessment)	86.0	5.6	2.3	6.1	3.72	.784
14	Allocates workshops to help me understand how to improve my child's progress in school	57.9	18.6	19.5	4.0	3.30	.917
15	Assigns homework that requires parents to interact with children	10.9	34.2	50.0	4.9	2.51	.753
16	Suggests ways to practice some skills at home before a test	25.1	22.3	17.9	34.7	2.38	1.198
17	Welcomes and encourages my involvement at school	28.6	33.3	37.4	.7	2.90	.824
18	Has an active parents' board and PTA	24.0	35.6	29.1	11.4	2.72	.954

Note. Mean was calculated as follows: 4:00 = does not do; 3:00 = could do better; 2:00 = does well; 1:00 = does not apply.

Communication between home and school was also emphasized, as 63.3% of the parents desired to be contacted more often about their children's progress and not only when children faced difficulties or when a crisis occurred.

In order to increase and support their parenting skills, more than half of the sample (57.9%) of parents also wanted schools to allocate workshops to assist them to improve their children's performance at school. In addition, 28.8% of parents needed more assistance with homework, indicating that schools could do better in helping them in learning activities at home and how to check their children's homework.

However, parents indicated their satisfaction with some of the activities that the school organised. Parents were satisfied with the way schools communicated with them. 74% of parents reported that the schools were doing a good job in inviting them to various school activities such as special events and performances. The findings also suggest that nearly 66% of parent respondents were generally satisfied with the information they received from the school about the learning experiences and skills their children expected to learn in various subject areas. Parents also exhibited their satisfaction with the way schools held parent-teacher conferences regularly, as nearly 64% of them reported that the schools invited them to attend conferences more than once a year. As for school communication concerning their children, half of the sample (50.7%) reported that the schools were doing well in contacting them when children were having problems. In addition, 48.4% of parents said that the schools kept them well-informed about how their child was doing at school. For this type of communication, schools used various types of techniques such as phone calls, memos and notes. Parents' perceptions regarding their children's homework revealed that half of the sample were pleased with the way schools

assigned homework that required their children to talk with their parents about what they were learning in the classroom. As for parent's participation in volunteering activities, 47.7% of the parents revealed that schools were doing well in inviting them to help with fundraising. 37.4% of parents were also contended with schools' welcoming atmosphere through encouraging their involvement in school as well as 32.3% of parents' responses disclosed some satisfaction in the way school encourages them to volunteer and help at school.

4.22 Parents' perceptions of the barriers that hinder effective parental involvement

The fourth part of the questionnaire included the statements on the third subscale of the questionnaire. It was designed to answer the sixth research question concerning how parents perceive the effect of various barriers that may hinder parental involvement. Eight items (barriers) on this scale were scored on a four point Likert- type scale: (4) to a great extent, (3) to a moderate extent, (2) to a small extent, and (1) not at all. Parents were asked to what extent they perceived that each was a barrier. Percentages mean scores and standard deviations were computed and presented.

The results shown in Table 13 revealed that 55.6% of the parents reported that time conflicts between school schedules and their work had a great impact on parental participation in school. In addition, 46.5% of the parents revealed that their lack of time had a great impact on their involvement in their children's education. Nearly half of the sample (48.4%) indicated that lack of teachers' time had a moderate influence on parental involvement. Less than half of the sample (47.9%) of parents feared that the teacher might blame them for their children's failure, and 45.1% of the parents thought that language difference between parents and teachers could moderately hinder involvement.

Table 5 Parents' perceptions concerning the extent to which barriers may hinder effective parental involvement in children's education

Item	Statement	Scale of Measurement				Statistical summary measures	
		Great extent %	Moderate extent %	Small extent %	Not at all %	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Parent's lack of time	46.5	37.7	12.1	3.7	3.27	.815
2	Teacher's lack of time and opportunities	32.8	48.4	15.8	3.0	3.11	.772
3	Languages differences between parents and teachers	41.9	45.1	10.0	3.0	3.26	.758
4	Time conflicts between parent work and school schedules	55.6	30.0	9.5	4.9	3.36	.846
5	Staff attitudes about parents (e.g. feeling uneasy about working with parents)	16.5	29.3	42.6	11.6	2.51	.903
6	Lack of parent's knowledge to assist children with school work	19.8	33.0	30.7	16.5	2.56	.987
7	Lack of teacher's training to work with parents	18.6	31.0	42.7	7.7	2.61	.876
8	Fear of teacher's blame for being responsible for the child's failure	17.7	47.9	21.4	13.0	2.70	.908

Note. Mean was calculated as follows: 4:00 = great extent; 3:00 = moderate extent, 2:00 = small extent; 1:00 = not at all.

On the other hand, 42.6% of the parents reported that staff attitudes about parents, for example if teachers felt uneasy about working with parents, had only a small influence on parental participation in school. Likewise, 42.7% of the respondents believed that lack of training for teachers in working with parents also had only a small impact on parental involvement. It seems that the parents thought that teachers were well-prepared to promote their participation in school.

4.23 Summary of questionnaire findings

Parental participation in their children's education is recognized as an essential element in their success in the educational process. The purpose of the questionnaire in this study

was to measure parents' perceptions concerning their involvement in their children's education in kindergarten and primary schools in Kuwait. The questionnaire data provided valuable information about parental participation, and consisted of five parts which gathered demographic background about the respondents and quantitative findings related to the research questions.

Factor analysis was utilized and seven factors (dimensions) emerged which represented parents' current level and type of involvement at home and school in kindergartens and primary schools in Kuwait. Comparisons between total mean scores indicated that parents were often and usually involved in home-based activities. These activities associated with Factor 1: parents' supervision of children's readiness and behavior; Factor 2: parents' support of children's learning home environment, and Factor 6: parents' roles in assisting their children's school education. More over, parents were usually involved in activities within Factor 3 which is the only factor that is related to school-based activities. These findings suggested that parents had positive perceptions regarding their level of involvement in the activities within the previous mentioned factors.

On the other hand, results showed that parents were rarely involved in the other remaining three factors. These factors mostly concern school-based activities, and include Factor 4: parent-school communication, Factor 5: parent-school help and volunteering, and Factor 7: parent-school involvement in decision making. These findings suggested that parents had negative perceptions regarding their level of involvement in the activities associate with the previous factors.

The six family background factors were tested to identify any significant influence on the seven emergent factors of parental involvement practices. Results showed significant relationship between the family background factors and the seven emergent factors. Child grade level and the parent's gender were often found to have a significant effect on some of the home-based and school-based factors than the other family background factors.

The findings from the third part of the questionnaire revealed that parents wanted schools to make every possible attempt to be in contact with parents and to reinforce positive home-school communication. Most importantly, they would prefer school to further encourage their participation in school through involving them more in decision-making and enhancing their parenting skills by organising workshops that served their children's learning and development at home and school.

In regard to impediments that could influence parents' participation, the parents reported that their own lack of time was one of the main obstacles that may hinder their involvement. They also indicated that time conflicts between their busy schedules and the school's schedule may not permit them to be at school as often as they would prefer.

4.24 Findings from the open-ended questions

On the final page of the questionnaire parents were invited to write their comments and thoughts about their involvement in the children's education. Out of a total of 430 parents only (44.9%) of parents answered these four open-ended questions, but their thoughts provided a rich source of information about parents' concerns and demands for specific types of parental involvement practices.

This data was qualitatively analyzed and three recurring themes emerged:

1- Positive home-school communication.

2- Mutual help between home and school to support children's achievement.

3- Parent participation and input in decision making.

These parents ascribed different levels of importance to different types of involvement based on their children's needs, their own attitudes, and the opportunities the schools made available to enhance their children's performance as well as their own partnership with schools.

4.24.1 Positive home-school communication

The majority of parents (145 out of 193: 75.16%) mentioned the positive effects of their involvement on their children's academic achievement. Parents expressed concern about developing their children's behaviour as well as becoming more supportive of their children's teaching and learning. However, according to the parents, this could not be accomplished unless good home-school communication was established. According to Callison (2004) when parents and educators establish effective two-way communication about school programmes and student performance positive relationships develops and students achieve greater success. Parents generally agreed that exchanging information through successful communication between home and school is essential to enhance parental involvement and child development.

There was a persistent request from parents, particularly those of primary school children, for more information about classroom learning practices with an emphasis on informing parents of the children's development and achievements on a weekly basis. For instance, they wanted frequent information concerning what was being taught, what was required of their child and about their negative or positive progress in the school in order to keep

their children on the right path and achieving better grades. One parent provided a description of effective home-school communication:

> 'Communication has to be continuous and the role of the parent at home complements the role of the teacher at school.'

When parents and teachers become partners, problems can be more easily overcome and this creates a better learning environment for children. Hornby (2000) believed that teachers should attempt to see the child's situation from the point of view of parents because parents know so much about the child. Parents also appreciate teachers who are open and honest about their children and who are capable of providing realistic and constructive information about their children.

Written communication was thought by parents to be a helpful mode of communication between home and school. Most parents considered that written letters sent home, concerning for example homework and project calendars, weekly progress notes, curriculum plans, and suggestions for pre-examination instructional revision, would assist in fostering children's academic performance.

Telephone calls were also regarded as a useful method of home-school communication. One parent wrote that:

> 'Personal phone contacts are even better than printed letters, as sometimes we do not get these letters as children at this age might lose them.'

Most of the parents indicated that phone calls are useful, especially for parents who cannot come to school during the day. Parents emphasized that they wanted to have direct

telephone contacts either with the teachers or the principal; in addition they would like school personnel to be approachable and welcome their calls.

In order to achieve better home-school communication, parents asserted that schools should provide more opportunities for direct and positive communication with teachers. For example, some parents thought that parent-teacher conferences were a key factor in maximizing parent-teacher partnership if applied properly in a welcoming atmosphere and at convenient times.

Attending school activities was also mentioned by parents as a means of fostering their interaction with school personnel. Some parents asserted that they did want to come to school or to help, however, they wanted schools to take the initiative in asking for their participation in school activities as well as in helping and volunteering, indicating that they felt more relaxed when their participation or assistance was needed or requested.

On the other hand, parents exhibited their concern about attending lessons in their children's classrooms regularly at all grades in order to be aware of their children's performance and development. Some parents of kindergarteners also wanted to make more visits to their children's lessons in the classroom. One parent of a kindergartener complained that:

'In kindergarten we are given the opportunity to see our children and meet their teachers just once a year, which I think it is not enough, I hope they consider repeating this activity more often.'

In general, most of the parents were concerned about their involvement in school activities. However, in their written comments they described the following impediments

that may hinder their involvement in school: their work schedules did not allow them to participate at school during the day, and most schools held activities and meetings during the day and not in the evenings which may conflict with their working hours. Also, some parents who were also teachers had some difficulty in regularly taking time off work because of their commitment to their teaching duties.

4.24.2 Mutual help between home and school to support children's achievement

With regard to school and parent help in supporting children's achievement, 152 parents out 193 (78.8%) provided comments concerning this theme. The majority of these parents were concerned about the progress and well-being of their children. Most parents perceived their involvement in children's learning and teaching at home and providing a convenient learning environment as vital elements in developing their children's progress and achievement. Parents indicated that homework was widely used in schools, revealing their continuous encouragement of their children through their engagement and help at home.

Parents provided some descriptions of their help at home. Some of them said that they offered guidance for children and followed up what they were learning at school through homework and projects sent home. Others usually checked that the homework was completed. As one of the parents wrote:

> 'homework is a fundamental method of interacting with my child to know what is happening in the school'.

According to the parents, their help at home could promote their children's learning as well as reinforcing their children's education at school through assisting teachers with school tasks at home:

> 'I can provide help at home to support my child's learning. My task here is associated with facilitating the teacher's mission of educating my child.'

> 'Monitoring homework could support my child's development at school.'

A large number of parents expressed their concerns about their children's education and stressed that their children could obtain a good education if they had highly efficient teachers. They seemed to be worried about their academic progress, and the completion of assignments. It appeared that most of the parents wanted schools to provide them with guidance, and suggestions for instructional practices on how to help their children at home to promote their achievement in school.

Helping with homework, according to some parents, could be problematic, particularly if was not clearly understood by the children. One parent wrote that:

> 'Helping us with homework is vital for our children's success.'

According to Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe (2007), the successful completion requires considerable parental commitment and it can be especially overwhelming to parents with limited time, resources, or education. Although some parents know how to provide appropriate support and a positive atmosphere, many parents struggle with this. Some parents of primary school children expressed their concern about facing difficulties with homework and teaching methods in particular subjects, for example Arabic, English and mathematics. Cooper (1994) described one reason behind their concern as being that

children who come across difficulties with the school curriculum or who have developed negative attitudes toward their schoolwork are presumed by their parents to require additional homework monitoring and help.

There seemed to be a recurring request from parents for schools' assistance when facing difficulties with their children. According to them, this could be accomplished through training workshops for parents that encompassed ideas and instructions for parents about how to supervise or help children at home on learning activities that are associated with their schooling. Hornby (2000) described effective workshops as those that enable parents to learn new skills and provide insights on specific topics of interest or concern to guide parents in promoting their children's development.

Other parents revealed that they would prefer to participate in different ways. Their comments implied that the roles of the parent and school are separate, and that each works independently. Some parents indicated that schools should be accountable for teaching children the content of the school curriculum, while their role would be to concentrate on checking that homework is completed. According to them, aspects such as children's learning and teaching, children's achievement and behavioural problems are challenging, and overcoming these difficulties is regarded as the school's obligations. One parent wrote that:

> 'Teachers are the experts, so the school's responsibility is to provide remedial classes for our low academic achievers who face difficulties at school.'

These parents seemed to be unaware of the significance of sharing responsibilities and the benefits of joint efforts between home and school which eventually lead to successful partnership as well as increasing children's outcomes.

4.24.3 Parent participation and input in decision-making

In their comments, 97 parents out of 193 (50.2%) revealed their desire to be involved in decisions that influence their children and the school's internal affairs. According to Davies (1987), participation in decision making gives parents opportunities to be involved in decisions for the benefit of their children. Although parents described that their role as a decision-maker is less representative in their schools, more emphasis was revealed from parents on the importance of communication for their input in decision making.

> 'We can participate and share our opinions but schools have to give us more knowledge when implementing new plans and programmes or even when encountering problems.'

Most of these parents expressed their willingness to participate in decision-making roles and to initiate an open dialogue with school personnel if this activity was going to be shared. Parents wanted schools to promote their input in decisions through allowing them to have a position in which to articulate their views and opinions.

In order to have effective PTAs and parents' boards, schools should provide a framework for parents for their involvement in decision making roles. As Church (2005) stated, school personnel, and particularly principals, play a critical role in making parents feel confident about becoming part of parents' boards, councils or PTAs through designing structures and processes that provide the necessary direction to foster productive shared decision-making. However, some parents indicated that they wanted equal opportunities

to share their input in school plans and programmes even if they were not members of parents' board or PTAs, indicating that their input could be obtained in many ways such as surveys or discussions in meetings with principals or other school personnel.

Parents revealed different types of involvement in which they could provide input into school decisions. Most parents wanted school personnel to involve them by sharing their opinions when deciding the timing of exams, events, ceremonies, and meetings during the academic year.

Some parents wanted to provide input on educational teaching methods and the appropriateness of elements of the curriculum provided for children as well as proposing helpful activities that could motivate children's achievement. These views were mostly expressed by parents with higher levels of education:

> 'I would want school to set up educational meetings for the parents with the teachers in order to exchange some of our expertise in education for the benefit of our children.'

Other parents expressed their enthusiasm about participating in solving some of the educational problems their schools encounter. However they needed to be informed about these problems through effective two-way communication based mostly on the willingness of school personnel to accept their opinions and value them as equal partners.

For parental participation in decision-making to succeed, an exceptional degree of trust and understanding has to be developed between home and school. The importance of this partnership is fundamental for continued dialogue between parents and school personnel. As Epstein (1995) indicated, shared decision-making in partnership should not be a power struggle, but working towards shared goals.

To conclude, three themes emerged from the parents' comments. The first theme is maintaining productive communication through promoting clear communication channels between home and school. Thus parents would be knowledgeable about what their children were learning and how they were progressing, either negatively or positively.

The second theme is mutual help between home and school which could improve children's performance and achievement. Parents suggested that this could be achieved through maintaining positive collaborations between parents and teachers, and enhancing parents' confidence as home helpers. According to parents, schools could provide training sessions and workshops which concentrate on directions and instructional practices for solving homework problems and helping their children with educational subjects.

The last theme is parent participation and input in decision-making, which was also desired by parents. To develop involvement between parents and schools, the parents wanted to share in making school decisions, to increase a feeling of belonging and ownership of school as well as gaining empowerment and respect. This could result in admitting them as valuable partners in the educational process of their children.

Chapter Five: Discussions of Results

This study investigates the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning parental involvement in kindergarten through grade three in primary schools in the Hawalli district of Kuwait. The study examines current types and levels of parental involvement practices as well as identifying areas of comparative strengths within which school and family relationships could be enhanced as well as other ineffective areas that need to be improved. The influence of family background factors on level and type of parental involvement as well as impediments that could hinder parental involvement have been identified. A mixed method (quantitative/qualitative) design was used to collect data from the study sample, including teachers' focus groups, interviews with principals, and a questionnaire survey of parents. The rich contextual qualitative data obtained provided rich material allowing the causes of variations in parents' levels and types of involvement to be determined. The analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data yielded significant findings.

This chapter discusses the findings and is organized according to the research questions. The discussion addresses the results which emerged from the data analysis in the current study and offers input to the research questions with respect to previous research findings.

5.1 Research question 1

How do parents perceive the current types and levels of their involvement in the education of their children?

As it was mentioned earlier in chapter four the initial exploration (descriptive analysis) of the data was not sufficient to provide an apparent understanding of parental involvement. Therefore factor analysis was employed in an attempt to identify any significant patterns in the data to provide a visible pattern that could represent parents' perceptions of their current involvement in their children's education. Factor analysis reduced the 21 variables in the second part of the questionnaire and summarized them into seven dimensions (factors). Those factors could be grouped into two types of activities: home-based activities including Factors 1, 2 and 6, and school-based activities including Factors 3, 4, 5 and 7.

The following sections discuss each factor in turn to identify differences in parents' perceptions of their current involvement in children's education.

Comparisons of the total mean scores revealed that Factor 2 (parents' support of children's learning home environment) gave the highest mean (3.9332) of all of the factors, indicating that parents were highly involved in supporting their children's learning home environment. This result indicated that parents had positive perceptions of their level of involvement in the activities within Factor 2. This factor emphasises the parents' role in supporting their children's home learning environment, and was corroborated by comments made by parents in response to the open-ended questions which acknowledged their responsibility for providing a convenient learning environment for their children to increase their achievement. Their comments agreed with the findings of Thorkildsen and Stein (1998), who reviewed the results of various correlational studies and identified the existence of strong positive correlations between achievement and parents encouraging homework through setting aside a time and place to do homework.

Factor 6 (parents' role in assisting their children's school education) showed a mean score of 3.3805, revealing that parents were usually involved in assisting their children's education and learning indicating their positive perceptions of their level of participation in the activities related to this factor. This factor complements the role of parents in terms of Factor 2 activities, and describes parents' constructive relationship with their children. This type of involvement underlines parents' role in assisting children's education at home to establish an adequate base of support for children's schooling through helping with homework and requesting advice about homework from teachers. Parents' comments in the questionnaire provided support for parents' roles in Factor 6, indicating that they regularly helped their children at home through providing supervision and checking that homework was completed in order to improve their progress. This corroborates the finding of Fan and Chen (2001) and Walberg (1993) that home-based involvement was more effective than school-based involvement. Moreover, the efforts made by parents to help children at home were a major contributor to student success and attainment.

Factor 3 (parent-teacher communication) with a mean score of 3.4211 showed that parents were usually involved in communicating with their children's teachers exhibiting their positive perceptions of their level of involvement in the activities within this factor. Although this factor involves school-based activities and demands parents' attendance at teacher-parent conferences or at school, parents were revealed to be greatly concerned in developing partnerships with teachers to promote their children's outcomes. These findings support those of Carey et al. (1998), who surveyed 900 U.S. elementary schools and showed that 92% of them scheduled school-wide parent-teacher conferences. The

study revealed that parents were more likely to attend a parent conference than any other school-wide event such as open houses and back-to-school nights.

The mean score of Factor 1 3.3530 (parents' supervision of children's readiness and behaviour) also revealed that parents were usually involved in supervising their children's readiness for school and nurturing their good manners and morals which involve respecting others, especially teachers. This result displayed that parents had positive perceptions of their level of involvement in the activities within Factor 1. In support of this finding, Swick et al. (1979) stated that parents represent one of the most potent ethical models for their children. Parents teach values, attitudes, ethics and morals by example and through their involvement with infants and children in order to perceive life in a positive manner.

On the other hand, the total mean score 2.3039 of Factor 4 (parent-school communication) revealed that parents were rarely involved in communicating with school. This finding showed that parents had negative perceptions of their level of involvement in the activities related to Factor 4. This factor includes activities that demonstrate parents' communications with school such as attending school events and a lesson in their children class, and contacting school personnel on the phone. This finding is supported by the study of Derrick-Lewis (2001) which examined specific parenting practices as perceived by parents and teachers in elementary and middle grades revealing that only 28.9% had attended special programs or events sponsored by the school few times as well as only 24.9% had ever talked to the child's teacher on the phone. It is interesting to note the drop of parents' involvement in attending lessons in their children's classrooms. It was explained in comments by parents that the schools did not

provide enough opportunities for parents to get involved in this activity. In their focus groups teachers also confirmed that this activity was no longer practised in their schools since they were already overloaded with their teaching tasks and duties, and thus they did not have time to organize this type of activity.

The mean score 1.6619 for Factor 5 (parent-school help and volunteering) suggested that parents were rarely involved in activities related to volunteering at school. Based on this finding it appears that parents had negative perceptions for their level of participation in the activities related to Factor 5. This could be explained according to the comments of many parents who wanted the schools to take the initiative in encouraging their participation in volunteering. Parents also commented that work schedules and time conflicts did not allow them to participate in or volunteer at school during the day, especially since most of these activities are held in the morning. These findings are further verified by the study of Epstein (1986, cited in Derrick-Lewis, 2001, p. 24) which reported that over 70% of elementary school parents never volunteered and over 60% worked full- or part-time during the school day, making traditionally organized volunteer work impossible.

The same pattern is exhibited in Factor 7 (Parent-school involvements in decision making) with the lowest mean score of 1.1602, revealing that parents rarely participated in decision-making roles at school. This result showed that parents had negative perceptions of the amount of their involvement in activities associated with Factor 7. This factor includes activities of participation in decision-making via parents' boards and

PTAs. This could be identified in parents' comments disclosing that their input was neglected by schools and not considered as important as they desired. Parents said that they would like to get involved in decisions-making roles, particularly with aspects that affected their children such as school plans, curriculum contents and teaching methods. The results of Ng's study (1999) in Hong Kong bear some resemblance to parents' level and type of involvement in the current study, revealing that parents were mostly engaged in activities based on home-school communication and involvement at home. However, only few interactions were found where parent involvement occurred in participating in decision-making.

The overall findings concerning the perceptions of parents concerning their involvement coincides with those of a study by Grossman et al. (1999) which explored parents' beliefs and practices regarding participation in school. The results revealed that parents placed greater emphasis on academic support at home (helping with homework) and encouraging non academic activities (supervision and discipline) rather than school-based activities.

Parents' rare involvement and negative perceptions of their level of involvement concerning some types of activities could be illuminated by the qualitative data collected from the teachers and principals. According to Swick (2003), the underlying attitude that parents and teachers have about themselves and each other plays a major role in shaping home-school relationships.

5.2 Research question 2

How do teachers and principals perceive the current types and levels of parental involvement practices in their schools?

The results from the qualitative data revealed some convergence between the perceptions of teachers and principals concerning parental involvement in their schools. Both teachers and principals agreed about the importance of parental involvement for the development of children's progress and school effectiveness respectively. Principals and teachers confirmed their continuous efforts to establish a welcoming school climate to encourage parental involvement and foster openness in school and family relationships. The evidence of efforts by schools and interest among teachers in their invitations for parental involvement is well recognized in the literature. For example, Eccles and Harold (1993) and Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that parents reported higher participation in the school when teachers enthusiastically encouraged parental involvement. The fundamental role of principals in supporting parental involvement practices in their schools was also identified. The majority of principals asserted that they always encouraged parents' participation in school and also provided support and assistance to their teachers in the process of preparing parental involvement activities. Credence to these findings is provided by Berthelsen and Walker (2008) and Bogenschneider (2006), who supported the strong role schools play in determining the level and nature of parental involvement and indicated that the attitudes and behaviours of teachers and particularly principals play an essential role in establishing a school climate suitable for partnering with parents.

Both teachers and principals reported that parents were engaged in two types of involvement: home-based and school-based involvement. However, the participation of parents varied according to the type of activity concerned.

5.2.1 Home-based involvement

Teachers and principals agreed that parents were mostly involved in helping their children at home and were more receptive in supervising their children's homework. Without question, homework can provide a visible link between home and school and in some families homework is the only way that parents can connect with their children's school experience (Patton et al., 2001). The indication by principals and teachers of parental help at home lends support to the findings from the responses to the questionnaire which confirmed their frequent involvement at home in Factors 2 and 6 through providing a convenient learning environment and encouraging their children's schooling to enhance their achievement

5.2.2 School-based involvement

Both teachers and principals indicated that parents were involved in different types of activities at school. These activities focused on communication with school, volunteering and school decision making.

In terms of communication activities, the principals and teachers at kindergartens and primary schools reported that parents were mostly engaged in attending scheduled parent-teacher conferences or individual meetings with teachers to inquire about their children's progress at school. These results supported the findings from the parents' questionnaire when parents indicated their usual involvement in Factor 3 activities in communicating

with the teacher to discuss the children's progress via school meetings. Likewise, the results of a survey by Carey and Farris (1996) concerning children from kindergarten through grade 8 revealed that school events that feature some interaction with teachers appear to attract more parents than those that exhibit student performances or demonstrations. Schools reported that parents were more likely to attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences with their children's teachers than any other type of school events.

Attending school social events and programmes were also discussed by teachers and principals in kindergartens and primary schools as another type of school-based activity. They suggested that parental participation and attendance increased when the school events and programmes were more closely related to their children's learning or participation. This could explain the findings from the parents' questionnaire of their rare participation in school activities Factor 4 (communication with school), as parents were interested in attending school activities that were mostly related to their children's own performance. The results of Cotton and Mann's (1994) study also implied that parents are involved when their children are part of the activity, for example in back to school nights, open houses, and parent conferences, as these events have an impact on every child and parents are more apt to be involved.

Parents' volunteering was the second school-based activity, which consisted of helping at school and in the classroom and fundraising, as indicated by the teachers and principals. However both groups described parents as only infrequently involved in these activities, and that they needed to ask parents repeatedly in order to get any volunteers each year. Fundraising was also not recognized as a common activity in schools by teachers. They

explained that the Ministry of Education forbids them to ask parents for monetary contributions in order not to burden parents with other further responsibilities.

As for parents' serving as teaching aides at school, the teachers explained that inviting parents in to assist them in teaching or instructing children in the classroom is not allowed according to the Ministry of Education's rules and regulations. However, the situation is different in kindergarten. According to the teachers and principals, kindergartens assign one hour per week for extracurricular activities in which parents have the opportunity to participate in informal teaching with their children under the supervision of the teachers. Nevertheless, kindergarten teachers and principals still believed that few mothers participated, interpreting this as possibly due to parents' work schedules in the morning that may prevent them from contributing their time and energy in these activities. Further explanation of the causes of low levels of participation by parents in volunteering activities is provided by Simon and Epstein (2001), who stated that even schools with organized systems of matching volunteers to school goals and student needs may still exclude many potential volunteers by limiting how they define volunteer work.

These findings confirms those from the parents' questionnaire, which described parents' negative perception and rare involvement in activities related to Factor 5 (parent-help and volunteering in school) and in addition provide illumination on the reasons behind the propensity for their involvement in Factor 5 activities.

Parents' participation in school decision-making is the final type of activity which principals and teachers mentioned as one type of current parental involvement in schools. Both principals and teachers considered parents' participation in school decision-making

activity to show their lowest levels of involvement. Despite frequent encouragement and invitations by principals, parents were unenthusiastic in participating in parents' boards. This coincides with the findings of Hatton's study (2001) which described principals' reports of their great efforts to include parents in decision-making. Yet parents were reluctant to attend meetings and only personal invitations convinced them to participate.

Surprisingly, both principals and teachers agreed that the role of parents' participation in parents' boards and PTAs was mostly focused on volunteering, fundraising or exchanging their opinions to solve school problems. These findings contradict those of Robbins and Alvy (2004), who described the main role of decision making as to include parents in decision-making to play a major role in school boards and associations through welcoming their help with school policy, budgetary, and instructional decisions. Principals and teachers indicated that the main reason for the restricted participation of parents in decision-making roles is the Ministry of Education's regulations, which forbid parents' input in decision-making roles associated with curriculum plans, budgets and the assessment of children or teachers. This is supported by Crozier (2000), who stated that the terms upon which parental participation is based are determined by the school and policy agendas. It is only through these policies and school governing bodies that parents could be allowed to have a say in decision-making related to policy and curricula.

The report of Carey and Farris (1996) revealed quite similar results about the extent to which parent input is considered in decision making roles. The results showed that parents have no say in decisions regarding monitoring and evaluating teachers, and

furthermore they have very little say in matters of the curriculum or instructional programmes, discipline policies and procedures, or the design of special programmes.

5.3 Research question 3

Do family background factors influence the perceptions of parents regarding their current involvement?

The literature suggests that socioeconomic background (SES), and family characteristics such as the parent's gender, family structure and ethnicity influence the level of parental involvement as well as being associated with student achievement (Lareau 1987, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Ferehat and Odah, 1988; Samadoni, 1991; Kohl et al.; 2000; McNeal, 2001; Okpala et al. 2001; Manz et al., 2004; Abd-el-Fattah, 2005).

Despite the fact that there are disagreements within the existing literature about the extent of the influence these factors have on parent involvement, there is a consensus that they are influential (Rous et al. 2003). Thus, schools that recognise the importance of parental involvement should make plans for implementing opportunities that consider parents' needs, diversity and circumstances.

Six family background variables were chosen to be tested against the seven emergent factors (as discussed earlier in research question one) in order to identify if they have a significant influence on these factors. The six family background factors are: child grade level, family composition, parent's gender, level of education, and employment status, and family income. The findings regarding the effect of family background factors were found to be significant since they coincide with other findings from previous research.

182

5.3.1 Parents' supervision of children's readiness and behaviour and family background factors

The findings from the data analysis revealed that family size and family income had no significance influence on Factor 1. However, child grade level does have a significance influence. Although all parents appeared to be involved in supervising their children's readiness and behaviour, the parents of primary school children at level 3 were more involved in supervising their children than the other groups. The results also showed that, as children grow older, parents become more concerned to lay more emphasis on nurturing their children's good behaviour and to supervise their children's readiness for school. Caspe et al. (2006/2007) lend support to these findings, arguing that in their early years from kindergarten through elementary school children start to integrate knowledge from their interactions with teachers, peers, and families in order to construct their identities which are mostly based on their parents' attitudes, values, and practices in raising them. When parents reinforce their expectations of good behaviour and school development, their children are less likely to be at risk of school failure or dropping out of school as well as exhibiting better academic achievement through the elementary stages and in later years (Kaufman and Owings, 1992).

The parents' gender also had a significant impact on Factor 1. The results showed that mothers were more involved in supervising their children's behavior and readiness than fathers. This might be related to the norms and values of the cultural context in Kuwait, as most Kuwaiti fathers are considered to be the primary provider of financial support for the family. Therefore, they tend to work longer hours than mothers, and sometimes their working conditions require them to work in the evening or at night. Because of those obligations, most mothers are usually present at home more than fathers, thus they are the

ones who more frequently set discipline and provide moral and behavioral instructions for their children when the need arises. A study by Milkie (2000, cited in Casper and Bianchi. 2002, p.144) examined actual parental involvement, and the results correspond with these findings, indicating that mothers are more likely than fathers to report that they take the main responsibility for disciplining their children. Most mothers are the main caretakers of children and provide more emotional support to children. This may be due to most mothers being in the home more than fathers.

Parents' level of education also showed a significant influence on parents' supervision of their children's readiness and behaviour. Parents educated at university or postgraduate level were more concerned to supervise their children's readiness and behaviour than the other groups. One possible explanation for this variation in involvement was provided by Sclafani (2004), who suggested that highly educated parents may be more self-confident and have more advanced parenting skills, and are then more likely to be concerned about children's behaviour and preparedness than less educated parents who may feel lacking in rich parenting skills.

Parents' employment status also showed a significant influence on parents' supervision. The results showed that employed parents were more involved in supervising their children than unemployed parents. It is possible that employed parents are more likely to have the opportunity to interact with other people than unemployed parents, thus gaining more diverse knowledge which could expand their parenting styles. According to Rogers (1996) employed mothers are usually influenced by the specific conditions and experiences they face at work. Thus it could have an effect on their parenting values and behaviour and ultimately affect their children.

5.3.2 Parents' support of children's home learning environment and family background factors

Although parents reported their frequent involvement in activities associated with supporting their children's learning environment at home, the results showed that child grade level, family size and income, and parents' level of education and employment status had no significant influence on this factor.

On the other hand, the parent's gender was found to have a significant effect on Factor 2. As it was mentioned earlier, this supports the notion that mothers have the primary responsibility for taking care of their children's well-being and education more than any other adult at home. A possible explanation for the variation in the level of parental involvement between mothers and fathers is related to cultural and traditional issues. The Kuwaiti traditional family from the past generation which regards the father as the breadwinner of the household and the mother as the nurturer and caregiver tends to be maintained in society. Family role models are considered to be weak because most men were principally raised and educated by their mothers. Thus, most fathers are less likely to engage in their children's education, like their uninvolved fathers. The present finding is consistent with the conclusion of West et al. (1998), who revealed that mothers generally took on the principal responsibility for children's out-of-school activities and other educational activities. Furthermore, Lareau (2000) indicated that mothers rather than fathers carried the main burden of parent involvement in schooling. According to her, although fathers participated in their children's education, it is mother involvement rather than parent involvement.

5.3.3 Parent-teacher communication and family background factors

Results from the analysis of family factors against Factor 3 illustrated that family income and size, parents' gender, level of education, and employment status did not have a significance influence on parents' communication with their children's teachers. However, child grade level was found to have a significant effect on Factor 3. Parents of primary school children in grade 1 were more involved in communicating with the child's teacher than the other groups. A possible explanation for this is that as children make the transition from the informal education in the early stages at kindergarten to primary school, parents become more concerned to enhance their children's achievement and monitor their performance at this grade through increasing their regular communication with teachers. The findings of a longitudinal study by Jimerson et al. (1999) supported the positive impact of the parent's participation in the early years, and suggested that the parent's communication with teachers during the first three years of a child's elementary schooling between the ages of 6 to 9 years is correlated with positive accomplishments in mathematics all through the elementary grades and in high school. In the same vein, a follow-up study conducted by Marcon (1998) on inner-city children found a positive influence on children's success from increased parent involvement during preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades. The findings revealed that children whose parents had been uninvolved in the first grade were more likely to be placed in special education later.

5.3.4 Parent-school communication and family background factors

The data analysis from testing family background factors against Factor 4 showed that parents' level of education and employment status, and family income had no significant impact in relation to the parents' levels of communication with school.

Conversely, child grade level was found to have a significant effect on Factor 4. Comparisons between the means of the five groups showed that parents of kindergarten children in the first stage reported significantly higher levels of participation in communicating with the school than those in the other groups. This might be explained by the fact that parents of children at this young age are interested in being closer to their children. Likewise, young children's anxiety about the new school experience may be reduced if there is less abrupt division between home and school. Thus children would feel more secure and develop positive attitudes towards school if they saw their parents being involved at school (Gestwicki, 2004). Variations in the levels of participation by parents in kindergarten were also reported by teachers in their discussions, indicating that parents of kindergarten children are more likely to participate in activities related to communication with the school than parents of primary school children. Teachers pointed out that the kindergarten setting and the nature of the curriculum are less formal and more flexible than in primary schools, so that parent participation is more easily accommodated.

Parents' gender also showed a significance influence in relation to communication with school. Mothers were more involved in communicating and attending activities in their children's schools than fathers. It appeared that mothers are most likely to be the main connection between home and school, and the results further indicate that supporting

children's schooling is generally taken to be the responsibility of mothers. One explanation could be related to mothers' work patterns in Kuwait. Governmental organisations have provided mothers with flexible work arrangements which facilitate their attendance in school activities. Another explanation could be associated with the feminization of school staff in primary schools in Kuwait. It is expected in society that females feel more comfortable working in the same gender group. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the segregation of males and females in schools needs to be considered as an important factor that may have affected the nature of the relationship between the two genders. Thus, men may feel embarrassed to participate in a school activity because of the lack of other men (fathers, male teachers). The findings of the present study coincide with those of West et al. (1998), who indicated that in relation to involvement in school activities, results revealed that the mother was almost and always involved because of the longer working hours of fathers. The studies by Shumow and Miller (2001) and Nord et al. (1997) also support the finding of the present study indicating that fathers were less involved at school than were mothers.

Family size appeared to have a significant effect on this factor, indicating that families with one child were more involved in communicating with schools than other groups. As noted earlier, Kuwaiti families are still large in size, with an average of seven members. Although Kuwaiti law does not specify a desirable number of children, the government policies aimed at increasing the social welfare of families decrease the cost of the children, and may thus contribute to the maintenance of a large ideal family size (Shah et al., 1998). The findings suggest that larger numbers of children could have a negative influence on parents' involvement in school activities. According to Jones and White

(2000), family size and a growing number of children could potentially increase the demands on parents, thereby reducing their ability to participate in school-related activities with their children. On the other hand, a study by Dauber and Epstein (1993) was conducted in eight inner-cities elementary and middle schools, and its findings are inconsistent with those of the present study in that family size had a negligible effect on parental communication with the school.

5.3.5 Parent-school help and volunteering and family background factors

After reviewing the effect of the six categories of family background variables on Factor 5, the results revealed that family income and parents' gender, level of education, and employment status had no significant influence on Factor 5.

However, two family background factors did show significant effects on the parent's perceptions of involvement in volunteering in schools: family size and child grade level. The results showed that parents of kindergarten children in the first level reported significantly more involvement in volunteering and helping in school than those in the other groups. One explanation is that through parents' volunteering, children receive the message that their parents are taking school seriously which in return develops their positive attitudes towards school. According to Caldas and Bankston (2005), parent volunteering also contributes to children's achievement through creating strong links between the family and school as well as positively shaping the attitudes and expectations of all children in the school.

Family size was also found to have a significant effect on parents' participation in volunteering and assisting in school activities. One possible explanation is that families with fewer children have less obligations and responsibilities and more parental resources

and time than families with larger numbers of children. This might motivate them to participate actively in school activities such as helping in fundraising and voluntary work. These findings are supported by Ambert (2001), who indicated parents who have several children may be affected differently than parents who have a small family. Parents' resources in term of time, energy and money are diluted by the addition of each new child. This is called the dilution of parental resources theory, which explains that parents with more children expend less time and material resources on each individual child while spending more time and money on them jointly.

5.3.6 Parents' role in assisting their children's school education and family background factors

The findings from the testing of family background factors against Factor 6 revealed that family size and income had no significant effect on Factor 6.

Conversely, child grade level was found to have a significant impact on parent's involvement in assisting their children with schoolwork at home. The results showed that parents of primary school children in the first grade reported more frequent involvement than the other groups. As might be expected, children at this stage have recently transferred from kindergarten to primary school and are mostly dependent on and require their parents' assistance to help them with homework and other school learning activities at home, since this stage is the beginning of the transition from informal education to formal education. According to Snodgrass (1991), the highest levels of parental involvement occur when children are younger; however their involvement declines as children move up through the grades. On the other hand, a study by Manz et al (2004) revealed that family involvement in elementary school did not vary significantly according to a child's grade level.

The parent's gender was found to have a significant effect on Factor 6. The results show that although parental involvement includes the participation of both mothers and fathers, mothers continued to bear a substantially larger share of responsibility than fathers in assisting their children with schoolwork and other curriculum-related activities at home. As explained earlier, fathers in Kuwait are assumed traditionally to be the protectors and the providers of the family; thus, they tend to maintain economic control over themselves and their families. Based on this assumption, mothers are held accountable for nurturing and assisting their children's education. In fact, mothers in the Kuwaiti society do the lion's share in encouraging children's teaching and learning (e.g. monitoring and helping with homework, meeting teachers, and attending school events), as the findings of the present study revealed earlier.

It could be anticipated that some fathers might help mothers in caregiving; however, they do not recognize it as a part of their responsibility. The majority of fathers tend to minimise the burden of their responsibility towards their wives and children through bringing domestic servants from Southern Asia to assist in housekeeping such as cooking, cleaning, and babysitting. In that way, mothers have more time and energy to supervise their children's schooling. Some fathers may delegate the responsibility of children's teaching and learning to mothers, particularly when they are highly educated. The findings of the present study correspond with those of the study of Renk et al. (2003), which reported that mothers were more responsible for child-related tasks than fathers. In particular, mothers reported taking more responsibility for assisting their children with schoolwork, disciplining their children and conducting caretaking activities with their children. Conversely, the study of Shumow and Miller (2001) revealed that

fathers were involved with their young adolescents in academic work at home to the same extent as were mothers.

Parents' level of education appeared to have a significant influence on Factor 6, indicating that parents with higher levels of education showed higher rates of involvement. The results revealed that parent's involvement rose steadily as parents' level of education increased. Kohl et al. (2000) explained that educated parents understand education better and have the competence to assist their children with homework. Such parents feel more self-confident, predisposing them not to be hesitant in requesting the teacher's assistance. As for less educated parents, it is possible that they lack the skills and do not feel that they know enough about how to help children with education.

The study of Kohl et al. (2000) of elementary school children also lends support to the present findings, indicating that parents of higher levels of education were more involved with children at home. Furthermore, Masud et al. (1994) reported a positive relationship between the mother's level of education and the quality of the supportive home environment provided for their children.

Parents' employment status also shows a significant influence on parents' assistance of their children with schoolwork at home, suggesting that employed parents were more involved in helping their children with school learning activities at home than unemployed parents. This agrees with the findings of Ferehat and Odah (1988), Dauber and Epstein (1993) and Zick et al. (2001), which emphasised that employment status was not associated with a lack of parental involvement at home. According to them, when parents are employed, less time is spent in direct physical or nonphysical care, and as a

result mothers and fathers attempt to compensate for their absence by engaging in more home-based activities such as reading to children and helping with homework.

5.3.7 Parent-school involvement in decision-making and family background factors

The findings concerning the impact of family factors against Factor 7 demonstrate that child grade level, parents' gender, level of education, and employment status did not have a significance influence on parental participation in decision making roles in school. However, the results revealed that family size did have a significance influence, indicating that parents who have one child were more involved in Factor 7 than other groups. As mentioned earlier, parents' available time, energy and money per child are reduced as family size increase. Therefore, families with fewer children have more opportunities and time available than those with more children to participate in school activities such as decision-making roles and attending parents' board and PTA meetings.

Family income was also found to have a significant influence on Factor 7, indicating that it has a significant impact on parental participation in decision making roles. Surprisingly, the results revealed that families with the least income were more involved in decision making roles than the other groups. Lareau (1987, 2000) and Coleman (1988) pointed out that parents' level of education and occupation and family income may offer different levels of capital which are major factors in determining the level of parental involvement. On the other hand, in this study lower income did not deter parents from participating in decision-making roles in schools, which contradicts the conclusions of Thorkildsen and Stein (1998) that parents with lower incomes are less involved than parents of higher income. It appeared that these parents were concerned to work with

teachers as authentic partners to develop mutual support, respect, and trust which may enhance their roles in promoting their children's success.

5.4 Research question 4

How do parents perceive the types of desired parental involvement activities in their children's education?

Based on the responses of parents, some specific practices of parental involvement were judged by parents to have been created in their schools, and others needed to be developed to improve their involvement at home and school. The findings from the questionnaire revealed that a high percentage of parents desired that schools engage them more with activities related to decision-making processes. They would prefer more input and participation in decisions that affected their children in schools, such as curriculum development and children's assessment. The same concerns were also exhibited in parents' comments which suggested that they wanted to share their input with school personnel concerning internal school affairs, for example helping to solve problems the school may encounter and having a role in planning the times of meetings dates of events. In addition, they wanted schools to welcome their views and opinions, particularly on matters related to school development, for example curriculum and pedagogy. According to parents, these roles could not be achieved unless schools started to establish effective and active PTAs and school boards in their children's schools. Based on parents' recurring requests for their involvement in decision-making roles, it appears that parents were not given meaningful decision making authority, which may explain their rare involvement in this activity. According to Church (2005), if parents are going to have equal opportunities for participation in decision-making roles and to have an active role

in school improvement, suitable parameters and processes need to be established. If school leaders value authentic parent participation, schools need to design structures and processes in order to provide the essential directions that cultivate productive, shared decision-making.

Because homework offers parents an opportunity to catch up with their children's schoolwork as well as providing help to the school (Patton et al., 2001), parent also wanted schools to provide them with practical instruction, in order to help their children with homework and before exams. Parents seemed not to be satisfied with the schools' efforts in developing parent's education and parenting skills. A high percentage of parents reported requests for more workshops that focus on instructional and practical sessions to assist them in improving their children's learning and progress. The parents' comments also supported their great desire for schools to allocate workshops which focused on helping them to improve children's cognitive and social skills to increase their progress and achievement. The literature suggests that home structures which support learning are strongly correlated with children's achievement. As Cotton and Wikelund (1989) stated, programmes which tutor parents using materials and instructions provided by teachers to support their help with their children's homework and assignments show impressive results. As for their preference in communication activities between home and school, parents wanted schools to contact them about their children's progress more and not only when problems occurred. It is widely known that, to a parent, a phone call from school signifies bad news about behaviour or grades. However, Depaul (2000) believed it would be appropriate to contact parents early and before a problem arises, particularly when there is good news to share. This might be time-consuming but it is invaluable. This welcoming approach can do much to offset the feeling that schools

contact parents only with bad news (Moles, 1993). Parents also said that schools need to do better in running weekly meetings with the child's teacher at appropriate times. Given that parent-teacher meetings provide an opportunity for parents to demonstrate an interest in their children's education, schools should be required to schedule these meetings with parents at a convenient hour due to parents' work schedules which may make their attendance difficult (Tileston, 2004).

5.5 Research question 5

How would teachers and principals perceive the types of desired parental involvement activities in their schools?

This question shed light on the attitudes and views school staff held about their practices and policies concerning parental involvement. In their discussions about how they would want parents to get involved at home and school, the teachers and principals reported their desire for changes in the level and type of parental involvement. Their preferences of this involvement differed according to their field of interest. One of the most common preferences expressed by teachers concerned the parent's role in helping children at home in the appropriate way. Most of the teachers in primary schools were concerned about how parents help their children at home rather than what to teach them, since the latter is 'the teacher's job'.

Likewise, Al-Houli's (1999) study revealed that teachers in Kuwait schools expressed a desire for support at home, particularly in terms of supervising and assessing homework. Teachers explained that parents' interference in teaching children at home may sometimes be inconsistent and could conflict with the teachers' teaching methods at school, particularly in mathematics and English. This is supported by Mills (1996), who

stated that some teachers are reluctant to involve parents in their children's education because they fear that parents' efforts may do more harm than good and they worry that parents' methods may counteract the good work going on in school. However there is no research evidence to support this view (Hannon, 1995, cited in Mills, 1996, p. 85). Although teachers displayed their preference in the way parents help their children, they need to provide parents with guidelines to help their children adequately. According to Dauber and Epstein (1993), requesting parent's involvement in helping at home may not be sufficient. Teachers should offer suggestions and instructions on the best way for parents to assist their children with schoolwork.

Children with lower levels of achievement were also discussed by teachers as an important issue that parents need to focus on. Teachers expressed their preference for maintaining regular communication particularly with parents of those children to discuss the problems they encounter and to find appropriate solutions to overcome them. Possible explanations for the lack of involvement among parents of children with lower levels of achievement are revealed in the comments by some parents that they delegated this task to the teachers. Parents indicated that children's achievement difficulties are regarded as the school's obligations and that teachers are accountable for finding solutions to address this problem. The teachers also thought that parents of children of lower achievement sometimes feel intimidated about coming to school because they feared criticism from the teacher and being blamed for being responsible for their children's failure at school.

Despite teachers' encouragement of parental involvement, they seemed to be reluctant to countenance interference by parents in their affairs, particularly in the areas of the curriculum and pedagogy. The teachers and principals refused parents' criticisms of what

and how things are taught. This might be related to teachers' feelings of professionalism and desire for autonomy. According to Tutwiler (2005) teachers are reluctant to involve parents in the classroom or give them access to the curriculum and teaching methods as these are regarded as the 'teacher's domain' and professional identity. These remain difficult to erase, even when reduced by educational policy. The finding of Raccah and Elyashiv (2008), who conducted in-depth interviews with teachers, lends credence to the findings of this study, indicating that although teachers favoured parents' participation they would also feel vulnerable to their increasing influence if they scrutinized their work and impinged on their professionalism. The findings are also similar to those of the study by Al-Houli (1999), who examined teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in elementary schools in Kuwait and revealed that a high percentage of teachers felt that parents should not interfere in the teacher's affairs. Thus, it could be anticipated that beliefs and values which exist in the school context may influence the amount and the ways of parents' participation in their children's education.

Parents' negative attitude at the kindergarten stage was one of the persistent issues discussed among kindergarten teachers. Most kindergartens favour the involvement of parents in the child's early years at school and home, so that they are aware of a child's weak points earlier, which can be then addressed efficiently with the joint efforts of parents and teachers. These findings coincide with those of Miedel and Reynolds (1999), which revealed that parental involvement in preschool and kindergarten was associated with lower rates of grade retention and fewer years in special education.

The concerns of principals were mostly related to administrative issues, though the results did reveal some convergence between the views of principals and teachers in their preferences with regard to parental involvement activities. Some principals favoured parents participating in PTA and parents' boards regularly. These principals explained that parents were welcome to participate in making decisions that are constructive for children and school improvement, as long as the principals were authorized to approve these decisions. Conversely, other principals preferred some restrictions to be placed on parents' input in decision-making roles. They argued that parents are unfamiliar with educational issues, and thus they are not qualified to make sound decisions. Moreover, they preferred parents not to interfere with administrative issues in schools due to their lack of expertise in this area. Similar findings emerged in the study of Ng (1999) which revealed that parents in Hong Kong schools were not used to being involved in the school as full partners, and the purpose of parents' collaboration with the school was to help their children achieve better academic performances. Ng (1999) described school personnel as to a great extent neither liking to work closely with parents, nor having partnership relations with them in decision-making roles.

As far as teachers and principals were concerned, both groups favoured parents increasing their levels of involvement in volunteering and taking the initiative and being more approachable about this type of involvement, since their participation in these activities was less than what was desired. On the other hand, in their comments parents favoured schools taking the initiative to invite them to participate in school events and volunteering since they felt more comfortable when they thought that their help was needed. The disparity in opinions between parents and school personnel in regard to

volunteering could be explained by Connors and Epstein (1995, cited in Trumbull et al. 2001, p. 38) who suggested that families may prefer to take the initiative to find ways to contribute time or talent to support their children's school. However, it would be difficult for parents to take the initiative if they were not aware of the norms of communication or the goals and policies concerning parental involvement in their schools. Thus, school personnel should take the initiative, since volunteering and participating in extracurricular activities involve initiatives by teachers and principals and arrangements by the school (Davies, 1987).

Parents' low levels of involvement in non-academic learning issues related to adjusting children's misbehaviour, particularly in boys primary schools, was the final type of involvement that greatly concerned school staff. Both principals and teachers desired parents and children to respect the teachers and the school's rules and policies. Some discrepancies exist between the results from the questionnaire analysis and teachers' reports about children's behavioural problems, as mentioned earlier. From the questionnaire, parents are often involved in Factor 1 which embraced their role in supervising children's behaviour, whereas teachers revealed their dissatisfaction about children's misbehaviour at school and the lack of cooperation between home and school concerning this problem. One possible explanation for this is that parents may perceive that it is their role in nurturing morals and good behaviour in their children, but when it comes to problems which have occurred at school parents usually stand beside their children as advocates against teachers. Thus, children might feel that they are in a stronger position and may be more likely to disobey their teachers. This was also expressed by one of the teachers when she complained in the focus group that:

'I want parents to stand with me and not against me. If parents did the opposite, children will gain strength and feel that teachers are weak, and thus children start to disrespect us. I believe it is impossible for children to learn at school if they do not respect the teacher.' (PT 27)

The fact that parent involvement has a positive impact on children's behaviour was recognized in the study of Zill and Nolin (1994), which revealed that students whose parents had low levels of involvement at school were three times as likely to have been suspended or expelled from school compared to students with highly involved parents.

5.6 Research question 6

To what extent do parents, teacher and principals perceive the barriers which hinder effective parental involvement?

Research has repeatedly documented the existence of barriers that may inhibit the development of productive relationship between home and school, which can even make simple and successful parental involvement programmes difficult to construct and sustain. The role of schools in overcoming barriers that impede parental involvement was asserted by D'Angelo and Adler (1991), who believed that they must be dealt with if schools are to successfully include parents in their children's schooling. Barriers discussed in this part of the chapter concern the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals about the reality of interactions between family and school. It is worth noting that the eight barriers mentioned in the parents' questionnaire are divided into two categories: school-centred and parent-centred barriers.

Among the parent-centred barriers, parents indicated that their lack of time and time conflicts with school schedules were considered to be two major obstacles that impeded efficient parental participation in school activities. Similar results were gained in a survey

conducted by the School-family Partnership Project, which reported that lack of time or schedule conflicts were the two most important barriers to parental involvement where more than half of the sample felt that activities involving parents at school were held at inconvenient times (Weissberg et al. 1997, cited in Patrikakou et al., 2002, p.192). Teachers and principals confirmed in their discussions that, with the emergence of families where both parents work, difficulty is often experienced in attending day-time school events. They explained that some parents cannot easily get time off from work, or sometimes their work demands may conflict with school schedules that prevent them from participating in school programmes or even helping their children at home.

Lack of staff time and opportunities is one of the school-centred barriers identified by parents as having a moderate impact on parental participation in their children's schooling. One possible explanation is that in some situations parents may perceive that teachers are fully committed if not over-occupied in normal circumstances and simply may not have enough time to devote to effective family-school partnerships. According to Gestwicki (2004), one factor that may function as a barrier is a teacher's appearance of always being busy, which may result in them unconsciously keeping parents at a distance. Hornby (2000) added that increasing levels of parental involvement demand increasing amounts of a teacher's time. Thus, it would be hard to persuade teachers that they need to contribute more time if they are to implement effective plans for parental involvement.

Surprisingly, principals and teachers did not mention that such a barrier was likely to exist in their schools. However, during the interviews with principals, a recurring theme could be identified concerning teachers' lack of adequate time to get involved with

parents. For example, the principals regularly indicated that parental visits to school should be primarily for urgent reasons, since teachers were not necessarily always available to meet parents due to their engagement with lessons and other duties.

Another parent-centred barrier which was considered by parents to have a moderate impact on their involvement was lack of knowledge about how to help children with schoolwork. Most parents were really concerned about their children's education and wanted to be involved in it but may not have known how to help. Buttery and Anderson (1997) believed that parents would be willing to spend more time with children to help them if they were given more guidance, and Epstein (1992) accepted parents' willingness to help their children at home but argued that they do not always recognize whether or not they are doing the right things. Parents' lack of knowledge was also asserted by teachers as one of the barriers that may impede parental involvement, particularly with helping children at home. Those teachers reported that parents sometimes view themselves as being incompetent to help their children, especially when they move to higher grades. Epstein (1986) and Snodgrass (1991) also confirmed that, as children advance to higher grades, parents have fewer opportunities to be involved with their education. According to the teachers, this was mostly related to parents with lower levels of education. The relationship between parents having difficulty helping with homework and their level of education was revealed by Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe (2007), who pointed out that parents have often been found to have difficulty in helping their children even at elementary schools, for example, in vocabulary and mathematical calculations. The implication is that it is more likely that parents with higher levels of education will

show greater involvement in their children's schooling (Dauber and Epstein, 1993; Eccles and Harold, 1993; Kohl et al., 2000).

Parents also indicated that fear of criticism from teachers and blame for a child's academic failure is another parent-centred barrier that could have a moderate influence on their participation in schooling. Some teachers at primary schools explained that certain parents, particularly whose children obtained lower grades, refrained from attending parent-teacher meetings because they were worried about being blamed for their failure to push their children towards success. In their discussions teachers revealed that they do not hold parents responsible for their children's academic failure. On the contrary, they focus their efforts positively on working with parents to improve their children's progress. In contrast, Karr and Landerholm (1991) stated that teachers become upset when parents do not attend meetings and do not follow up with the activities that are supposed to help them teach their children. They blame themselves as well as blaming the parents.

The last parent-centred barrier perceived by parents to have a moderate impact on parental involvement was language differences between parents and school staff. Principals and teachers also agreed that differences in language may lead parents to become timid and cautious about participating in their children's schooling. School personnel indicated that such language barriers were only recognized at the kindergarten stage because parents tended to transfer their children to private schools as soon they advanced to primary school level. Although school personnel reported that this barrier was only recognized at the kindergarten stage, from the questionnaire, parents indicated that the language barrier had a moderate influence on parental involvement.

Discrepancies in the results could be related to the fact that parents in the present study may have recognized language difference as a general barrier that may face any parent who does not speak the same language as the school.

In support of this finding, Blankestein (2004) clarified that language differences form a barrier to parental involvement in schools which make parents tentative about making contact with schools. For example, in the study of Smith et al. (2008) on Hispanic parents, it was revealed that the inability of parents to speak and understand English was the major obstacle to effective communication between schools and Hispanic parents. Language barriers could also impede the role of parents in helping their children at home. The study of Paterson and Ladky (2007) revealed that language difference hindered the involvement of new immigrants in their children's education, where parents believed that their mispronunciation of words or reading with an accent may lower their children's chances of doing well at university.

It is of worth noting that ethnic and racial diversity does not widely prevail in Kuwait schools in comparison to United Kingdom and USA schools. Perhaps it could be identified in private schools where students from different nationalities are enrolled. However students in state public schools at primary and higher levels mostly speak the Arabic language.

As for the two remaining school-centred barriers, parents felt that staff attitudes about parents and lack of teacher training about working with parents had only a small impact on parental involvement. This was also revealed in the teachers' focus groups and interviews with principals, when both groups showed their concern about making effective relations between home and school through providing a welcoming and

informal environment for parents in the school. In agreement, the study of Becker-Klein (1999) examined the influence of family and school barriers to parental involvement, and revealed that school practices such as an encouraging school climate and efforts to foster positive home-school communication were positively significant influenced on parental participation in children's education at home as reported by parents. In general, schools need to understand the barriers that prevent some parents from participating in their children's schooling and consider their needs and circumstances more.

Chapter Six: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

The aim of this study has been to investigate the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals concerning parental involvement in the early grades of schooling in Kuwait. According to Coletta (1999) and Samples (1985), parents, teachers and principals greatly influence children's academic performance. Their perceptions concerning parental involvement should be taken into consideration in the planning of effective programmes in order to enhance parental involvement in a meaningful way and thus contribute to the success of children and school effectiveness.

This chapter presents a brief discussion of the methodology that has been utilized to collect data from the study samples. The conclusions are drawn in the light of the findings of this study and from the answers to the research questions. Recommendations to improve relevant areas of parental involvement are offered and suggestions for further study are then put forward.

6.1 Reflection on methodology

This study is a contribution to the current literature on the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals on parental involvement. One original aspect of the study is that it is the first study designed to integrate the perspectives of three key stakeholders (parents, teachers and principals) concerning the quality of parental involvement practices and programmes in Kuwaiti public schools. This study aims to examine parental participation in children's schooling, the impact of demographic factors on parents' current involvement, the types of involvement desired by parents, teachers, principals, and obstacles to successful parental involvement. No previous study has investigated parental

involvement in Kuwait using such a multifaceted approach through exploring the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals by utilizing a mixed method design. This research has combined two sequential and complementary qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in order to take advantage of the strengths of using more than one method. The qualitative phase consisted of 12 focus groups of a total of sixty teachers and 14 interviews with principals which were conducted in kindergartens and primary schools in Hawally district. The quantitative phase consisted of 430 questionnaires which were completed by parents who had a child attending kindergarten through grade three in primary school.

Sometimes researchers bring to the inquiry their own personalities, and thus in order to decrease the amount of bias and subjectivity and provide confidence in the validity of the research findings, each of the data collection instruments in this thesis were peer reviewed and pilot tested before the final conduct of the instruments. Moreover, the study employed three types of triangulation as identified by Denzin (1989, p.313): data triangulation, investigator triangulation and method triangulation, as explained earlier in chapter three (Methodology). All of the instruments were translated into Arabic and experts were consulted to review them. All of these procedures are likely to have played a major role in the originality and validity of the research. As for reliability, the three parts of the questionnaire demonstrated a satisfactory level of internal consistency with reliability coefficients ranging from 0.816, to 0.713.

6.2 Conclusions (Summary of findings)

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions are drawn:

- The findings suggested that while parents were usually involved in home-based activities, they were rarely involved in school-based activities. These findings were supported by teachers and principals who revealed that parents were mostly involved in helping their children at home and engaging in activities that could help them to monitor their children's academic development at school.

- Findings concerning the influence of family background factors on parent's perceptions regarding their current parental involvement are significant since it has been assumed in previous research that various family factors may influence the process of involving parents in children's schooling. A parent's gender was found to have a significant influence on types of parental involvement. Mothers tended to be more engaged than fathers in both home-based and school-based activities.

- The level of education and employment status of parents were found to have a significant influence. Parents with high levels of education tended to be more involved with home-based activities than parents with lower levels of education, and employed parents were more likely to be involved in home-based activities than unemployed parents.

- Family size appeared to affect parental involvement in school. The results indicated that parents in families with more children were less likely to participate in school-based activities.

- As for child grade level, significant differences were found between parental involvement in primary school and kindergarten children. The parents of kindergarteners were more likely to be involved in school-based activities than

parents of primary school children. On the other hand, parents of primary school children were more likely to be involved in activities associated with assisting their children's education at home and monitoring their children's progress.

- Most of the parents wanted schools to promote their participation in school through involving them effectively in decision-making roles. Many parents would also prefer schools to enhance their own academic and parenting skills in helping their children at home. Positive communication between parents and schools was also desired.

- Teachers reported their desires somewhat differently. Most teachers expressed a desire for more support at home, particularly in terms of monitoring homework. They also wanted greater parental collaboration with school to address problems concerning children's misbehaviour and low levels of achievement.

- Teachers in kindergarten also raised another point of concern when they urged parents to change their unresponsive attitudes toward the kindergarten stage through participation both in school-based and home-based practices.

- Teachers would prefer a productive connection between parents and school to be created. However, some teachers, particularly in primary schools, would not welcome parental interference in their affairs. Teachers did not appreciate parents' criticism particularly in the areas of the curriculum and pedagogy.

- Principals, on the other hand, wanted parents to demonstrate more initiative in involvement in volunteering and fundraising. Some principals welcomed parents' participation in decision making; however others were reluctant to include parents' input in decision-making roles. Besides, some principals as well as

teachers did not approve of parental interference in school administrative matters and teaching affairs.

- A large number of barriers may impede effective parental involvement. Lack of time among parents and time conflicts with school schedules emerged as the main barriers to family involvement as perceived by parents, teachers and principals.

6.3 Recommendations for increasing parental involvement

Based on the findings of this research, the current study can provide policy recommendation to benefit principals, teachers, parents and policymakers in the Ministry of Education.

Principals may use the findings to play an active role in taking the initiative in building constructive communication and collaboration with families and teachers to become effective partners. As for teachers, they could use the information to find new activities to help parents be involved at home and school to positively foster their children's achievement. The benefits to parents are to be aware of the range of activities available in schools and to know how to share responsibilities in fruitful partnerships. Policymakers in the Ministry of Education could develop policies and school reforms that would ensure that parents are included in schools as genuine partners to play an essential role in their children's learning and success.

It is expected that the findings of this study could contribute to practical guidelines to plan strong parental involvement programmes that could develop rewarding parent-teacher partnerships through determining which areas of parental involvement need to be enhanced and adjusted. The schema for such a plan could look like this:
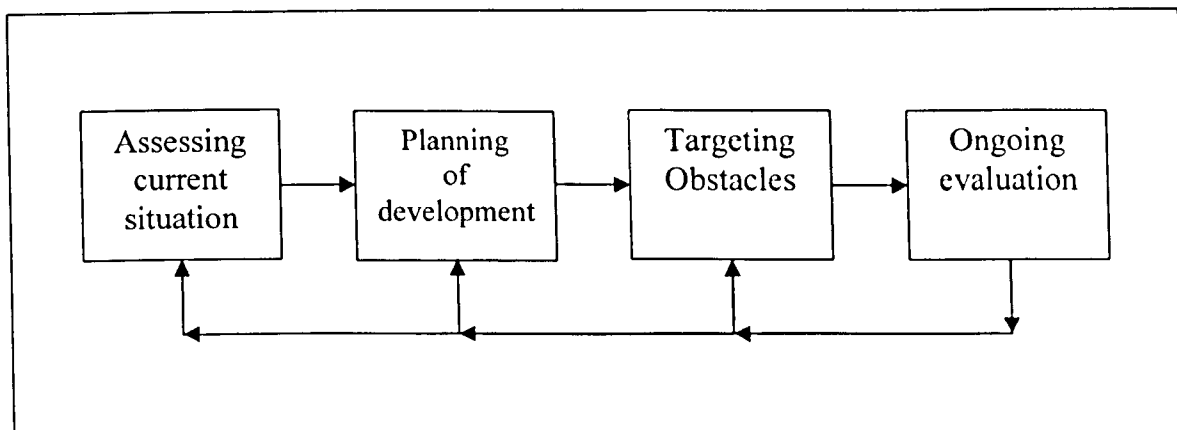
Figure 4: A schema plan to increase effective parental involvement

To improve meaningful parental involvement programmes in schools, it is important for principals to construct a concrete plan (figure 4) by concentrating on what they want to achieve through:

- Evaluating the current status of parental involvement in their school by surveying teachers and parents to obtain a clear vision of existing parental involvement practices. The questionnaire in the current study could be adapted for this purpose.

- Allocating ways to improve parental involvement by looking at the variety of types of involvement favoured by parents and teachers through questionnaires, meetings (focus groups, interviews) and telephone calls.

- Identifying obstacles and challenges that may restrict future improvements and how they can be overcome when implementing a new strategy or programme. Challenges such as family barriers and school barriers should be taken into consideration as mentioned in the current study.

- Assessing the outcomes and results of the programme and continuing to periodically adjust, improve, and coordinates practices when necessary. Principals are required to be clear about the short- and long-term outcomes desired and the measurement tools they will use to evaluate progress and success.

It is worth noting that this scheme can become a useful structure to enhance parental involvement if constructed with clear policies and strong support from the principal, teachers and parents along as well as from the leaders of the educational districts.

Emerging from the findings of the study are several implications that need to be considered by principals, teachers and the authorities in the Ministry of Education. Findings from parents, teachers and principals have revealed that the patterns of parental involvement in Kuwait schools in the early grades are such that that the parents were more likely to get involved in home-based rather than school-based activities. However, such involvement may not contribute to child development unless parents are motivated and assisted by teachers.

For effective parental involvement at home, teachers need to establish consistent patterns of interaction between home and school and provide more information for the parents about what is being taught and what the school expects of their child. Using communication through technology is an innovative and time-efficient method which should make contact between parents and teachers faster and easier. Homework hotlines, electronic mail and the internet are all examples of effective technological methods that could provide parents with updates about homework, their child's success or problems and classroom and school events.

Since parents want to enhance their skills, supplementary training may need to be available for them, particularly for parents with lower levels of education, as the findings of the present study suggest. Schools could allocate workshops or lectures to provide practical training for parents based on their interests and needs at convenient times to guide them on how to work with children at home. According to Epstein (1986) parents can encourage home-learning activities if they understand what is expected from their children and become knowledgeable about how to conduct specific learning activities to support those expectations.

As for parent involvement at school, for example attending school events or helping and volunteering at their children's schools, teachers have to relinquish the supposition that parents do not want to get involved. Swap (1993) revealed that parents come to activities in school, but do not want to waste their time if their involvement is not valued or if they do not make a contribution to their own children's education. Schools need to implement a variety of activities for parental participation and to take the initiative to get parents involved more in the school, taking into account the circumstances of parents and avoiding misjudging them as being not interested if they do not attend. In addition, school staff could try to seek parental input when planning parent involvement activities in order to increase their positive participation at school.

One finding of concern related to the effect of family factors on parental involvement is the effect of parental gender, and the low level of involvement by fathers in their children's education. The results indicated that mothers bear a substantially larger share of responsibility for children's schooling, although the involvement of fathers is

important in terms of children's behavior and achievement. Children do better in school when fathers get involved (Nord et al. 1997). Thus, it is suggested that schools need to understand why fathers are less involved than mothers in their children's schooling, in order to increase their involvement.

Another finding which needs to be taken into consideration is parents' apathy and disinterest in participating in kindergarten. It would be advisable that researchers investigate the causes that contribute to the low level of parental involvement in kindergarten. One possible recommendation would be to make this stage of education compulsory.

Although the positive attitudes found in the current study of school personnel regarding parental involvement were promising, the findings concerning the reality of the situation in Kuwaiti schools revealed that school personnel and parents differ in their views of the types and amounts of meaningful parental involvement in schools. According to Epstein and Sanders (2002), when parents and teachers have different perceptions of their roles, conflicts and concerns may arise between them. While parents favoured sharing their input in curriculum planning and other educational concerns, some teachers and principals seemed unenthusiastic about parents' participation in decision-making roles or their interference in administrative issues and teaching affairs. Rather they encouraged other types of parental involvement, for example attending school events, volunteering, and helping children with homework. Yet the literature acknowledges that parental involvement in decision-making should be improved together with other main parent involvement practices (Tutwiler, 2005).

The findings suggest the importance of the Ministry of Education and schools changing their policies and practices to enhance family involvement. It is recommended that the authorities in the Ministry of Education shift their paradigm from centralized to decentralized management and provide empowerment to parents in order to have some authority in decision-making roles. As for schools, it would be beneficial that principals and teachers included parents in successful collaboration practices through placing parents on committees to gain their input on decisions that are mostly associated with their children's development. According to Curtis and O'Hagan (2003), empowered parents feel more ownership of their children's education and can bring valuable perspectives to the setting because they understand their children's needs.

The current research findings may be an indicator of the need to draw attention to teacher training. The student-teacher training curriculum in colleges of education in Kuwait does not include preparation that focuses on improving family outreach and involvement skills. Hence, teachers' lack of training to deal with parents may alienate parents and increase attitudes of suspicion towards parental involvement policies and practices in schools. The findings from this study recommend that further training is needed for pre-service teachers. According to Williams and Stallworth (1982) it is crucial that teachers should be trained to work with parents by providing in-service and pre-service education for teachers. Principals should also be included in parent involvement training to support and motivate teachers and parents to develop productive partnerships and accomplish common goals.

There is evidence that several barriers often prevent or limit parental involvement. One good start to involving parents is to engage them in discussions on the barriers found in this study, in order to provide possible strategies to overcome existing barriers. Time and schedule problems remain the most common reasons that parents, teachers, and principals give as to why they do not interact more often. A possible recommendation for schools is to schedule school events at convenient times through surveying parents at the beginning of each year taking into consideration factors such as the work patterns of parents and family size, as the findings of this study have revealed that these factors may influence levels of parental involvement in school settings. Schools can also help parents by sending them advance notification of school events in order to adjust their schedules accordingly.

In light of the findings of the current study, it is assumed that the diversity in the level and methods of parental involvement has been influenced by cultural and social background factors. These factors may be related to parents' attitudes, self–concept and beliefs, fathers' and mothers' parenting skills, parental education, rituals and rules coming from past generations, stress and support from the extended family, parental working arrangements, and the level of comfort in dealing with the educational system. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards parental involvement are other factors that need to be focused upon. According to Christenson and Sheridan (2001, p.107), it is important to consider the predominant culture of the school (e.g. the beliefs and values that exist in the school context) because this culture can be imposed on family members unintentionally and communicate a lack of openness to different cultural beliefs. Therefore, investigating those factors and the outcomes of their impact on the family would be helpful to identify

why parents differ in their level and type of involvement in children's education. This investigation may assist policy makers to implement new and appropriate programs which accommodate parents' needs and interests in order to increase parental involvement at home and at school.

6.4 Linking to theories

This study has provided a comprehensive knowledge for educators and policymakers to create rational plans of actions to improve future practices and programmes. Previous research has revealed that a strong programme centred on the concepts of strengthening home-school partnerships could greatly minimize common educational problems in our schools, for example student underachievement, failure and dropping out. As mentioned earlier, it was decided that the parental involvement practices which are summarized in Epstein's framework have been employed in this thesis. Epstein (1987b, 1995) articulated six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. It is worth mentioning that the sixth type (collaborating with the community) was not included in the present study because it is neither widely recognized nor practiced in schools in Kuwait. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which takes into account the three contexts (school, family, and community) in which children learn and develop, is also adopted in the present work to interpret the types of involvement and interactions that emerged in this study. However, for the purpose of this research, Epstein's theory has been altered and the third influence of spheres (community) of this theory is not included. As a result, the family context represented the parents (mothers and fathers) and the school context represented teachers and principals who participated in this study. Prior

218

research revealed that using a model that has been already been refined and widely implemented is very beneficial. Epstein's framework of parental involvement is likely to be very useful when schools in Kuwait develop programs that will foster greater parental involvement in children's learning environment. One of the major assumptions of the theory is that greater cooperation between spheres (e.g., families and schools) will lead to positive benefits for students, parents, and teachers (Epstein et al., 2002).

Therefore our schools in Kuwait may consider two choices towards involving parents in their children's education based on Epstein's (1990a, 1995) overlapping spheres theory. Epstein argued that schools make choices. They might conduct only a small number of acts of communication and interaction with families which may emphasise conflict and views school as a battleground. The conditions and relationships in this kind of environment could produce power struggles and disharmony thus keeping the two spheres of home and school relatively separate. Or they might initiate many high-quality communications and conditions that foster the sharing of power and mutual respect to bring the two spheres of influence closer together, which then directly influence student learning and development. Further support for this is provided by Dauber and Epstein (1993), who indicated that parents are more likely to participate in their children's education if they recognize that school has strong practices to involve parents at school. Consequently, school personnel (e.g., teachers, principals) might be more inclined to construct novel ways to involve parents in their schools.

6.5 Limitations of the study

This research aimed to investigate the perceptions of parents, teachers and principals regarding parental involvement in children's education in kindergarten and primary schools in Hawalli district in Kuwait. Research problem, the aim of the study, and the research questions were well defined before the instruments were designed. The current study combined two sequential and complementary qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis which allowed us to look from multiple perspectives at how parents, teachers, and principals constructed meaning for their educational roles of parental involvement. Taken together, they provided more comprehensible picture of parents' and school personnel's views than would have been possible using a single approach. For example a questionnaire can provide generalizable information, while interviews and focus groups can complement such data by showing the process behind respondents' beliefs and actions. Used in combination as mixed methods, quantitative data could offer breadth of understanding, whereas qualitative data offer great depth (Patton, 2002). Nonetheless, limitations in the present work need to be recognized.

Although teachers' focus groups and principals' interviews allowed more detailed discussion of topic areas to obtain in depth knowledge of the participants' experiences, interests and concerns of parental involvement in their schools, some limitations have been encountered. Even if interview results may be genuine and rich, they can also be biased and unreliable (Oppenheim, 2001). This limitation was minimized through the use of triangulation between the qualitative and quantitative methods to arrive at more trustworthy findings (See section 3.6.4). Another limitation is that the sample size in interviews tends to be smaller than questionnaires due to time consuming and cost, thus

the qualitative data of the current study does not have the advantage of generalizability. However it is worth to mention that the teachers and principals who participated in this study were representative members of the larger population. Sample size was influenced by timetabling issues among the teachers and the work schedules of principals.

Another point of limitation is that it has been undertaken in female schools in kindergarten through grade three of primary school, since it was difficult for the researcher to include male school personnel due to cultural and religious norms and values. The reason for exploring parental involvement at these early grades is that early involvement could shape child development and progress in later years. A further limitation is that participants in this study were from schools situated in Hawalli district, due to the limited resources and time available which prevented a study of the entire population of the state's remaining five districts. Thereby the generalizability of the findings is limited to the population in this district.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

There is a need to investigate further parental involvement in schools in order to promote effective relationship between home and school. The following suggestions are made for further research:

- This study of parental involvement could be replicated in other schools in different districts in order to identify whether or not there are comparable degrees of parental involvement practices elsewhere.

- The perceptions of parents and teachers concerning parental involvement at other grade levels (middle and secondary schools) should be investigated to encourage collaboration between teachers and parents from kindergarten to twelfth grade.

- The present study is limited to female teachers and principals. Investigation of teachers of both genders is required to determine whether gender has an impact on teachers' perceptions of parental involvement.

- Further research is recommended to identify the reasons for the low rates of parental involvement in certain activities in order for educators and policy makers to develop a greater understanding of how to strengthen family-school relationships.

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241

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The total number of kindergarten and primary schools, teachers and pupils in Hawally district

Table 1
The total number of kindergarten and primary schools, teachers and pupils in Hawally district 2005/2006

Kindergarten			Primary school		
Number of schools	Number of teachers	Number of pupils	Number of schools	Number of teachers	Number of pupils
26	531	5285	23	1602	9721

(Source: Ministry of Education, Department of Information and Planning).

APPENDIX B

**Permission to conduct the study
(In Arabic)**

رقـــم : ٧١/ ب
التاريخ : ٢١/ ١٢/ ٢٠٠٥م

نشرة عامة رقم (١٣٥ / ٢٠٠٥)
<u>لجميع مدارس مرحلة رياض الأطفال و المرحلة الابتدائية</u>

السيدات والسادة / مديرات ومديري المدارس المحترمين ،
تحية طيبة وبعد ،،

يرجى تسهيل مهمة السيــدة :   حنان محمد محمود المزيدي معيدة بعثة
الدكتوراه بكلية التربية الأساسية لإجراء مقابلات مع معلمات مرحلة رياض
الأطفال و معلمات ومعلمين المرحلة الابتدائية .

مع خالص التحية ،،

مدير عام منطقة حولي التعليمية بالإنابة

سمة لكل من :
- المدير العام
- مدير الشئون التعليمية
- مراقبة رياض الأطفال
- مراقب التعليم الابتدائي
- الملف

هنادي

نشرة عامة رقم (٧٠ / ٢٠٠٦م)

لجميع مدارس مرحلة رياض الأطفال و الابتدائية (بنين وبنات)

السيدات والسادة المحترمين / مديرات ومدراء المدارس

تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،

| الموضوع :
تسهيل مهمة |

يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة / حنان المزيدي المسجلة في برنامج الدكتوراة – جامعة جامعة نيو كاسل ، بريطانيا وذلك بتطبيق استبانة على أولياء الأمور ومديري المدارس حول :

" طبيعة مشاركة أولياء الأمور في تعليم أطفالهم في كل من مرحلة رياض الأطفال والابتدائي "

شاكرين حسن تعاونكم

مع خالص التحية ،،،

وزارة التربية   مدير عام منطقة حولي التعليمية بالإنابة

وزارة التربية
منطقة حولي التعليمية

APPENDIX C

Teachers' codes and backgrounds
Kindergarten and primary school teachers

Teachers' focus groups of Kindergarten

Table 2
Participants' Codes and backgrounds

Kindergarten focus groups			
Focus group	Teacher code	Level of education	Years of experience
1	KT 1	University graduate	11
	KT 2	University graduate	3
	KT 3	University graduate	11
	KT 4	University graduate	15
	KT 5	University graduate	15
2	KT 6	University graduate	15
	KT 7	University graduate	14
	KT 8	University graduate	9
	KT 9	University graduate	7
	KT 10	University graduate	8
3	KT 11	Post graduate (Masters)	6
	KT 12	University graduate	4
	KT 13	University graduate	5
	KT 14	University graduate	3
	KT 15	University graduate	3
4	KT 16	University graduate	14
	KT 17	University graduate	12
	KT 18	University graduate	18
	KT 19	University graduate	8
	KT 20	Diploma in education	11
5	KT 21	University graduate	4
	KT 22	University graduate	14
	KT 23	University graduate	4
	KT 24	University graduate	13
	KT 25	University graduate	5
6	KT 26	University graduate	11
	KT 27	University graduate	7
	KT 28	University graduate	12
	KT 29	Diploma in education	19
	KT 30	University graduate	13

Note. **KT**: Kindergarten Teacher

Table 3
Participants' Codes and backgrounds

Primary school focus groups			
Focus group	Teacher code	Level of education	Years of experience
1	PT 1	University graduate	8
	PT 2	University graduate	7
	PT 3	University graduate	10
	PT 4	University graduate	11
	PT 5	Diploma in education	19
2	PT 6	Diploma in education	25
	PT 7	University graduate	13
	PT 8	University graduate	9
	PT 9	University graduate	11
	PT 10	University graduate	12
3	PT 11	Post graduate (Masters)	7
	PT 12	University graduate	3
	PT 13	University graduate	8
	PT 14	University graduate	5
	PT 15	University graduate	9
4	PT 16	Diploma in education	28
	PT 17	Diploma in education	18
	PT 18	University graduate	13
	PT 19	University graduate	7
	PT 20	University graduate	14
5	PT 21	University graduate	5
	PT 22	Diploma in education	22
	PT 23	University graduate	7
	PT 24	University graduate	11
	PT 25	University graduate	6
6	PT 26	University graduate	5
	PT 27	University graduate	7
	PT 28	University graduate	11
	PT 29	University graduate	3
	PT 30	University graduate	10

Note. **PT**: Primary School Teacher

Appendix D

**Principals' codes and backgrounds
(Kindergarten and primary school)**

Principals' of primary schools

Table 4
Participants' codes and backgrounds

Interviewee code	Level of education	Total years of experience	Years of experience as a principal
PP1	Diploma	30	11
PP2	Diploma	29	7
PP3	Diploma	27	5
PP4	Postgraduate(Masters)	33	11
PP5	Diploma	30	6
PP6	Diploma	30	12
PP7	University graduate	33	8

Note. **PP:** Primary School Principal

Table 5
Participants' codes and backgrounds

Interviewee code	Level of education	Total years of experience	Years of experience as a principal
KP1	Diploma	20	5
KP2	Diploma	28	11
KP3	Diploma	20	8
KP4	Diploma	35	16
KP5	Diploma	29	14
KP6	Postgraduate(Masters)	18	3
KP7	Diploma	30	6

Note. **KP:** Kindergarten Principal

Appendix E

Krejcie and Morgan's sample guide table for representative sample size

Table 6
Krejcie and Morgan's table guide to sample size

P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	241	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	100000	384

Note: These sample sizes are with 95% confidence level and +/- 5% sample error
Source: Krejcie, R.V. and Morgan, D.W. (1970) p. 608

P: Population
S: Required Sample

Appendix F

Focus group guide

Teachers' focus group guide

As part of my doctoral thesis requirement at Newcastle University, I wish to conduct a focus group to examine teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and parent-teacher relationship. The purpose of this focus group is to share and listen to your thoughts and experiences of interest concerning some of the issues of parental involvement practices in your school.

There are no right or wrong answers and your views and beliefs and what you think in the questions asked will promote and aid my research in this important area.

Your responses will be tape recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. The length of the focus group will take no longer than an hour and a half. Your confidentiality is protected. All the participants will remain anonymous, and all the responses will be reported anonymously. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without any prejudice of any kind. Within two weeks you will receive a written transcript of your focus group interview to proofread for accuracy. Thank you for your participation.

Would you like to ask any question before we begin?

Teachers' focus group questions

1. Could you please tell me about your personal background?

2. How would you describe parent-teacher relationship and interaction in your school?

3. What types of ways have you found parents to involve themselves with their children's education?

4. What sorts of involvement would you like parents to have with their children education at home and at school?

5. What kind of methods and types of communication does your school employ to engage and reach out for parents? Please describe all types of communication that your school uses either frequently or rarely.

6. From your experience, why do you perceive that some parents are not involved effectively in their children's schooling?

7. Are there any comments you would like to add?

Appendix G

Principals' interview guide

Principals' interview guide

As part of my doctoral thesis requirement at Newcastle University, I wish to conduct individual interviews to examine principals' perceptions of parental involvement and school-family relationship. The purpose of this interview is to share and listen to your opinions and experiences freely without any inhibitions to some of the issues related to parental involvement practices in your school.

There are no right or wrong answers, and your views and what you think in the questions asked will promote and aid my research in this important area.

The length of the interview will take no longer than an hour and a half. Your responses will be tape recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. Your confidentiality is strictly protected. All the participants will remain anonymous, and all the responses will be reported anonymously. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can end the interview at any time. Within two weeks you will receive a written transcript of your interview to proofread for correctness. Thank you for your participation.

Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Principal's Interview questions on parental involvement

1. The literature claims that parental involvement is important in the child education.....how do you feel about this?

2. How would you describe your role in parental involvement activities in your school?

3. How do you perceive the overall relationship between parents and teachers in your school?

4. How motivated do parents/teachers seem towards involvement?

5. How are parents currently involved in your school?

6. Do parents participate in PTA and parents' boards?

7. If yes, could you describe their participation?

8. Are parents involved in any type of decision making in your school?

9. If yes, could you describe how?

10. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the level/type of involvement?

11. Would you like to see any changes?

12. If so, how would you prefer this to happen/come about?

13. Can you think of any thing that might get in the way of the role parents should play in their children's education?

14. If so, please describe more.

15. How could you overcome these interferences? Have you already tried any strategies?

Appendix H

**Parental involvement research study questionnaire
(English version)**

An investigation of the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning parental involvement in kindergartens and primary schools in Kuwait

Parent's involvement questionnaire

Dear Parent

This study is a part of a doctoral thesis which I am conducting. My name is Hanan Almazeedi and I am a post graduate student at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. The purpose of this study is to investigate parents, teachers and principals' perceptions of parental involvement in kindergartens and primary schools in Hawalli District in Kuwait. By filling out this questionnaire, you will help me in my research in relation to family-school partnership. You will have the opportunity to identify your ideas on important topics related to your involvement in your child's education and these ideas will inform the findings of this study. Your answers will be kept private and confidential. For this reason you are not asked to sign your name on the questionnaire. Your participation would be highly valued.

If you decide to take part in this study please read the directions for each question carefully and take your time before responding.

Please feel free to call me at 5724242 if you have any questions concerning the study.
Thank you for your time and interest. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Hanan Almazeedi
Doctoral Student
School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

About your child (The child who brought the questionnaire)

<u>Please circle the number of you choice</u>

My child is a: 1. boy   2. girl

Child's age: _____

What grade is this child in?

1. Kindergarten level   1   2. Kindergarten level 2

3. Primary school (Grade1)   4. Primary school (Grade 2)   5. Primary school (Grade3)

Number of children at home: _____

About the respondent (It should be noticed that this questionnaire should be answered by the parent or the guardian who mostly contacts school about this child)

Please check if your are

1. Mother   2 .Father   3 .Uncle

4. Aunt   5. Grandfather   6. Grandmother

7. Other (please describe) _____.

Your age: _____

How do you describe your marital status?

1. Married   3.widowed

2. divorced   4. Separated

5. Single

How do you describe your education?

1. Did not complete high school   4.University degree

2. High School   5. Postgraduate (masters/PhD)

3. Diploma   6. Others please specify.......

What is your monthly income per year?

1. Less than 1000 Kuwaiti Dinars

2. 1000 – 1500 Kuwaiti Dinars

3. 1500- 2000 Kuwaiti Dinars

4. More than 2000 Kuwaiti Dinars

Job Status: 1.employed   2. Not employed   3.other (describe) _____

Q1. Parents get involved in different ways at school or at home. Please check the corresponding on the scale that describes what you have done this year.

Statements	Often	Some times	Rarely	Never
Often — I have been involved in this activity frequently this school year.				

Often   I have been involved in this activity frequently this school year.

Some times   I have been involved in this activity occasionally this school year.

Rarely   I have been involved in this activity rarely this school year.

Never   I have never been involved in this activity this school year.

I have been involved in the following activities:

Statements	Often	Some times	Rarely	Never
1. Talk to my child about what he/she is learning at school				
2. Help my child with homework				
3. Tell my child how important school is				
4. Set up a place and a time for my child to study at home.				
5. Talk to school personnel on the phone				
6. Attend parent-teacher conferences regularly				
7. Attend a lesson at my child's class				
8. Attend ceremonies and special events at school				
9. Ask the teacher for specific advice on how to help my child at home with home work.				
10. Talk with my child's teacher at school to discuss the progress of my child				
11. Volunteer in school when possible with activities that are related to my profession and talent				
12. Volunteer to help school with field trips and special events and ceremonies.				
13. Help with fundraising				
14. Participate in parents' boards and PTA meetings				
15. Participate in extracurricular activities (e.g. craft work, library aid) under the supervision of the teacher				
16. Talk, listen, and read to my child at home				
17. Teach my child to behave well and respect the teacher				
18. Check that my child's homework gets done regularly				
19. Talk to the teacher about the problems the child faces at home				
20. Help my child get ready for school (good nutrition, appropriate clothing, school materials)				
21. Participating in decision making roles at school.				

Q.2 Schools involve families in different ways. Please check the corresponding on the scale to tell us if this school has done these things.

DOES NOT DO   means the school does not do this

COULD DO BETTER   means the school does this but could do better

DOES WELL   means the school does this very well

Does not apply   means that this activity does not apply in my child school

My child's school:

Statement	Does not do	Could do better	Does well	Does not apply
1. Sends personal notes or memos about how my child is doing at school				
2. Tells me what learning experiences and skills my child needs to learn in each subject.				
3. Has parent-teacher conferences with me more than once a year				
4. Explains how to check my child's homework				
5. Runs weekly meetings with my child's teachers at an appropriate time				
6. Gives me information about how report card grades are earned				
7. Contacts me if my child is having problems				
8. Invites me to school events and programs				
9. Contacts me to let me know about my child's advancement at school				
10. Encourages me to volunteer at the school				
11. Asks me to help in fund raising				
12. Welcomes my suggestions and views for school improvement				
13. Allows me to participate in decision making (curriculum development and assessment)				
14. Allocates workshops to help me understand how to improve my child progress in school				
15. Assigns homework that requires parents to interact with children				
16. Suggests ways to practice some skills at home before a test				
17. Welcomes and encourages my involvement at school				
18. Has an active parents' boards and PTA				

Q.3 Difficulties can arise within and between family and school which may impede effective parental involvement. Please check the corresponding on the scale to indicate:

To what extent are these barriers may impede parental involvement in children's schooling?

Statement	Great extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all
1. parents' lack of time				
2. teachers' Lack of time and opportunities				
3.Languages differences between parents and teachers				
4. Time conflicts between parent work and school schedules				
5. The staff attitudes about the parents (e.g. feeling uneasy to work with parents)				
6. Lack of parent's knowledge to assist children with school work				
7. Lack of teacher's training to work with parents				
8. Fear of teachers' blame for being responsible for the child's failure				

Q.4 We would like to have your opinions and ideas

1. As a parent, how would you perceive that school could promote your involvement at home and school?

    ....
    ....
    ....

2. What kind of practices that mostly concern you to enhance your child achievement?

    ....
    ....
    ....

3. How do you think you could help your child with school related activities and homework?

    ....
    ....
    ....

4. If you are interested in decision-making, what types of decisions would you like to participate with your child's school?

    ....
    ....
    ....

Please use this space if you have any ideas or suggestions regarding parental involvement in schools

....
....
....

Thank you

Appendix I

Parental involvement research study questionnaire

(Arabic version)

دراسة استطلاعيه للتعرف على آراء اولياء الامور والمعلمين و مدراء المدارس حول طبيعة مشاركة اولياء الامور في مراحل رياض الاطفال والابتدائية في دولة الكويت

استبيان اولياء الامور

السادة اولياء الامور

هذه الدراسه هي جزء من رسالة الدكتوراه التي اقوم بها في جامعة نيوكاسل في بريطانيا. ان الغرض من هذه الدراسه هو التعرف على وجهات نظر اولياء الامور والمعلمين ومدراء المدرسه حول طبيعة مشاركة أولياء الامورفي تعليم اطفالهم في كل من مرحلة رياض الاطفال والابتداني سواء كان بالمنزل او المدرسة مثل الاتصال بالمدرسة، المشاركة بأنشطة المدرسة او التطوع بالمدرسة . ان استجاباتكم لهذا الاستبيان سيكون لها الاثر البالغ في مساعدتي في دراستي للتعرف على طبيعة العلاقه بين المدرسة والمنزل بالاضافة الى ذلك سوف تكون لديكم الفرصة للتعبير عن آرائكم وافكاركم لمواضيع هامه ذات صلة بتربية وتعليم الاطفال في المراحل المدرسيه الاولى. يرجى الاحاطة ان جميع الاستجابات سوف تستخدم لغرض البحث كما انها ستعامل بسريه و خصوصيه تامة.

في حال مشاركتكم في الاجابة على هذا الاستبيان يرجى قراءة التعليمات لكل سؤال بتمعن واخذ الوقت الكافي في التفكير قبل الاجابة عن كل سؤال.

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير لتعاونكم

الباحثه

<u>معلومات حول الطفل الذي احضر الاستبيان</u>

جنس الطفل   1- ذكر   2- أنثى

عمر الطفل: _____

الرجاء تحديد المرحلة الدراسيه لهذا الطفل:

مرحلة رياض الاطفال   1- المستوى الاول   2- المستوى الثاني

المرحلة الابتدائيه   3- السنه الاولى   4- السنه الثانيه   5- السنه الثالثه

عدد الاطفال في المنزل:_____

<u>معلومات حول المستجيب</u>

<u>يرجى الاحاطه انه يتوجب على من يجيب على هذه الاستبانه هو ولي الامر الذي يكون على اتصال دائم بمدرسة الطفل</u>

الرجاء الاختيار في حالة كونك

1- الام   2- الاب   3- العم/الخال   4- العمة/ الخالة   5-الجد   6-الجدة

7- أخرى، الرجاء التحديد: _____

العمر: _____

الحالة الاجتماعيه: 1- متزوح   2- مطلق   3- ارمل   4- منفصل   5- أعزب

أعلى شهاده علميه حصلت عليها:

1- لم اكمل الثانويه العامه   2- الثانويه العامه   3- دبلوم ما بعد الثانويه

4- الشهاده الجامعيه   5- دراسات عليا

6- أخرى، الرجاء التحديد:_____

ماهو معدل الدخل الشهري للاسرة؟

1-   أقل من 1000 دينار كويتي

2-   1000- 1500 دينار كويتي

3-   1500- 2000 دينار كويتي

4-   أكثر من 2000 دينار كويتي

الحالة الوظيفه: 1- موظف   2- غير موظف   3- أخرى:_____

أولا ً شارك الوالدين بطرق مختلفة في المدرسة أو في البيت، يرجى اختيار الإجابة التي تقع في النطاق الذي يصف ما قمت به هذا العام.

لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا 1-2 مرة في هذه السنة	أحيانا 3-4 هذه السنة	كثيرا اكثر من 4 مرات هذه السنة	العبارات
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	1. أتحدث مع طفلي عما يتعلمه في المدرسة
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	2. أساعد طفلي في واجباته اليومية
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	3. أحضر طفلي بأهمية المدرسة
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	4. أحدد وقت الدراسة لطفلي في البيت
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	5. أتحدث هاتفيا مع العاملين بمدرسة طفلي
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	6. أواصب على حضور اجتماع أولياء الأمور مع المدرس
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	7. أحضر حصة دراسية في فصل طفلي
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	8. أحضر الاحتفالات والبرامج المدرسية
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	9. أطلب من المعلمة بعض النصائح عن كيفية مساعدة طفلي في واجباته المنزلية
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	10. أتحدث مع معلمة طفلي في المدرسة للتعرف على تقدمه في الدراسة
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	11. أتطوع في المدرسة حينما يكون ذلك ممكنا في الأنشطة المرتبطة بمهنتي أو موهبتي
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	12. أتطوع لمساعدة المدرسة في الرحلات الميدانية والحفلات والمناسبات الخاصة
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	13. أساهم بالتبرعات للمدرسة (نقود-أجهزة-كتب-هدايا)
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	14. أشارك في اجتماعات مجالس الآباء/الامهات
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	15. أشارك في أنشطة المقررات الإضافية (مثل العمل المهني والمساعدة المكتبية) تحت إشراف المعلمين
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	16. أقرأ و أستمع لابني في البيت
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	17. أعلم طفلي السلوك الحسن واحترام المعلم.
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	18. أتأكد من قيام طفلي بأداء واجباته المدرسية
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	19. أتحدث مع المعلمة عن المشاكل التي يواجه ابني في البيت
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	20. أتأكد من استعداد طفلي لليوم المدرسي في الصباح (نعله جيدة وملابس ملائمة ومواد مدرسية)
لم يحدث مطلقا	نادرا	أحيانا	كثيرا	21. أشارك في اتخاذ القرارات المهمة في المدرسة

273

ثانيا: تقوم المدارس من خلال المعلمين والمعلمات باشراك الاسر فيما يختص بتعليم اطفالهم من خلال انشطه مختلفة، الرجاء اختيار الاجابة التي تصف لنا كيفية أداء المدرسة لهذه الانشطه.

لا تؤدبه: تعني المدرسه/المعلمة لا تؤدي هذا الشيء.

ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل : نعني أن المدرسة/المعلمة تقوم بهذا الشيء ولكنها لا تؤديه بشكل حسن

تؤديه بشكل حسن: نعني أن المدرسة/المعلمة تؤدي هذا الشيء بشكل حسن

لا ينطبق: نعني ان هذا النشاط لا ينطبق على طفلي في المدرسه

لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	العبارات
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	1.ترسل ملاحظات عن عمل ابني في المدرسة.
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	2. تزودني بالخبرات والمهارات الدراسية المطلوبة لابني لدراسة كل مادة.
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	3. تعد اجتماعات لأولياء الأمور مع المعلمين أكثر من مرة في السنة .
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	4.تساعدني في كيفية التحقق من مراجعة الواجبات المنزليه لطفلي
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	5. تخصص اجتماعات اسبوعية مع معلمي طفلي في وقت ملائم
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	6.تزودني بالمعلومات عن كيفية توزيع الدرجات لكل مادة
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	7. تتصل بي عندما يواجه طفلي مشاكل
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	8. توجه لي الدعوة لحضور فعاليات وبرامج في المدرسة
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	9. تتصل بي لتبلغني بأداء ابني في المدرسة.
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	10. تشجعني للعمل التطوعي في المدرسة.
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	11. تطلب مني المساعدة في التبرعات
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	12. ترحب باقتراحاتي وأرائي لتطوير المدرسة
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	13. تسمح لي بالمشاركة في اتخاذ القرارات (تطوير و تقييم المناهج-تقيم الطفل-الاختبارات)
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	14. توفر ورش عمل لمساعدتي في تطوير مستوى طفلي الدراسي
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	15. تعطي واجبات منزليه تتطلب من الوالدين التفاعل مع الأبناء
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	16. نقترح طرق لممارسة بعض المهارات في البيت قبل الاختبار 17.
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	17. ترحب المدرسة بمشاركتي وتشجعني على ذلك
لا ينطبق	تؤديه بشكل حسن	ممكن ان تؤديه بشكل افضل	لا تؤديه	18. لدها مجالس آباء/امهات فعالة ونشطة

274

ثالثاً: الواجب الرئيسي للمدرسة هو التعرف على العوائق التي تؤثر على مشاركة أولياء الأمور ومن ثم وضع الاستراتيجيات للتغلب على هذه التحديات.

يرجى اختيار الاجابة التي تصف الى اي مدى تؤثر هذه العوائق على مشاركة ولي الامر في تعليم الطفل في المدرسة او المنزل

لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	العبارات
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	1. قلة الوقت من جانب الوالدين(ظروف العمل-التزامات أخرى لا تسمح بحضور ولي الامر الى المدرسة)
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	2. قلة الوقت من جانب المدرسين(انشغال المدرسين بالحصص الدراسيه وعدم لديهم الوقت الكافي لمقابلة ولي الامر
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	3. الاختلاف في اللغه. (أحد الوالدين لا يتكلم اللغه العربية)
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	4. تعارض الوقت بين البرامج المدرسية وعمل الوالدين
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	5.موقف المدرسين من الوالدين (عدم الارتياح في التعامل مع اولياء الامور)
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	6. قلة معلومات الوالدين لمساعدة الابناء في الواجبات المدرسية
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	7. قلة تدريب المدرس للعمل مع الوالدين
لا تؤثر	بدرجة قليلة	بدرجة متوسطة	بدرجة كبيرة	8. الخوف من نقد المعلم فيما يختص بانخفاض الاداء المدرسي للطفل

275

رابعـــاً: الرجاء الاجابه على الاسئلة التاليه للاستفاده من افكاركم وآرائكم . يرجى استخدام خلف الـصفحه في حـال الاجابـات
المطوله مع ذكر رقم السؤال.

1. كولي أمر، كيف يمكن للمدرسة ان تشجع مشاركتك في البيت والمدرسة؟

2- برأيك ما هي اهم الممارسات او المشاركات المدرسية او المنزلية التي قد تساعد على تقدم طفلك في الدراسه؟

3-هل يمكنك ان تصف كيفية مساعدتك لطفلك في اداء الواجبات المدرسية؟

4- هل يوجد جوانب معينه قد ترغب بالمشاركه فيها في مجال اتخاذ القرارات في المدرسه في حالة اهتمامك بالمشاركة بهـذا النـوع
من النشاط؟

الرجاء استخدام الاسطر التاليه او خلف الصفحه اذا كان لديك اي افكار او اقتراحات اضـافية فيما يختص بأهمية مشـاركتك في تعليم
طفلك سواء في المدرسه او المنزل.

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير

276

Appendix J

Alpha coefficients for internal consistency reliability of the parent's questionnaire items

Table 7
Reliability Coefficients for parent's questionnaire (Alpha Coefficients)

Questionnaire scales	Number of items	Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability	
		Pilot testing	Current study
The First part	21	.733	.816
The second part	18	.823	.789
The third part	8	.698	.713

Appendix K

Factor analysis test, and factor items' ranking by factor loading and variance extracts

Table: 8
Factor's items ranking by factor loading and variance extracts

Factor name	Factor loading	Variance extracts
Factor 1 Q17- Help my child get ready for school. Q 20- Teach my child to behave well and respect the teacher.	.835 .571	29.109
Factor 2 Q24 -Set up a place and a time for my child to study at home. Q18 - Check that my child's homework gets done regularly. Q19 - Talk to the teacher about the problems the child face at home. Q3 - Tell my child how important is school	.765 .692 .570 .511	22.332
Factor 3 Q6- Attend parent-teacher conferences regularly. Q10- Talk with my child's teacher at school to discuss the progress of my child.	.855 .673	34.373
Factor 4 Q5- Contact school personnel on the phone. Q7- Attend a lesson at my child's class. Q8- Attend ceremonies and special events At school.	.731 .645 .506	20.701
Factor 5 Q12- Volunteer to help school with field trips. Q11- Volunteer in school when possible with activities related to my profession. Q15- Participate in extracurricular activities. Q13- Help with fundraising	.810 .751 .750 .650	55.123
Factor 6 Q16- Talk, listen, and read to my child at home. Q2- Help my child with homework. Q9- Ask the teacher for specific advice to help my child at home with home work. Q1- Talk to my child about what he/she is learning at school	.705 .690 .654 .652	45.619
Factor 7 Q14- Participate in PTA/PTO meetings Q21- Participating in decision making roles at school	.866 .866	75.037

280

Appendix L

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal- Wallis Tests for Factor 1 and the six family background factors

Table 9

Factor 1: Parents' supervision of children's readiness and behavior by family background factors

Factor 1: Parents' supervision of children's readiness and behavior						
Demographic Variables		No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Number of children	1	25	3.3748	.53537	.991	N/S
	2	76	3.3516	.57476		
	3	131	3.3521	.53172		
	4	104	3.3363	.51721		
	5	65	3.3551	.42989		
	6+	23	3.3777	.40568		
Total		424	3.3513	.51333		
Child School Level	KG1	60	3.1513	.65488	.000	S
	KG 2	109	3.1188	.56475		
	Primary1	95	3.4754	.35633		
	Primary2	68	3.4634	.46928		
	Primary3	98	3.5418	.35867		
Total		430	3.3530	.51342		
Parent	Mother	405	3.3701	.50492	.001	S
	Father	23	3.0051	.54722		
Total		428	3.3505	.51326		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	3.1164	.66080	.006	S
	Diploma	116	3.3223	.51034		
	University or higher	262	3.4122	.46898		
Total		429	3.3527	.51399		
Family monthly income	Less than 1000	95	3.4067	.54466	.430	N/S
	1000-1500	212	3.3510	.48338		
	1500-2000	100	3.3333	.52029		
	More than 2000	23	3.2348	.62026		
Total		430	3.3530	.51342		
Employment status	Employed	405	3.3610	.51762	.046	S
	Unemployed	25	3.2230	.42789		
Total		430	3.3530	.51342		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)

Appendix M

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal- Wallis Tests for Factor 2 and the six family background factors

Table 10
Factor 2: Parents' support of children's home learning environment by family background factors

Factor 2: Parents' support of children's learning home environment						
Demographic Variables		No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Child School Level	KG1	60	3.9199	.22462	.767	N/S
	KG 2	109	3.9248	.21371		
	Primary1	95	3.9411	.23107		
	Primary2	68	3.9530	.15476		
	Primary3	98	3.9287	.19273		
Total		430	3.9331	.20591		
Number of children	1	25	3.9039	.20097	.407	N/S
	2	76	3.9526	.18162		
	3	131	3.9329	.22782		
	4	104	3.9366	.20870		
	5	65	3.9108	.20292		
	6+	23	3.9480	.17242		
Total		424	3.9331	.20660		
Parent	Mother	405	3.9373	.20395	.004	S
	Father	23	3.8521	.23513		
Total		428	3.9328	.20634		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	3.9216	.18745	.294	N/S
	Diploma	116	3.9569	.15756		
	University or higher	262	3.9247	.22623		
Total		429	3.9331	.20542		
Family monthly income	Less than 1000	95	3.9222	.24942	.476	N/S
	1000-1500	212	3.9415	.18342		
	1500-2000	100	3.9341	.20680		
	More than 2000	23	3.8956	.20772		
Total		430	3.9331	20591		
Employment status	Employed	405	3.9334	.20799	.506	N/S
	Unemployed	25	3.9279	.17222		
Total		430	3.9331	.20591		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)

Appendix N

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal- Wallis Tests for Factor 3 and the six family background factors

Table 11
Factor 3: Parent-teacher communication and family background factors

Factor 3 : Parent-teacher communication						
Demographic Variables		No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Child Grade Level	KG1	59	3.3364	.76530	.044	S
	KG 2	109	3.3221	.61257		
	Primary1	95	3.5081	.64849		
	Primary2	68	3.4081	.65134		
	Primary3	98	3.5069	.57243		
Total		429	3.4211	.64341		
Number of children	1	25	3.3329	.78389	.611	N/S
	2	75	3.4517	.51823		
	3	131	3.5226	.54257		
	4	104	3.3315	.76883		
	5	65	3.3513	.71122		
	6+	23	3.4643	.52521		
Total		423	3.4224	.64401		
Parent	Mother	404	3.4267	.65027	.087	N/S
	Father	23	3.2728	.50370		
Total		427	3.4184	64369		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	3.3284	.73011	.707	N/S
	Diploma	116	3.4271	.65166		
	University or higher	261	3.4382	.62326		
Total		428	3.4221	.64384		
Family monthly income	Less than 1000	95	3.3847	.75939	.411	N/S
	1000-1500	211	3.4762	.57643		
	1500-2000	100	3.3860	.63952		
	More than 2000	23	3.2190	.70321		
Total		429	3.4211	.64341		
Employment status	Employed	404	3.4289	.63571	.527	N/S
	Unemployed	25	3.2957	.76101		
Total		429	3.4211	.64341		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)

Appendix O

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal- Wallis Tests for Factor 4 and the six family background factors

Table 12
Factor 4: Parent-school communication by family background factors

Factor 4 : Parent-school communication						
Demographic Variables		No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Child School Level	KG1	60	2.5550	.69484	.013	S
	KG 2	108	2.3652	.64286		
	Primary1	94	2.1818	.60746		
	Primary2	68	2.2390	.60302		
	Primary3	98	2.2448	.58935		
Total		428	2.3039	.63337		
Number of children	1	25	2.5301	.81030	.040	S
	2	76	2.4716	.67504		
	3	130	2.2609	.58582		
	4	104	2.2538	.66080		
	5	65	2.1461	.52319		
	6+	23	2.3632	.57885		
Total		423	2.3009	.63411		
Parent	Mother	404	2.3168	.61926	.039	S
	Father	22	2.0681	.85804		
Total		426	2.3009	.63486		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	2.3953	2.3953	.699	N/S
	Diploma	115	2.2752	2.2752		
	University or higher	261	2.3014	2.3014		
Total		427	2.3055	.63323		
Family monthly income	Less than 1000	95	2.3951	.74241	.417	N/S
	1000-1500	210	2.2651	.57586		
	1500-2000	100	2.3188	.60328		
	More than 2000	23	2.2168	.76412		
Total		428	2.3039	.63337		
Employment status	Employed	403	2.3041	.63754	.933	N/S
	Unemployed	25	2.3015	.57374		
Total		428	2.3039	.63337		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)

Appendix P

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis Tests for Factor 5 and the six family background factors

Table 13

Factor 5: Parent-school help and volunteering by family background factors

Factor 5 : Parent-school help and volunteer						
Demographic Variables		No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Child School Level	KG1	60	2.0937	.88247	.000	S
	KG 2	109	1.7985	.67897		
	Primary1	95	1.5385	.66785		
	Primary2	67	1.5054	.54506		
	Primary3	98	1.6035	.60908		
Total		429	1.6919	.69965		
Number of children	1	25	2.0774	.94862	.000	S
	2	76	1.9670	.71901		
	3	130	1.5700	.63878		
	4	104	1.6192	.70085		
	5	65	1.5318	.52152		
	6+	23	1.8856	.75293		
Total		423	1.6947	.70198		
Parent	Mother	404	1.6912	.69350	.823	N/S
	Father	23	1.7356	.83564		
Total		427	1.6936	.70081		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	1.6178	.70072	.554	N/S
	Diploma	116	1.7447	.75137		
	University or higher	261	1.6835	.67765		
Total		428	1.6922	.70044		
Family monthly income	Less than 1000	95	1.7485	.78509	.913	N/S
	1000-1500	212	1.6475	.65159		
	1500-2000	100	1.7368	.71818		
	More than 2000	22	1.6709	.68985		
Total		429	1.6919	.69965		
Employment status	Employed	404	1.7041	.70738	.160	N/S
	Unemployed	25	1.4945	.53320		
Total		429	1.6919	.69965		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)

Appendix Q

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis Tests for Factor 6 and the six family background factors

Table 14

Factor 6: Parents' role in assisting their children's school education by family background factors

Factor 6 : Parents' role in assisting their children's school education						
Demographic	Variables	No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Child School Level	KG1	60	3.2942	.59153	.000	S
	KG 2	109	3.1639	.51416		
	Primary1	95	3.5463	.38663		
	Primary2	68	3.4764	.42268		
	Primary3	98	3.4471	.42082		
Total		430	3.3805	.48672		
Number of children	1	25	3.3373	.64758	.623	N/S
	2	76	3.4419	.46519		
	3	131	3.3424	.51172		
	4	104	3.4013	.48779		
	5	65	3.3485	.39072		
	6+	23	3.4703	.45864		
Total		424	3.3823	.48637		
Parent	Mother	405	3.3990	.47222	.001	S
	Others	23	3.0137	.59516		
Total		428	3.3783	.48662		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	3.2820	.62110	.053	N/S
	Diploma	116	3.3162	.46835		
	University or higher	262	3.4268	.46087		
Total		429	3.3797	.48694		
Family monthly income	Less then 1000	95	3.4423	.53978	.235	N/S
	1000-1500	212	3.3498	.48316		
	1500-2000	100	3.3810	.46531		
	More then 2000	23	3.4065	.36740		
Total		430	3.3805	.48672		
Employment status	Employed	405	3.3900	.49232	.034	S
	Unemployed	25	3.2276	.35863		
Total		430	3.3805	.48672		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)

Appendix R

Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis Tests for Factor 7 and the six family background factors

Table 15
Factor 7: Parent-school involvement in decision-making by family background factors

Factor 7 : Parent-school involvement in decision making						
Demographic Variables		No.	Means	Standard deviation	P. Value	Significance
Child School Level	KG1	60	2.1000	1.10392	.302	N/S
	KG 2	109	1.7661	.99436		
	Primary1	95	1.7789	.88941		
	Primary2	68	1.6912	.86400		
	Primary3	98	1.7908	.91641		
Total		430	1.8093	.95452		
Number of children	1	25	2.3600	1.26260	.035	S
	2	76	2.0263	.98622		
	3	131	1.7061	.90271		
	4	104	1.7115	.87493		
	5	65	1.7231	.90584		
	6+	23	1.9348	1.05856		
Total		424	1.8184	.95714		
Parent	Mother	405	1.8025	.94881	.356	N/S
	Others	23	2.0000	1.06600		
Total		428	1.8131	.95514		
Parent's education	High school or below	51	1.0373	.58275	.166	N/S
	Diploma	116	1.2272	.65405		
	University or higher	262	1.1515	.59581		
Total		429	1.1584	.61168		
Family monthly income	Less than 1000	95	2.0579	1.06906	.008	S
	1000-1500	212	1.7948	.88784		
	1500-2000	100	1.6350	.94510		
	More than 2000	23	1.6739	.93673		
Total		430	1.8093	.95452		
Employment status	Employed	405	1.8111	.95544	.817	N/S
	Unemployed	25	1.7800	.95830		
Total		430	1.8093	.95452		

Note 1 (Level of significance= 5%)