

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF
LEARNERS IN RURAL NAMIBIA**

by

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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I, Miriam Ndalilashiwa Hamunyela, declare that the thesis which I hereby submit for the degree PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR in Adult education and Community Development at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary education institution.

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

Signed:

Date: 31 March 2008

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late sister, Martha Ndapewoshali Hamunyela.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

	Page
INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIM OF STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	6
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	8
1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	11
1.5 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY	12
1.5.1 Conceptual clarifications	12
1.5.1.1 Critical analysis	13
1.5.1.2 Academic education	13
1.5.1.3 Home-school partnership	14
1.5.1.4 Involvement	14
1.5.1.5 Communication	15
1.5.1.6 Participation	15
1.5.1.7 Presence	15
1.5.1.8 Relationship	16
1.5.1.9 Co-operation	16
1.5.1.10 Support	17
1.5.1.11 Rural	17
1.5.1.12 Professional educator	17
1.5.1.13 Parent	17
1.5.2 Theoretical framework underpinning the investigation	18
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	19
1.6.1 Data collection strategies	19

1.6.2 Data analysis	19
1.6.2.1 Analysis of Phase 1 data: quantitative study	19
1.6.2.2 Analysis of Phase 2 data: qualitative study	20
1.6.3 Research population and sampling	20
1.6.3.1 Sampling for Phase 1 of the study	21
1.6.3.2 Sampling for Phase 2 of the study	21
1.7 CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE STUDY	21
1.7.1 Ethical considerations	21
1.7.2 Delimitations	23
1.7.3 Limitations	23
1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	24

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	26
2.1 INTRODUCTION	26
2.2 EXPOSITION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	27
2.3 CRITICAL AND ECO-SYSTEMIC THEORIES AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	29
2.4 CULTURAL CAPITAL: A DETERMINANT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	34
2.5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IN THE PARENT-SCHOOL SYSTEM	35
2.6 FOUNDATIONS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	37
2.7 IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	39
2.8 INDICATORS OF THE PRACTICE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	41

2.9	CHALLENGES AND COMMON BARRIERS ASSOCIATED WITH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS	51
2.10	CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE AND SILENCES IN THE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE BASE ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	53
2.11	CONCLUSION	57
 CHAPTER 3		
	RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, AND RESULTS OF PHASE 1: QUANTITATIVE STUDY	59
3.1	INTRODUCTION	59
3.2	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	59
3.3	PROPOSITIONS	60
3.4	RESEARCH DESIGN: QUANTITATIVE STUDY	61
3.4.1	Methodology	64
3.4.1.1	The research population and consecutive sampling	65
3.4.1.2	Development of the questionnaire	66
3.4.1.3	Pilot application of the draft questionnaire	68
3.4.1.4	Application of the questionnaire	68
3.5	DATA ANALYSIS	69
3.5.1	Frequency analysis	69
3.6	RESULTS OF PHASE 1 OF THE STUDY: QUANTITATIVE	70
3.6.1	Sample return	70
3.6.2	Section A: Demographic profile of the professional educators and rural lower primary schools who participated in the investigation	73
3.6.3	Section B: Rural lower primary schools' practices of parental involvement	77
3.6.3.1	Professional educators' perceptions of schools' climate to parental involvement	77

3.6.3.2 Professional educators’ perceptions of schools’ provision for parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement	78
3.6.3.3 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools make use of community resources	79
3.6.3.4 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools provide parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities	79
3.6.3.5 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools make use of communication options	80
3.6.3.6 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools involve parents in decision making and power sharing activities	82
3.6.4 Section C: Rural lower primary schools’ attitudes towards parental involvement	82
3.6.4.1 Professional educators’ sentiments towards parental involvement	82
3.6.4.2 Professional educators’ opinions regarding parental involvement	84
3.6.5 Section D: Barriers to parental involvement in rural lower primary schools	84
3.6.5.1 Professional educators’ indications of barriers to parental involvement that are experienced at their schools	84
3.6.6 Interpretation of the results of phase 1 of the study: quantitative	86
3.6.7 Identification of the rural lower primary schools with high, intermediate and low parental involvement	90
3.7 CONCLUSION	93

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS OF PHASE 2: QUALITATIVE STUDY	95
4.1 INTRODUCTION	95
4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE STUDY	95
4.2.1 Data collection procedure	96
4.2.1.1 Sampling	96
4.2.1.2 Data collection strategy: interviews	97
4.2.1.3 Pilot application of the draft interviews	98
4.2.1.4 Conducting the interviews	98
4.2.1.5 Recording techniques	100
4.2.1.6 Keeping field notes	100
4.2.2 Data analysis process	100
4.2.3 Validity of the qualitative study	102
4.2.4 Construction of the interview schedules	103
4.2.5 Content validation (Authenticity) of the interview schedule	103
4.3 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: QUALITATIVE STUDY	104
4.3.1 Description of communities in which the rural lower primary schools are situated	105
4.3.2 Rural lower primary schools' practice of high, intermediate and low parental involvement	106
4.3.2.1 Rural lower primary schools' practice of positive climate to parental involvement	106
4.3.2.2 Rural lower primary schools' practice of provision for parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement	107

4.3.2.3 Rural lower primary schools’ practice of the use of community resources	109
4.3.2.4 Rural lower primary schools’ practice of the provision of opportunities for technical support for classroom activities to parents	110
4.3.2.5 Rural lower primary schools’ practice of the use of communication options	111
4.3.2.6 Rural lower primary schools’ practice of involvement of parents in decision-making and power- sharing activities	112
4.3.3 Rural lower primary schools’ attitudes towards parental involvement on a high, intermediate and low level	113
4.3.4 Professional educators’ perceptions regarding parental involvement in academic education of learners in rural lower primary schools	114
4.3.5 Professional educators’ perceptions of the schools and parents’ roles and responsibilities regarding parental involvement in rural lower primary schools	116
4.3.6 Professional educators’ reports of barriers to parental involvement that were experienced at their rural lower primary schools	118
4.3.7 The strategies used by rural lower primary schools in dealing with the barriers to parental involvement	121
4.3.8 Parental involvement activities and strategies which are relevant to learners’ academic education but not compatible with the current rural conditions in Namibia	122
4.3.9 How parents support rural lower primary schools for the academic education of their children	123
4.3.10 Parents’ report on the reasons and impact of their support for rural lower primary schools in the academic education of their children	125
4.3.11 Parents’ experiences of difficulties in the process of parental involvement	126
4.3.12 What parents would like to be allowed to do for the promotion of their good relationship with professional educators in rural lower	

primary schools	128
4.4 INTEGRATION AND COMPARISON OF THE FINDINGS OF HIGH, INTERMEDIATE AND LOW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS	129
4.5 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FINDINGS OF PHASE 2 OF THE STUDY: QUALITATIVE	132
4.5.1 Interpretations of the findings of rural lower primary schools with high parental involvement	132
4.5.2 Interpretations of the findings of rural lower primary schools with intermediate parental involvement	135
4.5.3 Interpretations of the findings of rural lower primary schools with low parental involvement	137
4.5.4 Reports by professional educators and parents of barriers and difficulties that were experienced in the process of parental involvement practice at their school	140
4.6 CONCLUSION	141
 CHAPTER 5	
 CONCLUSION, CRITICAL REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	142
 5.1 INTRODUCTION	142
5.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW	145
5.2.1 Perceptions about parental involvement	145
5.2.2 Critical and Ecological Theories and parental involvement	145
5.2.3 Cultural and social capital and the importance of parental involvement	146
5.2.4 Foundations of parental involvement	147
5.2.5 Indicators of parental involvement	147
5.2.6 Challenges and common barriers associated with parental	

involvement in rural schools	148
5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY	148
5.3.1 Summary of the results of the quantitative study	149
5.3.2 Summary of the findings of the qualitative study	152
5.3.3 Propositions	156
5.3.4 Attainment of aim and objectives	157
5.4 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS	159
5.4.1 The study’s contribution to the existing knowledge base of parental involvement in rural lower primary schools	159
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	163
5.6 LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY	167
5.7 FUTURE RESEARCH	169
5.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	170
BIBLIOGRAPHY	174
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	
TABLE 2.1 Model of the factors and their indicators describing parental involvement	45
TABLE 3.1 The major typologies of the study design and key steps reflecting on the research process	63
TABLE 3.2 Schools from which questionnaires were received	71
TABLE 3.3 Demographic profile of the professional educators	74
TABLE 3.4 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools provide parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement	78
TABLE 3.5 Professional educators’ perceptions of the extent to which schools make use of communication options	81
TABLE 3.6 Description of professional educators’ sentiments towards parental involvement	83

TABLE 3.7 Barriers to parental involvement that are experienced at rural lower primary schools	85
TABLE 3.8 Parental involvement practice scores per school	91
TABLE 3.9 Schools selected for phase 2 (qualitative) of the study	93
TABLE 4.1 The biographical data of professional educators interviewed	98
TABLE 4.2 The biographical data of parents interviewed	99
TABLE 4.3 Barriers to parental involvement and their causes experienced by high parental involvement schools	119
TABLE 4.4 Barriers to parental involvement and their causes experienced by intermediate parental involvement schools	119
TABLE 4.5 Barriers to parental involvement and their causes experienced by low parental involvement schools	120
TABLE 4.6 Difficulties experienced by parents in the process of parental involvement	128
FIGURE 3.1 Professional educators' perceptions of schools' climate to parental involvement	77
FIGURE 3.2 Professional educators' perceptions of how schools provide parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities	80
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Consent form for professional educators and parents	186
Appendix B: Permission letter from the regional director	187
Appendix C: School principal and teacher survey on practice of parental involvement in learners' academic education	189
Appendix D: Statistics of schools in Ohangwena Region	196
Appendix E: Interview questions for professional educators and parents/ family members	206

Appendix F: Qualitative data analysis	210
Appendix G: Objectives of the interview questions	217



KEY WORDS

Critical analysis

Academic education

Involvement

Communication

Participation

Relationship

Support

Rural

Professional educator

Parent

SUMMARY

The role of parents in the education of learners as well as the relationships between and amongst parents and professional educators has long been of interest to researchers and practitioners at all levels of public and private education. The consistent findings that the involvement of parents positively influences educational quality and learners' academic achievement are well documented. However, the findings also concluded that parental involvement is difficult to implement in rural schools and its practices are more likely to take root in schools that serve urban and suburban populations than in schools that serve rural and low-income populations. Moreover, in most schools where parental involvement is functional, parents are more involved in non-academic activities than academic activities. Against this background, it can be stated that there is insufficient empirical research-based information on whether and how parental involvement in academic education of learners can be practised in economically distressed contexts, especially in Namibia. Therefore, the current study intended to critically analyse whether and how do professional educators and parents of rural lower primary schools in Namibia perceive, think about and practise involvement in the academic education of learners.

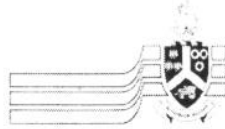
The framework of this study is based on Critical and Ecological Theories. The Ecological Theory regards both parents and schools as valuable contributors to children's learning. The critical theory claims that there is no absolute knowledge that people can grasp. All people encounter are opinions. Hence, this study challenged a long held ideal and belief of the capitalist culture in regard to positioning activities, and knowledge and resources of poor families as subordinate.

The study employed a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodological research designs. A survey about professional educators' perceptions on parental involvement was sent to 205 schools (of which 87 responded) to collect quantitative data for Phase 1 of the study. Frequency analysis was done to identify the meaning of the quantitative data. The analysis of quantitative data grouped schools into 3 groups (high, intermediate and low) according to their levels of practising parental involvement. Six schools (2 per group) were selected for Phase 2 of the study. Interviews were conducted among 18 professional educators and 12 parents of the six schools to collect qualitative data on their perspectives, attitudes and practices of parental involvement. Content analysis was made use of to explore meaningful aspects and indicators of parental involvement in lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region.

The following indicators revealed by the professional educators' and parents' reported experiences of parental involvement practice qualify the researched schools to be regarded as demonstrating parental involvement in learners' academic education: conducive climate and respectful relationship; provision of educational opportunities to parents; use of community resources; provision of opportunities for technical support to parents; use of various and possible communication options; power sharing with parents and encouraging them to actively participate in decision-making bodies; and professional educators' positive attitude towards involvement.

ACRONYMS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BETS:	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
ETP:	Educational Theory and Practice
HIV:	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
MBESC:	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MEC:	Ministry of Education and Culture
MHETEC:	Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation
MIB:	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
SWA:	South West Africa
WCER:	Wisconsin Centre for Educational Research



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16 March 2007

APPROVED

This ethical clearance is valid for a period of 3 years and may be renewed upon application

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE Dr S Human-Vogel

DATE 19 March 2007

CC Dr C J G Bender
Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for permission and informed consent are kept for future queries.

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