

THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN
FORMAL EDUCATION AT HIGH SCHOOLS IN
MOHALE'S HOEK DISTRICT OF LESOTHO

by

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Declaration

This is to declare that the study which I hereby submit for the degree of Magister Education, titled, “THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN FORMAL EDUCATION AT HIGH SCHOOLS IN MOHALE’S HOEK DISTRICT OF LESOTHO” is a product of my own efforts and has not been previously submitted at any university for a degree purpose. The sources have been indicated so as to acknowledge other researchers’ work.



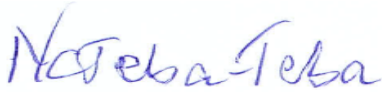
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Certification

I, Nthabiseng Clementina Teba-Teba, hereby certify that I applied and got permission from Central University of Technology, Free State to undertake M.Ed research under the supervision of Professor Alfred Henry Makura. The title of my dissertation is: “The influence of parental involvement in formal education at high schools in Mophale’s Hoek District of Lesotho.”



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Abstract

This study explored the influence of parental involvement in formal education at selected Lesotho high school, in the Mhale's Hoek District. A qualitative research design was adopted. A sample of nineteen participants, comprising of a school principal, six educators, six parents and six learners was interviewed on their perceptions of the influence of parental involvement in formal education. The sample was purposively selected as it was adjudged information rich. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the principal, educators and parents. Focus group interviews with learners were also carried out. All interviews were conducted on the school premises of one school. Data were analysed using the thematic approach. The results of the study showed that learners' performance improved in situations where there is teamwork between educators and parents. Parental involvement develops the relationship between all the parties involved in learners' education in high schools in the Mhale's Hoek district. However, some parents were still not aware of their responsibility in their children's formal education. The study recommends that parents be supported for them to be involved in their children's education. They could also be capacitated in learning strategies on how to work with educators, learners and the community at large. The study implores government to strengthen the policy on parental involvement in formal education at high schools.

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List of acronyms

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

COSC – Cambridge Overseas School Certificate

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

LCE – Lesotho College of Education

MOET – Ministry of Education and Training

NCDC – National Curriculum Development Centre

NUL - National University of Lesotho

PTA – Parent Teacher Associations

PTO – Parent Teacher Organisations

US – United States

USA – United States of America

SB – School Boards

SDC – School Development Committee

SGB – School Governing Bodies

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXUALISATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 The Introduction

The broad study sought to establish the influence of parental involvement in the formal education of children in the Mhale's Hoek District in Lesotho. This chapter introduces the study. It discusses the background of the study from a regional, continental and international perspective. The intention was to examine the best practices from these different areas and find how these could be accustomed to enhance parental involvement at Mhale's Hoek high schools, in Lesotho. The chapter outlines the statement of the research problem, and the aim and objectives of the study. Finally, the purpose and significance of the study and its delimitation as well as limitations are described in this chapter.

Decades of global research and studies indicate that there is increasing evidence that the quality of links between parents and schools influences the nature of learners' success at school (Cox-Peterson 2011:8; Weiss, Lopez, Kreider and Chatman-Nelson 2014:xx; Carpenter, Egerton, Cockbill, Bloom, Fotheringham, Ranson and Thistlewaite 2015:89;). Evidence suggests that active parental involvement in schools is a critical factor in achieving a learner's educational success at all grade levels (Hiatt-Michael 2004:17; Hiatt-Michael 2008:99; Mccallum 2007:102; Beckley, Elvidge and Hendry 2009:64; Brown, Hilukilua and Kambonde 2014:325). Extant studies confirm that parents care about their children, but need good and clear information from educators in order to remain involved in their children's education from pre-school to high school (Epstein and Sheldon 2006:128; Hiatt-Michael 2010:59; Weiss, Lopez, Kreider and Chatman-Nelson 2014:xxii; Carpenter et al 2015:87). Thus parental involvement is important for the principal, educators, learners and the parents themselves.

Parental involvement in formal education helps to improve learners' overall attitude towards school in a number of tangible ways (Christenson and Reschly 2010:158). Antonopoulou, Koutrouba and Babalis (2011:333), Njeru (2015:368) and Forster and Grigsby (2015:1807) observe that the involvement of parents leads to an increase in

learners' attendance, improvement in learner attitudes and reduces occurrences of learner misbehaviour. Parental involvement also reduces the overall dropout rate for learners and increases the likelihood of learners engaging in further studies (Hiatt-Michael 2008:87). It is recognised that the inevitable growth in age of the learners compels older educators and peers to play a more important role in their learning. However, this entrance and rise to importance of adults and peers should not signal the end of the parents' involvement in formal education. Therefore, parents have a profound effect in their children's needs, especially the social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual, and educational growth (Comer 2005:123; Price-Mitchell 2009:87).

Most parents play an important role in their children's education in the home environment and are the first educators of learners (Beckley, Elvidge and Hendry 2009:64; Carpenter *et al.* 2015:81; Mutasa, Goronga and Gatsi 2013:22). Parents are indeed aware of their children's strengths and weaknesses and this enables them to assist in the improvement of their children's performance in formal education (Anderson and Minke 2007:317). Each family teaches its child on family and community norms and values from an early stage. Informal learning takes place before children are sent to schools and thus, gives way to formal education (Carpenter *et al.* 2015:81). As a result, formal education is less likely to be effective without a strong partnership between the parents and schools (Gingberg 2009:170).

Olsen and Fuller (2012:131), Todd (2007:65) and Omoteso (2010:262), noted that parent involvement at home is multi faceted. It is composed of numerous activities including the ways in which parents can get involved with their children's homework and the extent to which reading is modeled and encouraged at home. Parental involvement also involves the socialisation practices that parents use (Mutasa *et al.* 2013:22). It consists of the way in which parents manage their children's time use and provide them with access to educational resources. Through their involvement at home, parents support their children's learning by teaching them knowledge and skills, reinforcing school learning and fostering respect for education (Carpenter *et al.* 2015:87). Children's formal education is also supported by promoting cooperative behaviour, sparking motivation, and developing work habits and interest. Providing

enrichment activities that underlie, extend, and supplement academic knowledge is another way of showing support to children (Hiatt-Michael 2010:57). Therefore, there are various ways in which parents can get involved in the learners' education at the home front.

Children acquire knowledge by watching other people and participating in activities with them. They however, seem to consider their parents as their first role models (Miller 2011:236). Children do not have prior knowledge or skills and learn everything by imitating their parents' behaviour. They learn how to behave by watching how their fathers and mothers behave and following their example. According to social learning theory (Bandura (1986) in Miller 2011:236), children learn by watching other people rather than through overt, trial and error behaviour. They simply learn by observing because their minds are structured by the environment, and by the models and social training practices the environment provides (Bandura 1977:183, in Crain 2011:216). Therefore, children need to be motivated and assisted by parents in order for them to learn.

In most cases, children are more attracted to things that their parents do and say. They reproduce the behaviour they would have seen from their parents and other people (Miller 2011:237). Much of children's learning comes from observing their role models, peers, educators, and parents. Role models are particularly likely to be imitated because they are perceived as having a high status, competence and power (Bandura, (1985) in Miller 2011:236). Therefore, parents need to be aware of the role they play in their children's growth and education at the social and emotional development level. Thus, parents are encouraged to realise that their children learn from observing specific behaviour.

The current culture of schools, dating back from history, has been to take learners away from their homes in order for them to be educated by professionals. The door between home and school was usually firmly closed (Wolfendale and Bastian 2004:54). Countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), Japan, Greece and South Africa, however, take the issue of family participation in children's education very serious. According to Sheppard (2009:104), the UK government has over the last ten

years developed policies to improve school attendance and performance and has tried to make legislations that make school attendance a parental responsibility. This could be of help as parents may feel the need to engage in children's education. In the case of Japan, the parents' traditional role has been one of support and less of active involvement in school learning. However, the government's commencement of education reforms in the last quarter of the 20th century has encouraged a more active role for parents in education (Knipprath 2004: 95). As a result of this, Japan is showing a considerable increase of family participation in children's education.

The South African case has legislation, such as the South African Schools Act (1997), which creates expectations for parents' active participation as partners in school governance. The South African government is trying hard to reverse the historical separation of home and school, in which parents show low attendance at most parents' meetings. Parents' lack of involvement in fundraising projects and that of interest in their children's school work and homework is indicative of their hesitancy in taking part in children's formal education. The government is concerned with the fact that most parents do not participate meaningfully in their children's education. Therefore, it devised comprehensive measures to raise standards that enhance parental support, involvement and obligation to participate in their children's education (Menstry and Grobler 2007:167).

Lesotho, like other countries worldwide is not an exception in this regard. Parents are continuously encouraged, by the Minister of Education and Training, to be involved in their children's learning in high schools. The government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), invites parents to take part in their children's education, mostly as Board members, as promulgated through the Education Order No. 4 of 1970, Education Act No. 10 of 1995(MOET 1995:961), Section 23 (a) and (b)and the present Act No. 3 of 2010. The Education Act No. 3, Section 23 (1) of 2010 calls for parental involvement in children's formal education by allowing them to participate in school governance and management through School Board of Governance (MOET 2010:678). Thus, the 2010 Education Act and others from previous years recognised the need for learners to be supported and

acknowledged the effective role that can be played by parents in assisting their children to realise their potential.

1.2 Background to the study

There exist barriers that may hinder parental involvement in school activities (Mashburn and Pianta 2006:160). Most parents in the rural areas of Lesotho are illiterate or did not complete their secondary education. They, therefore, undervalue themselves and their potential to offer assistance where it is needed (Letsie 1998:168). In addition, a majority of the few educated people living in the rural areas of Lesotho are educators, which sometimes makes these educators to think that they are better than any other person within their areas. This attitude may make parents feel inferior (Mcube 2009:94; Msila 2012:305) and consequently stop them from cooperating with educators (Letsie 1998: 172). Another barrier that prevents parents and schools from working closely together is the practice of directly or indirectly telling parents either to leave teaching and learning to the school or educators on the grounds that the parents' level of education would be too low (Wolfendale and Bastiani 2004:54; Shumba, Rembe and Pumla 2014:458). These and many other barriers prevent parents and schools from working closely together for the betterment of learners' success (Brown et al. 2014:326; Dennis, Rosen and Patel 2015:37)

The introduction of the Acts alluded to in the introductory section has resulted in a number of initiatives meant at encouraging high schools to involve parents and convince them to engage more with their children's formal education. The Lesotho MOET, through the National Curriculum Development Centre's (NCDC 2008: x-xi) 2008 curriculum policy for high school programmes, requires parents to participate in school activities by acting as resource people in support of their children's schooling. Educators acknowledge that parents have special talents, skills and knowledge on issues, such as culture which is part of the syllabus that can promote learners' academic performance and culture. Hence, parents' experience and knowledge enables them to teach their children various subjects such as cultural topics including traditional food, dance, songs, how young people are expected to behave according to their culture and everything regarding culture (Monaheng 2008:74).

Educators can also learn more about culture from parents if they work hand in hand with knowledgeable parents. The Sesotho syllabus' component on culture, consists of 'Mekhoa le Meetlo ea Sesotho' (Traditional Basotho Culture), which is somehow difficult for learners. As a result, parental involvement can help young educators to acquire knowledge and skills on culture from parents and impart it to the learners in class (MOET 2008: xii). It is, therefore, of vital importance to involve parents in school activities and programmes. Most parents are still not involved in their children's formal education, even though the importance of parental involvement in formal education has been noted as highly valuable (Mestry and Grobler 2007:177). These parents continue to distance themselves from the education of their children. It seems that the phenomenon of parental involvement has not been clearly communicated to many parents, especially those who have children at the high school level in Lesotho. Most parents of high school children send their children to school with no intention of being part of the children's learning. Such parents' perception of involvement is limited to buying school uniform, and paying the children's fees and fares for school trips. The usual practice in many high schools is that parents should come to school quarterly to collect their children's progress reports, but only a few parents fulfill this expectation. A majority of the children's reports at the school where the research was being carried out are still in the school office, thus showing the level of limited parental involvement there. Parents only go to school when their children have problems, or when they are called to parents' meetings, and yet not all respond positively to this call to meetings (Letsie 1998:198). It is therefore essential for the school to make parents aware of the need to get involved in their children education as this contributes greatly towards their children's academic work.

1.3The Statement of the Research Problem

Lesotho, as a country with a low population of approximately 2,000,000 can be affected economically by having few learners who successfully complete their studies (Ministry of Finance 2007:223).Parents in Lesotho have diverse abilities, talents and experiences that grant them the opportunity to involve themselves in their children's formal education. A majority of these parents seem to continue to distance themselves

from school activities, such as parents' meetings, assisting children with homework, cultural activities and sports. This is despite the initiatives made by the Ministry of Education and Training and the high schools to involve parents since 1970. However, there is evidence in a few schools that some parents seem to be interested in their children's education (Ministry of Education 2008:178). It is the researcher's assertion that parents in the Mophale's Hoek District's high schools, appear to be partially involved. This situation could lead to a number of problems, such as an increase in the dropout rate, high failure, bad school results and truancy (Mestry and Grobler 2007:273). In most cases, learners who have not completed their studies find it difficult to be employed or create jobs. Instead, they become a burden to their families and the society at large. The lack of parents' involvement and their limited support and commitment in their children's education could give rise to low standard of teaching and learning (Cox-Peterson 2011:6; Anguiano 2004:66). It is therefore essential to investigate how parental involvement influences formal education in high schools in the Mophale's Hoek District in Lesotho in order to enhance parental involvement in schools.

1.4 Research questions

The study, in consideration of the above research problem, attempted to answer the following research questions:

- 1.4.1 What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the Mophale's Hoek District of Lesotho?
- 1.4.2 How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mophale's Hoek District?
- 1.4.3 What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?
- 1.4.4 What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's formal education?
- 1.4.5 What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

1.5 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement and how parents are involved in the formal education of their children at high schools in the Mhale's Hoek District, in Lesotho.

1.6 Research objectives

The above stated purpose of the study necessitated the formulation of a number of objectives. The first objective was to determine the influence of the involvement of parents in the Mhale's Hoek District in their children's formal education. The second objective focused on the investigation of parents' involvement in the formal education of their children in the Mhale's Hoek District. The third objective was to identify and discuss barriers to parental involvement in the formal education. The fourth objective of the study intended to evaluate the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's formal education. The fifth objective was to identify strategies that can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education.

1.7 The Significance of the Study

The research is embedded in the field of Education Management as it seeks to investigate the involvement of parents in their children's formal education. It will probably enlighten the department of education that trains educators and equip them with skills that will enable positive parental involvement in the education of their children. It may equip educators with skills on how to successfully involve parents in their children's education. Learners will benefit from this study as they will develop adequate and proper skills, from their educators and parents' support, which will improve their performance. Parents will be given direction on how to help their children in their formal education. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), will profit from this study as it will be able to develop clear and comprehensive policies on parental involvement in formal education. Moreover, the research might provide solutions to the problems associated with low parental involvement in formal education in the affected areas. This research can also offer

options that parents can use to assist in their children's education. Finally, the lessons learned may be adapted and applied in other settings to address similar problems.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

1.8.1 Parent

According to the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996 Section 1 (xiv):4), a parent is defined as follows: "the parent or guardian of a learner; the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a person referred to in the previous sentences, towards the learner's education at school." The term "parent" as stipulated in the Lesotho Education Act (No. 3 of 2010 Section 2:161) means "a parent who in law or by virtue of an order of a competent court has the custody or control of a learner, or a legal guardian, or in the absence of such parent or legal guardian, the person with whom the learner resides and to whom the parent or guardian has entrusted, in writing, the custody or control of such learner, or if the learner has no parent or legal guardian, the person with whom the learner resides and who has the actual custody or control of such learner." In this research the use of the term "parent" will be in line with both Acts.

1.8.2 Parental involvement

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:22) define parental involvement as the participation of parents in every facet of their children's education and development from birth to adulthood, which recognises that parents are the primary influence in children's life. According to Brown et al. (2014:325), the concept parental involvement incorporates interaction of parents with school and their children towards the success of the children's social and educational interests. In this current study, parental involvement implies parents' participation in one or more school activities, such as sports coaching, fund-raising, volunteering for school activities, assisting their children with homework, creating a conducive atmosphere that allows children to study at home and encouraging reasonable and greater achievement.

1.8.3 Formal education

The Lesotho Education Act No. 10 of 1995 Section 2 (a), (MOET 1995:950) asserts that formal education is the process of training and developing people in knowledge, skills, mind and character in a structured and certified programme. In its general sense it is a form of learning in which knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, or training. Simkins (in Motsetse 1998:9) defines education as the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded education system running from primary school to the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training. For the purposes of this study “formal education” is defined in line with Lesotho Education Act 1995 and Motsetse’s definition.

1.8.4 High school

A high school, according to the Lesotho Education Act No. 3 of 2010 Section, Sub-section (3) (f), is a registered school which provides up to five years of post-primary education. It is a school that is intermediate in level between elementary school and college that usually offers general, technical, vocational, and college-preparatory curricula. It is an institution which provides secondary education (MOET 1995:949). Other terms, such as “secondary school” or “secondary college” are used in different nations or regions. The phrase “high school” often forms part of the name of the secondary institution (U.S. Department of Education). In this study the term “high school” will be used in line with both Acts.

1.9 Assumptions

Concerning research question 1 in which the participants were asked to share their opinions on the influence of parents in the Molekane’s Hoek District in their children’s education, the researcher assumed that many participants would point out a number of things that are done by parents in formal education. Regarding question 2, which is about how parents are involved in the formal education of their children, the researcher’s assumption was that many participants were going to share more about

the role parents play in the formal education. Furthermore, concerning question 3, which expected the participants to raise their views on the barriers to parental involvement, the researcher assumed that the interviewed participants' parents were going to say more about these barriers in order to protect themselves from not taking their responsibility in their children's education. The researcher assumed that the participants would be able to come up with a number of reasons accounting for the importance of parental involvement in their answers to research question 4. Lastly, the researcher's assumption was that the participants would have the capacity to outline the strategies that can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education.

1.10 Delimitation of the Study

The study was carried out in one high school that is located in the Mohale's Hoek town. It is the church run school which is established in the early 1960s. The study is limited to investigating parental involvement in their children's formal education only. Only the principal, educators, parents and learners were investigated.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The interviews began well and the researcher was able to meet participants at stipulated time, however, as time went on she came across some challenges during the conducting of interviews. Sometimes the researcher had to wait for a longer time for the interviewees to be ready, even though time had been set prior to the interview day. Despite the challenges, the researcher managed to gather the data that answered the research questions. The area of research is in a rural and remote place, as a result the researcher sometimes failed to arrive at the research site on time due to lack of transport.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter outlined background to the research problem, the statement of the research problem and the associated research questions to the study. The purpose and specific objectives, as well as the significance of the study were outlined.

Attention was also paid to the definition of the key terms, and outline of the assumptions and the delimitation and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The researcher's purpose in writing a literature review is to outline existing knowledge and thoughts on a given topic to her readers. The first part of this chapter reviews literature on social learning and ecological theories in order to establish the theoretical framework of the research. The appraisal of both theories is of value in that it assists in gaining insight into these principles key to understanding the relevance of studying the influence of parental involvement in formal education. The last section of this chapter is devoted to a review of literature concerning the influence of parental involvement in formal education focusing on the influence of, and nature of parent involvement in formal education, the barriers encountered, and the importance and strategies that can be utilised to enhance parental involvement.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is defined by Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2007:14) as the conceptual underpinning of a research project based on a theory or a specific conceptual model. Its main purpose is to guide researchers in their analysis, explanation and interpretation of data. The contextual framework for this inquiry is based on the social learning theory and the eco-systemic perspectives which provide a comprehensive way of understanding human development.

There are different theoretical frameworks, such as positivism, social learning theory and ecological systems theory, which are relevant to this study. Each theoretical framework is guided by principles that the researcher considers relevant and significant for the purpose that she intended to achieve. Positivism according to Hays and Singh (2012:39) is the assumption that a researcher can arrive at an objective universal truth through direct observation and experience of phenomena. As a result, any knowledge that cannot be measured and observed may not qualify as true knowledge. According to this approach, a researcher has to avoid a discussion on the

values of those involved in the research and the use of well-known statistical procedures (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston 2014:8).

Bandura's (1962) social learning theory argues that children learn by observing the behaviour of others. For example, girls learn to weave by watching their mothers, and this learning of a new behaviour that is acquired through observation is cognitive. The social learning theory seeks to establish possible means of reducing the likelihood of deviant behaviour. Thus, parents, generally considered as models of behaviour, can help motivate their children to learn and behave properly through involvement in their children's learning and by working together with the school (Papalia, Gross and Feldman 2003:36)

This study also considers Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. The ecological system examines the way in which an individual relates to his or her environment and the community that he or she lives in. According to this theory, development takes place by means of a two-way interaction between the child and the immediate environment. This theory postulates further that the school is a system with different parts consisting of staff and learners (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana 2002). The interdependence and interaction between different levels and parents can bring the desired results out of children as they will be receiving the support to learn from different levels.

The researcher regarded Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory relevant to her study because both theories are concerned with interaction between parents and their children's environments, such as the family, school, community and society (Riojas-Cortez 2014:7; Crain 2011:205). The improvement of parental involvement in formal education happens only when there is an equal improvement in the society and the way society relates with its schools. Therefore, the motivation of children to learn should be a cooperative undertaking in which parents and educators play harmonious roles (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider and Chatman-Nelson 2014:5). Both theories, therefore, assisted the study to achieve its objectives as they are related to parental involvement in the sense that they are both

concerned about the way human beings, especially children and adolescents grow, learn and behave (Miller 2011:206).

Both the social learning theory and ecological systems theory are preferred because they highlight the importance of an interaction that directly and indirectly influence children's development. The direct contexts of the children's improvement comprise of daily routines and interactions with family, school, peers and other people. Distance contexts from children's everyday experiences also affect the children's immediate routines and interactions (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider and Chatman-Nelson 2014: xxiv).

Finally, both theories postulate a situation where children have opportunities to develop emotionally, intellectually and socially (Riojas-Cortez 2014:7). The theories acknowledge that children go through dramatic changes physically, cognitively and socially as they grow. Therefore, if parents understand these patterns of change, they can be much more effective in supporting children's learning in school (Davis and Yang 2005:59).

2.3 Literature Review

2.3.1 The Ecological / Developmental theory

Pianta and Walsh (1996), in Christenson and Reschly (2010:4), define the ecology of education as an arranged system of interactions and transactions among educators, parents and learners. These interactions and transactions, which also include that between homes and schools as well as communities and governments, are oriented at strengthening the developmental and educational progress of learners. This theory according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), in Couchenour and Chrisman (2014:8), provides substantial supports for the upholding of practices involving parents in children's education. It also emphasises the developmental notion that biological tendencies and environmental influences interactively affect children's growth.

Based on this theory, Bronfenbrenner (in Couchenour and Chrisman 2014:8) states that children have needs that must be attended to in their families and schools. Couchenour and Chrisman (2014:8) also argue that, although many educators are

capable of and committed to providing quality education for learners, they do not have responsibility over each child throughout the child's entire life. Children spend most of their time with parents at home who play an important role in their learning. This shows that even though high quality education is essential for children's development, the parents' role in the acquisition of this quality education is even more important. Bronfenbrenner (in Couchenour and Chrisman 2014) argues further that the importance of parents in their children's education goes beyond parenting. Thus, it is the researcher's assumption that the parents' role in their children's formal education is significant in various ways, but it needs the support of different systems, such as family, school, national government and society at large. Bronfenbrenner (1990:33) states further that the informal education that takes place in the family is a powerful prerequisite for success in formal education. He also argues that the home environment affects children's cognitive and social development. The educators, therefore, need to include learners' families and build on the knowledge and skills that children would have acquired in their homes (Bronfenbrenner 1990:35).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory outlines the interaction of different levels of systems that have a particular relevance in the teaching and learning process. These are learners' development, their personalities and the environment in which they live (Bronfenbrenner in Stewart 2007:18). In this case, social support in the form of family involvement in education has implications, especially on learner achievement. Schools and parents, therefore, need to work together to close achievement gaps, for schools that operate alone will not be able to address issues related to academic achievement (Hands and Hubbard 2011:43).

The researcher asserts that it is imperative to nest the study to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of children development in their homes, neighbourhoods and schools. The ecological systems should be nurturing environments where children have opportunities to develop intellectually, socially and emotionally (Riojas-Cortez 2014:7). In this ecological framework, efforts to assess and improve learner development are likely to focus on the interactions within and across families and schools (Christenson and Reschly 2010:4).

The ecology of human development, as posited by Bronfenbrenner (in Christenson and Reschly 2010:6), is comprised of multiple environmental systems that provide a context in which learner development takes place. This ecology consists of five interrelated, nested systems, which are discussed in relation to family-school partnerships. These systems can directly or indirectly influence the development of an individual. They take people's understanding beyond the effect of the immediate environment on children's behaviour and development. Hence, parents being part of the system, with their knowledge and understanding of, and interest in local, national and global issues, must be involved in their children's formal education.

According to Hornby (2004:107), children's development and behaviour cannot be comprehended independent of the social context in which they take place. The social environment has an impact on the way children and families behave, and this takes place at various stages. Hence, the outcomes of parents' care over their children's needs are strongly affected by the social environment in which they live. The available education system, community attitudes, extended family and service are included in this social environment. This is illustrated by the Ecological model of family functioning, adapted from that described by Bronfenbrenner (1979). The model includes five different levels of influence on the family, which are: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem, and each is discussed below.

2.3.1.1 The microsystem

The microsystem is a setting in which development occurs and consists of any environment in which a learner spends most of her or his time and has direct experiences with family, peer groups, educators and the community. It is in this system that the child interacts with different people and forms his or her identity as perceived by others (Miller 2011:205). Again, the child interacts on a face to face level with parents, peers and educators, because the microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing child in a given face to face setting. In most cases, the setting includes particular physical and material features and people with particular temperaments, personalities and systems of belief.

As a result, a learner's home, school and peer group are important Microsystems. This gives parents the opportunity to play their role in their children's learning (Couchenour and Chrisman 2014:8 and 105; Landsberg, Kruger and Nel 2005:10-11).

In addition both the school and home contribute to the development of a learner, in this system, especially if there is partnership or a link between those two parties. This notion is supported by Christenson and Reschly (2010:7) in their suggestion that parenting beliefs, styles and cultural values, as well as parents' relationships, may affect a learner's development. Similarly, educators and school administrators may smooth the way for partnerships with parents by having positive attitudes towards parents.

2.3.1.2 The mesosystem

The mesosystem, according to Miller (2011:205), are the transitions and links between microsystems such as partnerships between the family and the school. As a result, the system of relationships among mesosystems for children may have effect on their behaviour or way of looking at things within any setting where they live. Couchenour and Chrisman (2014:9) are of the opinion that the mesosystem incorporates the linkages and processes occurring between two or more settings in which the developing person partakes. For the children, the relations are between home, school and peer groups, while for adults they are among family, work and social life. Riojas-Cortez (2014:7) agrees with these authors and notes further that a mesosystem includes face to face relationships with more formal organisations, such as, family, school, peers, religious institutions and health-care services. These relationships or connections between two forms of Microsystems, therefore, affect children's behaviour and development.

Hornby (2004:109), in agreement with other researchers, states that mesosystem comprises a range of settings in which the family, extended family and the community in which the family lives participate actively. Therefore, if extended family members, such as the children's grandparents, are understanding and supportive, they may have a significant and positive influence on family functioning. On the contrary, if the

extended family members have little contact with children's parents, the family misses out on an important source of support. Hornby (2004) states further that neighbours, colleagues, friends and other parents may also have a positive influence on family functioning if they show friendships which are very supportive and long lasting. Likewise, co-workers and managers, as part of the community may also have an influence on the family. Employers who are ready to give parents time off work to attend important school activities concerning their children's formal education may, for instance, reduce parents' stress levels and thereby contribute positively to the family wellbeing.

Christenson and Reschly (2010:7) state that since the mesosystem is for the good of learners, it is reflected in a large number of independent and interactive activities. These activities should be carried out with the bearing of the learner in mind. Parents and educators should come together and discuss how to build on the learners' strengths at school and at home (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider and Chatman-Nelson 2014:167). Educators and parents should guide learners on how to cope with peer pressure in a way that enables the learner to remain faithful to their family values and schoolwork.

2.3.1.3 An exosystem

The exosystem is defined by Christenson and Reschly (2010:7), Couchenour and Chrisman (2014:9) and Miller (2011:205) as an environment that is not directly experienced by learners but affect their development. As a result, it has an indirect effect on the development and behaviour of a learner. The examples of the exosystems that can influence learners' development and family-school collaboration are education programmes, parents' workplaces, mass media and sense of community within a neighbourhood. These may have a critical influence on the way in which parents become involved in their children's education. A stressful work environment, for instance, may increase parents' irritability at home, which may lead to parents' disinterest and failure to pay attention to children's schoolwork (Weiss, *et al.* 2014:167). Furthermore, watching television, for example, may interfere with family interaction and hinder parents' involvement in their children's learning (Weiss, *et al.*

2014: xxx). The environment may also include the major institutions of society, such as the economic systems and transportation. Hence, many parents may be unable to participate in their children's schooling due to a variety of reasons and conditions that would be arising from the different environments that they engaged with regularly.

According to Hornby (2004:110) and Riojas-Cortez (2014:7) an exosystem does not involve face to face relationships with a developing person. It influences children through their parents and the parents-employment and government actions. An exosystem includes social settings which have an impact on the family even though it is at an indirect level. Therefore, the quality of types of health, education, and social welfare services available to parents can have a critical influence on the way parents cope with their children.

2.3.1.4 The macrosystem

The macrosystem comprises of the very important pattern of microsystem, mesosystem and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture and other broader social contexts. The macrosystem incorporates the attitudes and beliefs of a given culture. These may include cultural traditions, laws, customs and environmental events (Riojas-Cortez 2014:7 and Miller 2011:205). Riojas-Cortez (2014) and Miller (2011) state further that the macrosystem assists in the designing of the social structures and activities that take place at lower levels. Hence, it influences how educators and parents directly or indirectly define the goals, risks and ways of bringing up the next generation.

This system is the culture in which a learner lives. The values and beliefs of the culture in which the family of a learner lives in, indeed have major effects on children and families. In actual fact, the specific type of society in which the family of a developing person, a learner in the case of this study, lives has an impact on many different aspects of family life (Weisset *al.* 2014:100). If the family lives in a rural area the children will be influenced by what is practiced by a majority of peer groups or parents. If there are many educated people at children's place or within his or close environment, then the learners and parents will show interest in education.

Undoubtedly, parents take part in their children's education (Couchenour and Chrisman 2004:6; Hornby 2004:111). The macrosystem is, therefore, the socio-cultural context in which learners and their Microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems function.

2.3.1.5 The chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner's (1986) concept of the chronosystem considers changes within the learners and their environment that occur over time and how these alterations may affect other elements of the learners' ecology (Weiss, *et al.* 2014: xxxi). This system examines how learners' cognitive, social and biological maturation influence parent-child and educator-child interactions (Christenson and Reschly, 2010:8). As learners move towards maturity, their cognitive and physical abilities develop and cause changes. These developmental changes influence their relationships with individuals and groups in the society where they live. Similarly, this contributes to their interaction with educators and parents who may work together for the improvement of parental involvement in the formal education of children (Thompson 2006:30; Couchenour and Chrisman 2014:10).

The chronosystem facilitates the learners' development of the skills that they might require in order to find direction across their social environment through interactions with educators and parents. Parents and educators have an impact on learners' development of cognitive skills through the social and individual experiences they provide and by motivating and shaping the children's behaviour for social interaction (Denham *et al.* 2000:25; Hamre and Pianta 2001:632; Gauvain 2001 in Christenson and Reschly 2010:9). Furthermore, there are development changes in learners' cognitive and biological process during their schooling experience. This system may directly or indirectly have an effect on how educators and parents interact with both learners and one another (Riojas-Cortez 2014:7; Christenson and Reschly 2010:9).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model emphasises the processes by which a learner and context directly or indirectly influence each other during frequently occurring interactions. It is noted, in the preceding discussion that, the family is not only

influenced by interactions within the family's microsystem, but also by its interactions with other levels of the entire social system, which all need to be taken into consideration by educators when they work with learners and their families (Hornby 2004:112). It also encourages cooperation between parents and educators for the development of learners who are also expected to collaborate in their education. This interaction brought by the nature of Bronfenbrenner's ecological models makes it easy for all the parties involved in learners' education to work together.

2.3.2 The social learning theory

2.3.2.1 Historical emergence of the social learning theory

According to Miller (2011:232), the social learning theory was conceptualised in the 1930s at Yale University when Clark Hull offered a graduate seminar on learning theory to psychologists. Social learning theorists explored much territory in the 1940s and 1950s; imitating cross-cultural influences on personality and parental attitude towards child rearing. This theory drew intensely on developmental psychology in the 1960s and early 1970s. Social learning theorists took interesting and imperative content from the Freudian theory, such as the concepts of dependency, identification, the conscious, formation, and defense mechanisms, but sought explanations for behaviour in principles of S-R (stimulus-response) learning, which could be observed, rather than the unconscious, which could not Crain (2011:199).

The guiding tenet of the social learning theory, as stipulated by Miller (2011:232), is that personality is learned. Children are shaped by the society in which they are brought up. They are influenced by their environment, people around them, the way things are done at their place and the activities they undertaken. Thus, the social learning theorists brought parts of the Freudian theory that were testable into the laboratory and ignored the ones that could not be tested. In this way, the social learning theorists increased the credibility of learning theory by extending learning principles to important real-life social behaviours. Therefore, the social learning theory concentrated on socialisation, the process by which society teach children to behave as the ideal adults of that society.

In a major theoretical change to the social learning theory, Miller and Dollard (1941), in Miller (2011:233), set out to illustrate that one of the most influential socialisation forces is replication. They put forward the view that a common inclination to imitate is learned because diverse imitative behaviours are consciously and unconsciously emphasised. This reinforcement of imitation may start at the early stage and continue as the children grow up, and it is at this stage where parents have access to involve themselves in the education of their children.

The social learning theory, according to Miller (2011:234), provided a new perception on Freud's essential concept of recognition. Identification with the same-sex parent engages a great deal of observational learning, because children are taught to behave in gender-appropriate ways during socialisation. Although in most cases societies encourage boys to develop masculine traits and girls to develop feminine traits, children frequently learn through observing the behaviour of both genders. However, they usually perform the behaviour only appropriate to their own gender because this is what they have been reinforced to do as they are modeled. The same thing applies to parental involvement, if educators do not involve parents in their children's education, learners might think that their educators are the only ones who are supposed to become involved in their education and parents should be involved in other things that take place at home excluding education.

Bandura (1962) is not much concerned with the literal duplication of behaviour (imitation) than with observational learning as a more extensive procedure of obtaining information from different sources such as books, the electronic media and other people. He states further that observational learning may lead to imitation when there is a model to imitate, although it needs not lead to imitation. After children attain new behaviours by observing a variety of models, they mingle these behaviours to develop more multifarious behaviours. In addition to developing complex behaviours by drawing on countless previously observed behaviour, it is possible to learn the whole complex behaviours all at once. A young girl may learn to cook or bake after watching the mother cooking or baking. Thus, acquiring large chunks of behavior by observation

is a very efficient way to learn as observed by Bandura (Miller 2011:235). The following section reviews Bandura's perception on observational learning.

2.3.2.2 Observational learning

The social learning theory according to Bandura 1977 in Illeris (2009:217), considers social interactions as essential as it postulates that people learn quickly merely by observing other people's behaviour. This theory puts more emphasis on interpersonal relationships that takes place through modeling and the limitation of parents and educators. Learners' behaviour is influenced mostly by social interactions with their parents, educators and peer groups. A child of parents who are interested in reading newspapers, magazines or books develops the habit of reading and this improves his or her performance at school. The social learning theory, therefore, underlines observation as a source of learning and thus focuses on the study of cognitive processes.

However, Crain (2011:219) in a study of the social learning theory states that many educators and parents are aware that children learn from them in the way they say or do things. They are somehow not aware of the influence they have on children as they try to correct their behaviour. He further points out that modeling can take two forms, that is, actions done by parents and educators, and what is said by them as they give instructions to children. Therefore, educators and parents must be careful in whatever they do or say so that children are able to follow good examples as they are their models. Modeling impacts on children's behaviour in the sense that it can change children's attitude towards something that they dislike or fear.

Children learn easily by watching their models, be it their parents as they do their work at home or their educators as they demonstrate during teaching in the classroom. Learners acquire new behaviour all at once, entirely through observation and do not need to go through trial and error learning in order to do what they have observed. This theory proffers further that new learning that is acquired through observation appears to be cognitive, a view also included in the social learning theory. Crain (2011:206) purports that children can also learn from different kinds of models. They

learn from both live models and symbolic models such as those watched on television and read about in books. This means that learners' behaviour may also be influenced by mass media. As such, parents must control the watching of television, encourage their children to watch particular programmes and prevent them from spending the whole time watching television during the weekend or school holidays. If this is handled successfully it may assist children to create time for their schoolwork.

According to Bandura 1977 in Crain (2011:206), observational learning is governed by four component processes and they are as follows:

2.3.2.3 Attentional processes

In these processes, children need to pay attention and perceive accurately what is intended to learn in order to learn much. Children learn most thoroughly from the behaviour that is frequently observed. For this reason, children copy everything their parents do or say as they grow up. Girls would like to dress the way their mothers do and the boys as well wish to cut the hair in the manner that their fathers do. Learners' parents are their first role models and, as such, learners pay attention to their parents' behaviour. This is because models often attract children's attention as they are distinctive and possess the trappings of power and success (Crain 2011:206). In this way parents are able to play the most important role in their children's formal education.

2.3.2.4 Retention processes

In most cases, people are influenced by observation of modeled behaviour which is easily recalled. The response patterns of this behaviour of models should be represented in an observer's memory in a symbolic form. This assists people to learn much of their behaviour by observation. Children are usually able to perform imitative responses in the absence of the models after a long time of observing the models' behaviour (Bandura 1977:25). Children cannot forget what they have seen their parents doing and what their parents do because they frequently imitate their parents after they have observed them. Observational learning states that when one sees something and gets attracted by it, the sight of the observed arouses many associated

images, and these guide children's actions. This retention processes may help learners if their parents are involved in their learning as their first models (Crain 2011:206).

2.3.2.5 Motor reproduction processes

In these processes, children reproduce accurately the behaviour they observed as grew up. They can be helped by the necessary motor skills. For instance, girls might watch their mothers cleaning the floor with a broom and a mop, but cannot imitate them very well because they lack physical strength and nimbleness. From observation alone, children pick up a new pattern of responses, such as how to hold the broom and to deep the mop into the water and squeeze it. Later on as they grow up and put the modeled behaviour into practice it will be easier for them to clean the floor as they learnt from their mothers (Crain 2011:207). Furthermore, the children who come from the families of hardworking parents learn this and as they grow up they become successful in their study.

2.3.2.6 Motivational processes

The social learning theory shows that people cannot be attracted by everything they observe or learn. They are more likely to take up the behaviour of more value and rewarding. People are normally motivated by behaviour that is accepted by others, if it is not, the behaviour is rejected by the observer. The performances as stated by Crain (2011), are governed by reinforcement and motivational variables. If the learners are praised or gain a reward after imitating the observed behaviour of their parents' and educators', they will actually imitate them. On the contrary, a learner will probably hesitate to continue imitating the modeled behaviour if it is discouraged by educators or parents.

From the discussed observational learning processes it became clear that social learning takes place as learners imitate the models successfully. They do this by giving attention to the model and by preserving what was observed in an emblematical form. Learners also need to acquire the essential motor skills to replicate the behaviour that was learnt previously. Lastly, if learners' actual performances are

motivated they will be more comfortable with and reproduce them (Crain 2011:208). As a result, these components are not completely split, for they link up with one another in that learners are usually motivated by their parents and educators as competent and powerful models.

The following section focuses on the influence, [involvement and importance] of parental involvement in formal education; barriers of parental involvement; and strategies that can be used to develop parental involvement in formal education.

2.4 The influence of parental involvement in their children's formal education

Parents, as first educators of their children should be involved in their formal education. They should assist with schoolwork, such as homework, because they too can provide expert knowledge. Parents also provide learners with cultural and other social experiences that help the children to survive in life in general. Like educators, parents are suppliers of the knowledge required to raise and develop the learners (Mestry and Grobler 2007:178; Jordan, Orozco and Averett 2002:14). In Lesotho, for instance, parents have a say in decision-making that affect the children's education through the School Board. In this way, parents share a vision similar to that of the educators and other community members (Rhimo 2011:32).

This section drew on the way other countries practice parental involvement in formal education. Parental involvement, here is achieved through the establishment of School Boards (SB) in Lesotho, School Governing Bodies (SGB) in South Africa, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) in Nigeria, School Development Committees (SDC) in Zimbabwe, and (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organisations (PTO) in the United States of America (USA) that allow parents to support educators in children's formal education (Mestry and Grobler 2007:177; Ajayi, Haastrup and Arogundade 2009:42).

2.4.1 Parents' support

Parents support educators by paying for their children's school fees, buying books and uniform on time. They also ensure that learners attend school regularly. This is a form

of support to educators in that this allows educators to achieve their objective in the learners' education. In this way learners get quality education (Moles and Fege 2011:9). Parents and educators, in Lesotho, ensure that there is involvement of parents in governance School Boards as stipulated in the Education Act No. 3 of 2010 (MOET 2010:180). The involvement of parents in formal education in the United States of America in governance is also linked to parents attendance of meetings where they are part of decision making concerning the learners' success and better performance (Moles and Fege 2011:5).

The parents in Zimbabwe are expected to form governing councils or the School Development Committees (SDC) that manage the schools. The Zimbabwe Education Act of 1987, as amended in 2006, acknowledges the value of parental involvement in their children's education (Mudekanye and Ndamba 2011:10). Parents in Zimbabwe are, thus, given the opportunity to decide on the infrastructure of the school, the amount of money to be paid to subsidise the needy learners, the purchase of textbooks and what the community can do to support the school (Ngwenya, Baird, Boonstopel and Pader 2008:1).

In Nigeria, parents take part in the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) that govern particular schools (Ajayi, et al 2009:42). Parents are also required to attend parent-teacher conferences in which their children's progress is discussed. The parents are also given tips on how to help their children with schoolwork (Ademola and Olajumuke 2009:458). In this country, parents help in the maintenance of discipline which strengthens mutual understanding between the educators and parents and advances the educational interests of the learners.

In the USA, parents communicate with their children's educators. This is essential for educators and parents when dealing with learners' disciplinary problems and poor attendance which lead to poor performance (Epstein 2005:130). Furthermore, this communication enables educators and parents to attend to learners' needs (Pushor 2007:3). It also allows them to build a trusting relationship which increases the involvement of parents in learning activities both at school and at home (Patrikakou 2008:2).

2.4.2 Legislative framework

The legislative frameworks in the USA, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Lesotho, enable the interaction between the parents and the school. Without the legislative framework it would not be easy for schools to involve parents in their children's education. In South Africa, in particular, the legislative framework monitors the interaction between the school and parents. Section 19 of the South African Schools Act No. 84 (1996), for instance, stipulates that the newly elected School Governing Body members are to be introduced and continuously trained so that they can perform their duty well. It is through the parents that the community's and learners' requirements are known to the schools that serve it. Therefore, social peace and justice are achieved when parents are represented in the governance structures of the school and participate in making decisions that affect the learners (Jordan, *et al* 2002:21).

Furthermore, the inclusion of parents in the Parent Teacher Association or Parent Teacher Organisation in the USA makes schools responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. This is carried out by permitting parents to take part in the governance decisions and in the process motivate parents to support their children's education (Moles and Fege 2011:1). The parents help their children with homework and study at home. They are able to do this because they have been provided with a homework policy that enables them to monitor the homework (Modisaotsile 2012:3; Grace, Jethro and Aina 2012:198). These legal mandates, therefore, establish close interaction between parents and learners with regard to school issues (Epstein 2005:64)

Grace, *et al* (2012:197) and Walberg (2011:72) point out that, parents create supportive home environments for their children's education. This is practiced in life by almost all parents, regardless of their educational status, income and background. Many parents play an important role in their children's education by limiting the objects and activities, such as watching the television, which distract learning. Parents do this with the intention of creating a conducive environment to learners' study. They also manage this because they are directed by the way legislation is framed.

2.4.3 Parents' collaboration

Parent's collaboration is important for the success of their children. According to Henderson and Redding (2011:105), parents in the USA, for instance, have to decide on curricular instruction, extra-curricular activities and school leadership. Parents are also expected to supervise their children's homework, and attend to learners' wellbeing and safety (Hallinger and Heck 2011:14; Pushor 2007:3). Furthermore, in Zimbabwe, parents are involved in the planning of infrastructure development and financial issues such as fees, learner subsidies and the purchase of textbooks (Ngwenya, et al 2008:1). In Nigeria, parental involvement involves attendance of parent-teacher conferences (Ademola and Olajumoke 2009:458) and participation in Parent Teacher Associations where parents discuss issues such as financial support and how to discipline learners (Haastrup and Alonge 2012:16). In Lesotho, parental involvement is facilitated through discussions on children's progress reports and discipline at school meetings (Letsie 1998:43).

2.4.4 Parents Volunteering

Parents are capable of volunteering to help educators do their work better in the areas, such as sport, music, culture and carpentry (Wang and Fahey 2010:2). This benefits the entire school. The schools, in the discussed countries, take initiative to train parents so that they do their part well. The training that parents get has increased the number of parents who render volunteering service in the education of their children (Epstein 2007:20; Redding 2011:18; Pushor 2005:13).

It is evident from the above discussion that parents in countries, such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, USA, South Africa and Nigeria get involved in their children's formal education. They are included in curriculum and training, in the handling of disciplinary problems, on safety and fundraising, in helping learners with homework and with regard to subsidising learners from poor family backgrounds (Mudekunya and Ndamba 2011:11; Ngwenya, et al/2010:54; Epstein 2005:65).

The following section focuses on parents' involvement in their children's formal education.

2.5 How parents can get involved in the education of their children

There are various ways in which parents can get involved in their children's education. Each type of parental involvement comprises various components that recognise the diverse needs and expectations of a variety of parents and educators (Department of Education 2001:16). It is of importance that parents and educators work together to develop goals that assist each child to achieve his or her level of potential. The discussion on these types of parental involvement considers the question on how parents can get involved in their children's formal education.

The following different manners in which parents can get involved in their children's education are discussed:

2.5.1 Parenting

Parents are involved in their children's formal education through parenting. Parenting is the process of teaching and guiding children throughout their school years in order to help them build self-confidence and self-esteem. Parental involvement also includes providing learners with the basic responsibilities expected of families, such as housing, health care, nutrition, clothing, safety, and creating home conditions that support children's learning. The parents purchase the necessary books and are responsive to their children, communicate with them and support their development (Epstein (2007:25). According to Olsen and Fuller (2012:134), the most basic involvement of parents is their continuous responsibility of raising their children and providing them with their basic needs. This means that parents form the foundation for their children's success in school by providing and maintaining a positive home environment that is conducive to learning and the development of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional skills and values.

Parents vary in their experiences and parenting skills. Thus, schools will have to take an active role in assisting parents with parenting and child rearing skills, helping in understanding children and adolescents development, and providing ideas for creating a home environment that supports children's learning at each age and grade.

Research indicates that families want to learn and receive ongoing information on how to help their children succeed and excel in school (Epstein 2007:20). Concurrently, educators and administrators need the families to assist schools in becoming better informed about their children and families. Information about children and family backgrounds, cultures, needs, interests, goals, and expectations should be provided by families (Olsen and Fuller 2012:135). Therefore, this type of involvement consists of a combination of information for parents and from parents about children and families.

According to Hiatt-Michael (2010:57) parents are the first educators of children and as such have a prominent place in the learning of their children at school. Parents can support their children's school success by reinforcing school learning, fostering respect for education, promoting cooperative behaviour, and developing work habits and interest. The support that parents provide to the learners can have a significant impact on the motivation learners bring to the learning environment and their willingness to behave responsibly at school. In addition, the learners' parents can provide the school with valuable information regarding how learners perceive their school experience and what they may need to be maximally successful at school. Importantly, parent involvement in learners' education has many advantages for children. Where parents are involved in a significant way, children learn better and more, develop a positive attitude towards learning and stay in school longer. Therefore, parents contribute to good behaviour, academic growth and learners' success by supporting learning.

2.5.2 Communicating

This type of involvement concerns the basic responsibilities of schools, including establishing two-way communication that reflects a co-equal partnership between families and schools. It is the school that produces the information forms that are used for communication between home and school. The communication should include many aspects, such as information on school programmes and children's progress, and should allow for feedback from the parents, because all parents need to have effective channels of communication with their children's educators (Van Wyk and

Lemmer 2009:26). Parents need information about the organisation and requirement of the school as this affects their children. They need to know when their children are having difficulties and what the school would do to address these. That is, parents ought to know about their rights and responsibilities (Hall 2015:368). Parents need to feel that they can contact the school at any time when they have a concern about their children. Some parents prefer to communicate by telephone; others would prefer to see the educators face to face, while others still find that contact through written notes or home-school diaries suits them best. Therefore, educators need to develop effective written and oral communication skills and to ensure that a wide range of communication options are open to parents in order for them to be involved in their children's formal education (Hornby 2004:25).

Efficient communication enables parents to respond speedily to problems and share important information with educators as soon as it is needed. Educators in turn develop skills in communicating with a variety of parents in a range of situations. They develop an appreciation for the parents' contribution to the development of the children and the parents' knowledge of the children (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:26). This view is emphasised by Olsen and Fuller (2012:136) who point out that effective communication is essential for the building of a successful partnership between school and home. Lack of a good two-way communication between the school and the family results in failure of other levels of involvement. Children often play an important role in the success of this type of involvement when they are involved as messengers who take the messages from school to home and bring them back to school from home.

It is, therefore, crucial to let parents know about events taking place at the school and what they can do to assist educators and their children. This is where effective home-school communication comes in for parents will simply not get involved if the educators do not keep them updated and informed about school activities.

2.5.3 Volunteering

The term volunteer in this study means parents who support school goals and children's formal education or development in anyway, at any time, and not just during

the school day or at the school building. This is the type of involvement in which the school recruits and organises parent help and support. This includes the design of a programme in which parent volunteers are recruited, trained and organised for a variety of activities aimed at meeting the needs of the school. Volunteering enables parents to give their time and talents to support schools, educators and learners (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:70). This idea is endorsed by Olsen and Fuller (2012:138) who maintain that the typical activities in this category are parental assistance to educators and administrators in supporting the school programme and with children's schoolwork and activities, such as field trips, class parties, and class performances. Volunteering ranges from low to high levels of participation. Parents can either act as audience with minimal commitment in advocacy, or they can act in decision-making roles with higher levels of commitment.

The fact that parental involvement allows parents and educators to work together for the good of children, shows that it is important for parents to volunteer throughout their children's formal education from preschool to high school. Parents who often volunteer feel that they would be making a significant contribution to their children, the school, and the education system itself. As a result, the school has to inform parents about the curriculum that they would be following so that they can better support the children in specific ways at home. Apart from this, there are many roles that parents can volunteer for in the morning or during their free time which directly supports the educators and their children. Parents can organise a cake sale, raffle or other fund-raising activities. The revenue can be used to purchase supplies for a specific science project, for instance, or pay for a guest speaker, or subsidise a fieldtrip for children unable to contribute or for the entire class (Hiatt-Michael 2010:87, 90). Regardless of the type of parent involvement that takes place at the school, it is extremely vital for administrators and educators to acknowledge the contributions the parents make to support the school as a whole.

2.5.4 Learning at home

This type of involvement suggests that the school provides parents with information and ideas about how to help children at home with homework and other curriculum-

related activities, decisions and planning (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:27). The basic belief in the field of early childhood education is that parents are their children's first and most influential educators. Therefore, if parents have influence over what children do at home, they can be easily involved in their formal education. Home-based learning is aware of the importance of parents in the education of learners and that is why it involves families with their children via game like activities for such as mathematics, reading and science studies (Skwarchuk and LeFevre 2015:103;). Most parents across all grades need more information about their children's homework, homework policies, and tools for helping their children because they are interested in their children's education. This also includes parents assisting their high school children in setting goals for the school year or for the future and making joint decisions on what courses to take (Epstein 2007:24).

Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein and Serpell (2001), in Hiatt-Michael (2010:63) indicate that children learn more vocabulary and have better comprehension and achievement when parents and children converse about the text of story books in a relaxed positive climate at home and make connections with their own experiences. This indicates that parental involvement has a positive influence on learners' success, as parents become more familiar with their children's formal education and better able to reinforce principles and concepts at home through the involvement (Peck 2014:234). Thus, parent participation in planning may help schools formulate programmes that are more suitable to the needs of their children as they know them more than the school personnel.

Schools should provide families with the relevant information that is required by learners at each age and grade level in order for an effective achievement. Schools should explain homework policies and how to monitor and support homework on an annual basis to make it easier for parent participation. Regular information about homework makes learners and parents aware of homework assignments and the learners' responsibility to complete homework on time. The involvement of parents in formal education at the home front assists the learners to develop respect for the parents' knowledge and experience. It also helps parents to learn how to assist their

children wisely without taking over the responsibility for homework and learning (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:27).

2.5.5 Decision-making

Decision-making according to Olsen and Fuller (2012:144) involves a partnership process in which parents and educators come together and share their ideas and views, solve problems, and take action towards a shared vision that contribute to school goals and policies. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:98) are of the opinion that this type of parental involvement includes of families as participants in the making of school decisions. This type of activity allows parents to participate in decisions about school programmes that affect their own and other children. Effective parental involvement is however achieved through the school's recruitment and training of parent leaders and the inclusion of all parents in the decisions regarding the life of the school.

Learners benefit from this through the participation of parent representatives in the school's governing body and through the involvement of all parents in decisions that involve parents or children. Naidoo (2006:5) adds that school systems in Sub-Saharan Africa encourage and increase opportunities for African parents to take part in education policy and decision-making to improve the quality of their children's education. This permits parents to come up with their views and make decisions concerning their children's school. The purchase of textbooks and materials, the maintenance of school building and furniture, as well as equipment, are examples of various functions that parents, through school governing bodies, carry out.

Parents may influence decision-making around educational issues at school level. Therefore, parental involvement in decision-making needs to be a collaborative process between both the school personnel and families. Both parties should also share their views and work towards a shared educational goals (Hiatt-Michael 2010:100). Educators are also encouraged to become experts in parent engagement, because school improvement efforts have more staying power when parents understand them. Failing to involve parents in decisions affecting their children may

result in apathy, distrust or confrontation (Couchenour and Chrisman 2011:272). Where strong links are established between home and school, parents assist with the completion of homework, and assist during school events or make decisions with educators and principals on how to improve learners' achievement.

2.5.6 Collaborating with the community

Epstein (2007:20) defines collaboration as including the identification and interaction of resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and the learning and development of all learners. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:110) in comments on this type of parental involvement stipulate that, the recognition, that the entire community should take responsibility for the education of its youth is a return to the ancient African truth, which says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." This means that African culture believes that the upbringing of a child is the responsibility of both the child's family and the whole community. Therefore, parents and schools alone can only ensure that learners receive the education they deserve by allowing community involvement too. Communities, just as families and schools, have significant roles to play in the education and well-being of learners. The communities can enhance and support home and school activities by providing manpower and making other economic and social resources available within their vicinities. Community involvement activities can thus manifest in the identification and integration of these resources to improve schools, strengthen families and assist learners to succeed in school and in life.

Olsen and Fuller (2012:147) draw on the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," in their suggestion that schools and educators need to see the community in a broader context, include community members in improving the quality of education and respond to the needs of the children and families. Community members can provide the schools with materials and natural resources and thus; schools need to make connections with community sectors such as large and small businesses, faith-based communities, cultural groups and government agencies. There is interconnectedness between the quality of family life and children's development and learning and so if families are struggling and in crisis, schools need to step in by

networking and collaborating with the community to gain access to services and resources that strengthen families and children's success in education.

Epstein, in her model, incorporates aspects of parental involvement programmes and provides a framework for six types of possible parent activities from which parent involvement can be planned, carried out and reviewed. The next section, therefore, deals with the barriers to parental involvement.

2.6 The barriers to parental involvement in formal education

Research has revealed that it is not lack of interest that inhibits several parents from becoming involved in their children's education, but rather a series of factors that prevent their capacity to become involved in the diverse aspects of their children's learning. A range of education researchers' viewpoint is that parental involvement is hindered by the following factors: ignorance and language, superiority complex and socio-economic status (Hill and Taylor 2004: 162; Mestry and Grobler 2007:177). Some authors are of the opinion that parents' lack of interest in children's formal education, is brought about by lack of time, work patterns, poor self-image, diversity and a negative school experience (Anguiano 2004:62; Mandara 2006:206; Stewart 2008:189).

2.6.1 To involve parents demands time

According to Omoteso (2010:264), school programmes are full and processed according to time schedules. School work must be done in a well organised fashion at a very high tempo, so that there is not much time that remains for additional matters. This state of affairs does not permit parents' participation because if they are to be taken on board, according to the educators, they may retard the progress of the school time-table. Thus, although involving parents in their children's education demands time, educators need to make room for parents to be patient with them if they want the learners to succeed in their learning.

2.6.2 Time constraints

Sometimes parents may genuinely lack time to participate in school-based activities. This may be because of work commitments. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:118) point out that time may be the most precious commodity that families need in order to support their children. The rise of two bread winners and the need for family members to hold more than one job has resulted in many families experiencing a time crisis.

2.6.3 Parents have their own programmes

Parents are usually busy with their own programmes which are related to their careers and family life. The demands of modern life often limit parents' ability to put aside time for involvement in the education of their children. Olsen and Fuller (2012:113) argue that time is precious and fragmented and that educators and parents are stressed by the multiple demands of their professional, family and individual responsibility and interest. Nevertheless, the fact that parents have no time for their children, affects the children negatively.

2.6.4 Superiority attitude

Adeyemo (2005:164) states that parental involvement is unlikely to succeed as long as educators continue to view themselves as all-knowing experts and to impose their definitions of parental involvement upon their clients. He points out further that many educators have a wrong understanding regarding what the educator's professionalism entails. This way of thinking leads to feelings of superiority and arrogance and fosters attitudes that stand in the way to effective parental involvement (Brown et al. 2015:326). The holding of a superior attitude by some educators indeed results in parents' refusal to accept such a professional.

2.6.5 Perceptions of educators towards parents

Parents from poor backgrounds become burdens to the educators. Crozier and Reay (2005:114) describe the educators' experience with some parents as follows: "Parents as outsiders are untidy and inconvenient. They disrupt routine and display disproportionate interest in their own children ahead of, or as a filter for, their interests

in their generality of children or in the large institutional world in the domain of the educators.” Untidy and inconvenient parents irritate both educators and their children, with the children usually wanting their parents to be presentable when they come to school.

2.6.6 Parents’ unrealistic self-concept

When parents think too high of themselves and their abilities they tend to have a superiority complex regarding the educators and sometimes feel that making contact with educators belittles them. In addition, when parents have a low opinion of themselves, it becomes difficult for them to involve themselves in school activities (Hands and Hubbard 2011:111). Such parents, therefore, have a negative influence on their children so much that they too belittle educators.

2.6.7 Parents are threatened by the educators

Cork (2005:125) discloses that the threat posed by educators on parents may be attributed to economic differences between parents and educators, and work responsibilities, especially in under-privileged communities where feelings of inadequacy, failure and poor self-worth are rampant. Parents who have had little education feel frightened and are not confident in education situations, unless educators create conducive atmosphere for them and show that they trust their contributions in the children’s education.

2.6.8 Language hindrance and pessimistic school experience

Various parents, according to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:18), had a negative experience while they were in school; hence, they feel uncomfortable to enter the school premises. Additionally, the use of a second language used at school is a barrier to parents who are unfamiliar with it. English, for instance, which is mostly used by foreign educators in some schools, hinders parents from visiting their children’s schools. Apart from that, such parents tend to use aggressive language as a defense mechanism to protect themselves or to cover up their lack of knowledge.

2.6.9 Ambiguity

When parents are unsure about what to do, they will not be effective in what they are expected to do. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:18), in their research on parental involvement, noted that several parents were ready to use more time and energy on school activities on condition that educators provide them with direction.

2.6.10 Fear of being involved

Christenson and Reschly (2010:40) are of the opinion that parents are usually afraid to become involved, because involvement implies that more of their time and energy would be demanded by the school activities. Some parents usually become disinterested and unwilling to participate in school activities because they find parental involvement too demanding. Many parents feel relieved once they send their children to school and believe that the learners would no longer be under their responsibility but that of the educators. Thus, in most cases parents do not mind whether their children would have done their school work or if they have pens or books, when they go to school every day.

2.6.11 Ignorance

One of the major causes of parents' lack of involvement according to Brown and Duku (2008:431) is ignorance. Some parents do not really know what the aims and essence of education are nor the essential contributions that they have to make. Furthermore, they do not know how to make contributions towards formal education, just as they do not know what is expected of them. Unfortunately, sometimes the parents' ignorance can be interpreted wrongly as indicating parental resistance to involvement in the educational project and yet they would be unaware of what is expected of them.

2.6.12 Parents' attitude towards the school

Parents' previous history of negative experiences at school usually blocks them from taking part in the formal education of their children. They would always like to hear good news about their children. In addition, such parents are usually of the belief that educators call them in only when there is bad news about their children or to blame

them for their children's problems at school, instead of holding the belief that the educators and other school personnel want to work with them to help their children. Therefore, the predominance of negative beliefs and attitudes gives rise to an unwillingness to engage in school activities when parents are invited.

2.6.13 Negative school climate

The school climate has a direct effect on the influence parents have by being involved in the school and their children's education. Olsen and Fuller (2012:148) emphasise that for schools to successfully reach out to parents, the first and foremost step is to create a positive social atmosphere and culture in the school. As a result, there is always a danger of little or no parental involvement at schools where administrators and educators do not create an environment that supports collaboration. In addition, lack of an organised and well-structured plan that allows active, meaningful participation by parents leads to the parents' loss of interest in that school. If the educators do not listen to parents' concerns and ideas, they develop a tendency of rarely attending the school meetings and taking part in school activities. Finally, a school that does not respect learners and families with diverse cultural values also encounters parent hesitancy to participate in its education activities.

2.6.14 Diverse types of families

Diversity in family structure and socio-economic status and other situations such as bereavement sometimes make it difficult for schools to form beneficial partnerships with families. The following are ways in which diverse types of families and other situations inhibit parents from participating in their children's education:

2.6.14.1 Single parenthoods

Currently, there are many children who are brought up in families headed by single parents (Boyd and Bee 2012:331). In some families, children of mothers who were never being married are traditionally accepted in the extended families, but factors such as poverty, drought and increasing urbanization compel most single-parents to take the responsibility for full parenting and assume the roles of head of families. In

most cases these mothers face the problem of inadequate income and have to leave their children while looking for or working at places far away from their homes. Hence, when the school invites parents of such children to come for meetings or anything that involves parents at school, the learners are forced to look for relatives who sometimes respond negatively, or are not constant in attending school activities. Moreover, most of the financially struggling single-parents are less able to assist their children with school uniform, school fees and other basic needs. They hardly control their children's behaviour and help them with their homework (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:154). Therefore, the school finds it difficult, in such a situation, to make parental involvement as active as it could be.

2.6.14.2 Family experiencing bereavement

Usually death in a family is a most painful and stressing event for all family members. Death of a parent causes the remaining partner, other relatives and the children in huge difficulties. According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:155), the death of one of the family members, or relatives affects children deeply. In this situation, the remaining family members might fail to support the children sufficiently. Failure or delayed reporting of the loss at school by the affected family members might cause a lot of disturbances, because the child might have a less concentration in class. Educators often feel at a loss when children are bereaved and therefore do nothing to help yet they are ideally situated to support both the bereaved children and their families.

2.6.14.3 Grandparents parenting grandchildren

Grandparents who willingly take up the care of grandchildren expose themselves to a massive responsibility and strain. On the whole most of the grandparents lack the financial resources that meet the basic needs of their grandchildren. A further complication here is that, much has changed in school since grandparents raised their own children (Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane and Rama (2004:25). The old age and susceptibility to ill health also means that the grandparents would be mostly likely unable to help their grandchildren with homework and checking their school-work. Normally, grandparents are good in spoiling children rather than disciplining them,

therefore, it is difficult for them to assist in their grandchildren's discipline at school and at home. Hence, it is difficult for them to be involved in grandchildren's formal education.

2.6.14.4 Families living with HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS is a very sensitive issue, yet it is one which many schools are affected by and cannot ignore. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:157) point out that the effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa are felt by most of the families and schools. In many families, children have lost a mother, a father or both parents due to HIV and AIDS. A large number of children are growing up without the benefits of an intact family life. In a significant number of cases, the eldest sibling has to take care of the young ones, thus taking on unfamiliar adult roles which they would be ill prepared for. It is also common that children in child-headed households become prey to neglect and abuse. Thus, one of the types of parental involvement, namely parenting, usually lacks and this affects both the orphans and parents negatively in the education processes.

From the previous discussion on barriers to parental involvement in formal education it is clear that many parents do not take part in the schooling of their children owing to various reasons such as, lack of time, lack of knowledge and poverty. Parents' attitude towards school creates another barrier to parental involvement for they perceive school as alienating and believe that since they do not have the necessary qualifications and skills they have nothing to contribute (Hornby 2004:1). In addition, educators and school authorities discourage parents from getting involved by not valuing the parents' opinions or looking down upon them. Lack of communication can also be identified as a barrier to parental involvement in that if parents are not well informed about the curriculum they might not get involved.

2.7 The importance of parental involvement

2.7.1 Active parental involvement

Evidence suggests that active parental involvement in the schools is critical to achieving a learner's educational success at all grade levels. Jones and Jones (2010:136) in their comment on the importance of parental involvement in their children's formal education state that while the educators' primary role is to work with learners, they also find their work with parents as important and rewarding, since children's attitudes about school are influenced by their parents. The first place of contact for most children, as soon as they are born into the world, is the family (Noraini and Naima 2006:195). Therefore, when parents feel good about their children's educators and school, the youngsters are more likely to receive encouragement and reinforcement for desirable school behaviour (Damien 2004:200; Anguiano 2004:67). Damien (2004) and Anguiano (2004) further point out that the influence of the family at this stage is very important, because much of the basic learning takes place at home with parents as chief educators. Children indeed learn a language, how to live or relate with other people and ways of doing things from parents and other family members. Consequently, home is the first place where children learn, whereas the school is the second one. As a result, parents can be considered to be the first and main figures in their children's learning. Parents, therefore directly or indirectly play a daily significant part in the education of their children (Gonzalez 2009:216).

Multiple studies have demonstrated that active parent involvement in their children's education is the most accurate predictor of learner achievement, and not family income or socioeconomic status, as many may think (Hands 2010:101; Couchenour and Chrisman 2004:78; Hiatt-Michael 2010:75). To show how important it is for parents to be involved in their children's formal education, Epstein *et al.* (2009), in Olsen and Fuller (2012:148) argue that parents, regardless of their income level, educational background, family structure, or past experience with schools, aspire to be actively involved with their children's education. Thus, schools have to reach out to all

families, mainly because most parents, in spite of their background, need to be recognised by the school through receiving information, especially information that shows how the parents can get involved. As a matter of fact, educators are increasingly aware of parents' desire to communicate with their children's educators, receive frequent feedback on the children's academic progress, and have the opportunity to participate in the making of decisions that affect their children's education.

2.7.2 Forms of parental involvement

Parental involvement according to Comer (2005:123) takes many forms, which include helping children with homework, coaching youth sports, and getting to know a learner's educators and friends. Learners with parents who are involved in their school tend to have fewer behavioural problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse, and perform better academically. These learners are more likely to complete high school than learners whose parents are not involved in their school (Price-Mitchell 2009:87). Parents' involvement in learners' activities reinforces a couple of important concepts. These include: parents' signaling to their children's needs in all areas, such as emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual; and an improvement of the parents' attitude towards education in general. Finally, schools that work well with families have more support from parents and a better reputation in the community (Worthman 2013:158).

Several studies agree with the above notion that parents' involvement increases the likelihood of children continuing with their education and choosing challenging course options (Cox-Petersen 2011; Riojas-Crtez 2014:3; Weiss, *et al.* 2014: xxiii). High levels of parental expectation, consistent encouragement and actions that aim to enhance learning opportunities in the home are all positively associated with learners' high aspirations and college enrolments (Lowe 2004:6; Stewart 2008:183; Hill and Taylor, 2004:161). Apart from that, parental involvement allows parents to monitor school activities and to coordinate their efforts with educators. That is why educators of learners with highly involved parents tend to give greater attention to those learners, and they tend to identify problems that might inhibit learners' development. Finally,

schools that experience high learner failure usually experience dramatic improvements in learner success when parents get provided a chance to become effective partners in their children's education (Hiatt-Michael 2010:177).

Parental involvement in education helps to improve learners' overall attitude towards school in a number of tangible ways. Antonopoulou, Koutrouba, and Babalis (2011:333) observed that the involvement of parents results in learner attendance increases, learner attitudes improvement and a decrease in instances of misbehaviour. Parent involvement also reduces the overall dropout rate for learners and increases the probability that learners will go on to attend college. Finally, there are "mutually reinforcing effects" for both the parents and the learners when parents and learners work together to achieve educational goals (Marshburn and Pianta 2006:150).

2.7.3 Parental involvement in learning

Olsen and Fuller (2012:132) argue that parental involvement in learning is crucial for a number of reasons. The most important reason is that, it has a positive influence on learners with regards to the educational achievement and the psychological and emotional development of learners. They further maintain that parental involvement is an effective way of restoring mutual confidence and trust, and in creating a sense of interdependence between parents and educators. This underscores the significance of parental involvement in school activities that benefit learners, educators and the school (Mandara, 2006:262).

The above mentioned notion is supported by Hornby (2004:1 and West, Noden, Edge and David 2013:461) as noted in their argument that learners of involved parents usually perform well in their tests and attend school consistently. These learners are regularly faithful to their school work which has to be done at home. They develop self-confidence that enable them to control themselves and are ambitious about and stimulated by to school work. These learners have a good perspective towards school and their behaviour is controllable in school. As mentioned earlier, learners who come from different social circumstances are inclined to perform well in situations where

parents and educators collaborate (Dodd and Konzal 2002:98). This fills the gap between the way things are done in school and at home. Hence, in most cases high school learners whose parents take part in their education normally proceed to another class every year (Olsen and Fuller 2012:133), and they do not have a tendency of leaving a school before the completion of their study.

2.7.4 Involved parents

Astone and Mclanahan, in Koonce and Harper (2005:57) posit that involved parents are more assertive in their upbringing and resolution skills. They develop a two-way conversation and exchange of views with their children and are aware that they have the potential to help their children to socialise and be intellectually and emotionally mature. Once parents are knowledgeable in developing their children, they usually discipline them with love and support them when they try their level best. Involved parents are also appreciative of the educators' roles and contribution to the school curriculum. Parents are often ready and willing to offer their assistance when asked for by their children's educators, especially if they know what their children exactly learn at school. Hornby (2004:2) is of the opinion that parents become more engaged in children's learning activities at home because they consider it as part of their daily task. Parents who are more involved with their children's activities also understand the school better and build powerful relationships with educators and the school administration. Such parents always take their children's education seriously and are very keen to help at any time when the school asks them to be engaged with any decision-making processes concerning activities that have an effect on children's education.

Schools that have a large number of parents who are fully involved in their children's education both at home and in the school are likely to have confident principals and educators (Hiatt-Michael 2010:4). Parents who get involved in their children's education usually show honour to principals and educators by appreciating what they do to their children and treat them with respect (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:15). As long as parental involvement is reliable, there will be a two-way communication and better relationships among educators, parents and administrators (Mashburn and

Pianta 2006:151). Principals and educators will also enjoy their profession because their work load is lessened by parents' cooperation. Consequently, learners may benefit from this progress by developing better attitudes towards school and improve their performance by demonstrating higher rates of work completion at school and in their homework (Cowan, Napolitano and Sheridan 2004:203).

Similarly, Olsen and Fuller (2012:134) point out that schools that show interest in involving parents are inclined to have a better stature in the community around them. Both maintain further that schools that involve parents in their children's learning are supported by the community in ways such as the provision of security, conducting fund-raising and assisting in building and the maintenance of discipline. On a similar note schools programmes that are concerned about parental involvement are most likely to have higher quality schedules than the ones that do not engage parents.

Hiatt-Michael (2008:87) mentions that an increasing body of research carried out in the past twenty years supports the importance of parent involvement in their children's schooling. She points out that findings reveal that educators' efforts to involve parents promote higher learner attendance rates, lower suspension and expulsion rates. The involvement of parents also contributes to higher graduation rates, more accurate diagnosis of learners for educational placement, higher satisfaction with the school, learner improved goal-setting and pride in school work, as well as higher academic achievement in reading and Mathematics.

The following section focuses on the strategies that can be employed to develop parental involvement in formal education.

2.8 The strategies that can be used to enhance parental involvement in formal education

2.8.1 Parent-child relationship

Although the practice in which parents work directly with their children in learning at home is the most successful parent involvement, it needs to be taken into consideration that most parents are unable to assist their children with school work. Thus, such parents need to be guided and supported in order to empower them so

that they would become involved in the education of their children at all levels of education. Parents also need ongoing guidance, training sessions, and information on how to become actively involved in their children's education as this allows them to plan and implement family involvement activities (Olsen and Fuller, 2012:149). Christenson and Reschly (2010:175) assert that learners, in most cases, like to make their parents happy or to show how obedient they are. Therefore, parents who respond positively to the educators call for parents to help their children with reading at home are more likely to excel in reading as compared to those whose parents do not show interest in helping their children with reading at home.

Hiatt-Michael (2010:61) in her study on parental involvement at home indicates that parents help their children at home by creating a space or making a time table for reading as well as reading for their children (Gottfried, Schlackman, Gottfried and Boutin-Martinez 2015:24). Parents also encourage reading, writing and discussions among family members by reading, listening to learners reading and talking about what is being read on a regular basis (Hornby 2004:58; Maloney, Converse, Gibbs, Levine and Beilock 2015:697). They also do whatever they can afford to improve their children's reading and expose learners to things that arouse their interest in achieving their goal of study. Parents create a favourable learning atmosphere for their children at home by making a family time-table that regulates all family activities such as study and rest time. In addition, parents lead by examples as the children copy the way their parents gain success or obtain great achievement. As a result, children learn that hard work pays from seeing how hard their parents work for the good of the education of their children (Epstein 2005:188). Parents also instill the importance of learning and self-control by asking time and again whether the school work is done. If this is done regularly it makes learners aware that in order to achieve their goals in life they must work hard.

According to Christenson and Reschly (2010:175) parents express high but realistic achievement expectations for their children by setting goals and standards that are appropriate for learners' age and maturity. Hiatt-Michael (2010:60) emphasises that parental involvement permits parents to show interest in learners' development

towards learning at school. Such parents are ready and willing to assist learners with their school work, on what they would like to be in the future and the chances that they have of their dreams coming true. Parent involvement is more valuable if the school policies are clear and understandable and also if educators give parents a clear explanation of what to do, how to do it and when (Hands and Hubbard 2011:46). If the school states clearly the activities parents should do at home in order to assist their children, parents would be able to motivate their children in learning and this makes children enjoy schooling. Thus, parents require definite information on what to do in order to assist learners with their schoolwork.

The best way parents can improve their children's life chances is, perhaps, by creating a home environment that encourages learning, expressing high expectations from their children, and becoming involved in their school. Parental participation has a significant positive effect on learners' achievement. The kind of involvement that makes the most difference is the conversations parents have with their children at home (Olsen and Fuller 2012:149). This view is raised by Anderson and Minke (2007:320) who assert that parent-child conversations about schoolwork that are carried out in the home are valuable as they enhance learner achievement. Anderson and Minke (2007) state further that the mere act of talking positively at home about learning and school is one of the most effective forms of parent involvement.

In the following section, the researcher will discuss communication as one of the strategies that can be employed to develop the involvement of parents in their children's formal education.

2.8.2 Communication

Communication is one of the most crucial components for creating and maintaining a constructive partnership between families and educators (Olsen and Fuller 2012:148). Therefore, schools should use a range of communication techniques that assist them and families to share information. Administrators need to have organised and well-structured plans and implementations of parent involvement in order to provide a consistent approach to family involvement practices. Communication is tremendously

essential in parental involvement, since all the efforts to enhance parents' participation in formal education are impossible without efficient interaction between educators and parents. According to Hornby (2004:25), a regular, ongoing communication from school to home and home to school is needed. The duty to arrange parents' meetings, in the Mhale's Hoek District's high schools lies with the principals. Therefore, they need to possess the fundamentals for good communication so that they will be able to encourage parents to attend meetings that focus on the children's needs.

A two-way communication is an open and dynamic channel of communication which allows educators and parents to share information about children's social, emotional and educational development. Communication enables both parties to discuss the children's behaviour and learning at home and at school (Christenson and Reschly 2010:249). It also assists families to actively and effectively encourage children to learn at home and support them with their school work. Christenson and Reschly (2010), emphasise further that parents wish to get regular updates about their children's performance from the educators and school staff. This communication between the school and parents should inform parents about children's progress, skills and strengths, and identify ways that can be used to improve children's learning and behaviour. Hence, families need to know what the educators do at school in order to help children with homework.

Communication and its resultant interaction among participants, allows parents to give feedback to the school on their knowledge, concerns and desires, and in this process both the school and parents benefit. Parents need to feel that they are free to contact the school at any time when they have a concern about their children. As a result, the school principals ought to develop effective oral and written communication skills and to ensure that an extensive variety of communication alternatives is open to parents (Hornby 2004:25). Parent-teacher meetings supply parents with strategies and skills to strengthen children's development in education and become a mode of communication to develop parent involvement at school and at home.

The parent-teacher conference is the most important opportunity to talk with parents about their children's school progress. During the parent-teacher conference, which is

normally planned by the school and invites all families, educators have access to communicate with parents. Parents and educators are able to discuss matters concerning children and hence both parties will be working towards improving learners' education. Learners can be invited to participate, particularly if the discussion is on the selection of subjects (Riojas-Cortez 2014:59). The conference is thus significant as it also assists educators to understand why some learners or particular learners behave the way they do.

Diversity in families as another strategy that may be used for the development of parental involvement in their children's formal education as discussed below.

2.8.3 Diversity in families

Riojas-Cortez (2014:20), in her study on diversity in parental involvement, stresses that educators must seek and involve families, other elders and cultural community experts in an effort to incorporate children's home cultures in the school curriculum. She also affirms that the assessment of children should not be limited to standardised tests, but rather that schools should include parents' feedback and suggestions during recommendations as this results in recommendations that match with the children's home culture and social practices. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:164) posit that schools should ensure that written and verbal communications to parents is meaningful by making sure that educators are sensitive and responsive to families' cultural and educational backgrounds when talking to them or writing messages and sending informational materials to parents. Educators need to be aware of different cultural groups (Mundt, Gregory, Melzi and McWayne 2015:170), but at the same time must avoid generalising families into distinct groups, such as low-income families, or single-parent families.

Acknowledging the presence of family diversity, as Hands and Hubbard (2011:99) note, is essential, because it goes beyond visual representations of culturally diverse materials in the school settings. It includes encouraging and supporting parents of minority groups to actively participate in all types of parent involvement activities, such as leadership roles in decision-making, attending parenting classes and assisting

their children's learning at home. Therefore, educators must encourage families to share their cultural backgrounds that have significance in their parenting and child-rearing practices, communication styles, and education beliefs.

The attainment of a satisfactory understanding of different cultural backgrounds by the principal and educators enables them to show a greater respect for the knowledge, experiences and skills acquired by the parents. Parental involvement requires schools and educators to understand and recognise the diversity of children and families that are represented in their schools. Families differ in their structures, economic status, ethnic and educational backgrounds. An awareness of learners' and families' beliefs, attitudes, cultural customs and values is also essential for the effectiveness of the planning and implementation of parent involvement as noted by Bradley and Kibera (2006) cited in Olsen and Fuller (2012:149).

Schools can only acknowledge the diversity of parents served in the school by developing a number of comprehensive parent involvement in school activities. All parents have different skills and abilities, interests and needs, schedules and family obligations, and ages and grade levels for their children. Therefore, all parents and families respond differently to requests for involvement in their children's education (Knopf and Swick2007:422). Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:79) who studied parental involvement in South African schools and in other places concur with the above authors by asserting that some parents are able to participate at the school during school hours, yet many have to choose activities that allow them to stay at home. Therefore, this comprehensiveness and flexibility acknowledges the parents' needs and interests and allows parents to build on their strengths and resources. All these considerations affect the amount and type of parental involvement in the school.

Olsen and Fuller (2012:149) note that the educators and schools have to understand the needs of diverse families in order to be in a position to help learners to learn more effectively. Addressing family diversity is fundamental to building positive home-school relationship. A combination of family characteristics supplies essential information to understanding how to work with diverse types of families. Christenson and Reschly (2010:83) mention that educators have to be prepared to work with families who

challenge their personal views and experiences towards different families. In that way an understanding of diversity among families grants information that allows schools to accept the variety of families represented in current school settings and to be familiar with the learners' background. In this way parental involvement in formal education becomes more beneficial.

The following section discusses family-school partnership as one of the strategies that can be used to enhance parental involvement in formal education.

2.8.4 Family-School partnership

Christenson and Reschly (2010:247) in their research on family-school partnership highlight the process of parents and educators working communally to augment learners' social, educational and emotional development by means of home-school interaction and involvement. Bender and Emolie (2010:57) and Christenson and Reschly (2010:30) observe that a partnership between parents and schools improves and develops the schools as parents involve themselves in the schools' activities for benefit their children's education. Parents need to be empowered if they are to make a significant contribution to their children's education (Ule, Zivoder and du Bois-Reymond 2015:329). Administrators need to support educators and parents in order for them to effectively carry out a productive home-school partnership. Vatterott (2009:55) is of the same opinion that this relationship creates an opportunity for parents and educators to become involved in a more formal and structured partnership relating to the education of the children. He confirms this in his remark: "Power relationship between schools and parents must be realigned to embrace parents as equal partners in their children's education" (Vatterott 2009:56).

Bender and Emolie's (2010) study on parental involvement in urban secondary schools is also significant here. Bender and Emolie (2010:55) argue that more research on learner development and effective family-school partnerships still needs to be carried out. The study also illustrates the need for a stronger parent-school partnership, and emphasises that children of parents who encourage learning at home are likely to attend school regularly, respect school rules and regulations, view their

school work seriously and do it enthusiastically. In another incident, a fifteen years research performed by Van Wyk and Lemmer, in South Africa (2009:12) noted that high level of parental involvement in their children's schooling yields better children's academic achievements, a more confident attitude to schooling and a lower the drop-out rate. These outcomes shown by the above-noted global research on family-school partnerships are indeed significant to this study.

A number of research studies on parental involvement in education stress that parental involvement is clearly linked to the learners' academic, social and emotional development and that building parent-school partnerships is one of the strategies for improving learners' success globally (Epstein and Sanders, 2006; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies 2007; Moyo, Wadesango and Kurebwa 2012:142; Mutasa, Goronga and Gatsi 2013:22). The above cited scholars mention that the development of school-family partnership is strongly recommended by special educators and this underscores that there is a link between parents' involvement and children's subsequent achievement. Just as parents can have an impact on the school, school-initiated activities can help parents improve the home environment, which, in turn, has a strong influence on learners' school performance (Dotger and Bennet 2010:132). When parents and educators work together, both parties feel supported and have more positive views toward each other (Epstein 2005:202). Additionally, the more parents and educators cooperate with each other, the greater the likelihood that learners will continue their own education and complete in time, and the better the resources and role models for their children (Hands 2010:115).

Although this is relatively a new research area, there is increasing evidence that the quality of the links between parents and educators influences learners' school success (Hiatt-Michael 2010:4). The reviewed literature also highlights that establishing parental involvement allows for "joint ownership" of problems and concerns as well as joint commitment towards educational and behavioural goals for learners. In most cases learners at different levels of education are more comfortable if their parents have knowledge about schooling. They are also satisfied with a help offered by their parents at home with regard to their school work. Such children tend to enjoy learning

and perform well because of the support shown by parents. If parents visit the school quite often, this makes the children feel that the school is a continuation of learning which begins and is practised at home and that their parents are concerned about their education (Hiatt-Michael 2004:50; Mccallum 2007:154; Beckley, Elvidge and Hendry 2009:234; Hiatt-Michael 2008:187).

According to Caspe (2008:94) and Ferguson, Ramos, Rudo and Wood (2008:125), educators and parents need to form and nurture relationships. Educators should recognise that parents have something to contribute to the education of their children and parents too should value educators' contribution in the education and growth of their children. All parties must work hard to ensure that both home and school are places where children feel safe and learn things about social and educational issues. Wortham (2013:150), in occurrence, stresses that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families through working together in partnership. Therefore, an effective parental involvement is one that allows school and family to share a responsibility that facilitates their children's academic achievement as well as their socio-emotional development.

Several studies indicate that school-family partnership is important for learner success (Christenson and Reschly 2010:3; Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009:15; Steyn 2007:267; Hands 2011:2) and that good parent-school links have positive effects on parents and educators. An active collaboration between educators and parents in the country can benefit learners in their learning (Epstein and Sheldon 2006:128; Wortham 2013:158; Hiatt-Michael 2010:135). Thus, parental involvement is significant for the learners, educators and parents. Mestry and Grobler (2007:177) mention that despite the obvious importance of parental involvement in learning, most parents do not participate in their children's school activities and they continue to distance themselves from the education of their children, which is an issue that this study seeks to better by identifying strategies that can improve parent involvement in formal school activities.

2.9 Summary of the Review of Related Literature

This chapter reviewed the ecological theory and social theory. Both theories acknowledge that children's development, growth and education are not constructed only at the level of the individual, but rather are influenced and facilitated by levels of the systems in which individuals live. Accordingly, parental involvement in formal education has to be examined in multiple contexts, and if parents are to participate in their children's schooling, educators and professionals need to ensure that social support and services take into account the contextual factors that may be limiting parents' access to parental involvement in formal education. Moreover, the literature reviewed in this chapter underscores the unique influence that parental involvement has on their children's formal education and that a number of factors, such as parenting styles, attitudes, socio-economic status, and school-climate, lack of time, transport problems and culture play an important role in determining the nature of parental involvement.

The next chapter explores the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was employed during the course of the research. Of particular importance is the focus on the study's research design, sampling of the participants, data collection and analysis and the limitations. A qualitative research design was chosen. Rich data were gathered from participants by means of semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The section also reveals how the researcher conducted all the interviews and how data were analysed and interpreted.

The following section discussed the research paradigm for this study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

In this study a paradigm serves as the lens or organising principle by which reality is interpreted (Maree 2012:48). Hence, an interpretive paradigm was used in this study. The researcher sought to interpret the meanings that participants give to their views and experiences (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:17).

According to Creswell (2009:7-8) and Maree (2012:21, 57) the three paradigms are constructivism, interpretivism and positivism. The interpretive paradigm is typified by a concern for the individual participants. The central attempt in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of the participants' experiences. A paradigm according to Maree (2012:47-48) and Creswell (2009:6), is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view. It is also a perspective or ways of looking at reality and a frame of reference that is used to organise reasoning (Babbie 2007:31). Nevertheless, Bryman (1988:4), in Bryman (2012:630), explains a paradigm as a cluster of beliefs and dictates that influence what should be studied, how the research should be done, and how results should be interpreted. To maintain the integrity of the phenomena under investigation, efforts are made by the researcher to get inside the participants

and to comprehend from within (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011:17). Hence, an interpretive researcher commences with individuals and sets out to grasp their interpretations of the world around them (Cohen, *et al.* (2011:18).

The researcher used the interpretive approach in order to get a clear picture of the participants' lived experience from the participants' perspective themselves. This entailed studying the subjective meanings that participants attached to their experiences (Makura 2014:45). For this study, the researcher sought to understand subjective meaningful experiences and the meaning of social actions within the context that participants live (van Wyk and Moeng 2014:137). The interpretive paradigm therefore highlights the significance of interpretation and observation in grasping the participants' social world (Snape and Spencer 2008:7). Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm acknowledges the value of the social, cultural and personal contexts on the participants' lives and questions whether it is possible to study the behaviour of participants outside the context in which they live (Snape and Spencer 2008:8).

Finally, the interpretive paradigm in this study recognises that participants' perceptions and experiences of reality are subjective. In addition, the interpretive paradigm questions the concept that research is actually value-free, and that the researcher has no influence on data collection and interpretation. Instead, interpretivism highlights the inherent subjectivity of humans, both as study participants and researchers (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:15).

The researcher discusses, in the following section, the ontology and epistemology of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985:5), in Maree (2012:48), point out that a paradigm addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), and the relationship between the knower and known (epistemology). Paradigms are all encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define the nature of enquiry for researchers along two dimensions: ontology and epistemology, as is the case in this study.

3.2.1 Ontology

The ontology of this study reflects multiple realities as it was noted that the participants were subjective, multiple and socially constructed (Barbour 2014:29). Ontology refers to the study of the nature and form of reality that is known (Maree 2012:54; Hays and Sing 2012:34). Sharan (2009:8) views ontology as a position that entails what one believes about the nature of reality. In Lesotho, for instance, some parents still believe that education of their children is the responsibility of educators. Educators are the ones to ensure that learners pass well even if parents do not take part. Ontology also refers to the assumptions people make about the nature of being in existence or reality (Breakwell, Smith and Wright 2012:490; O’Leary 2010:5). The researcher was, therefore, able to identify, through this study, the meanings that the participants attributed to the influence of parental involvement in formal education. This study also examines how and why parents, as participants, involve themselves in their children’s formal education.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology, in this study, is a philosophical term that refers to the assumptions people make about what knowledge is, how knowledge can be generated, what is known and how it is known (Breakwell, Smith and Wright 2012:490). Epistemology relates to how things can be known, and how truths or facts can be discovered and disclosed (Hays and Singh 2012:35; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston 2014:24). Epistemology also refers to the way people come to know the existing multiple realities (O’Leary 2010:5). It is influenced by communities of practice who define what counts as acceptable ways of knowing and those ways that affect the relationships between the researcher and the communities who are being researched, especially the way partnerships are formed on the basis of an equality of power and esteem (Cohen, Manon and Morrison 2011:33). Epistemology concerns itself with the question of what is regarded as acceptable knowledge (Bryman 2012:27). All along the practise of schooling was that, children were taken away from their parents and were taught by educators at school. Parents were not informed about what was going on at school regarding their children’s education. So now when the Ministry of Education and

Training, in the case of Lesotho, tried to encourage parents to be involved in their children's formal education some of them drag their feet because of the knowledge they had before. Some educators also seem to find it difficult to guide parents on how to be involved in learners' education.

Epistemology, therefore, looks at how one knows reality, the method for knowing the nature of reality (Maree 2012:55-56), and the relations between reliability and validity, as well as the subjective and objective (Hays and Singh 2012:540). As a result, the researcher had to be sensitive to the participants' views as these subjective experiences reflected the individual's reality and shaped her study (Maree 2007:55; Hays and Singh 2012:35). Some of the subjective views relate to the fact that, while the first group of people from which children learn are parents, some parents still think that formal education is the educators' responsibility. Other epistemological issues considered by the researcher in this study relate to the learners' lack of awareness of the importance of parental involvement and their perceptions that parents can only introduce them to family chores not to school work.

The choice of paradigm was guided by what the researcher intended to achieve. Thus, it guided and directed the researcher's thinking and action (Hays and Singh, 2012:37). The interpretive paradigm was employed, because it formed the keystone of this study in terms of ontology and epistemology (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011:33).

3.3 Research Design

A qualitative research design was used in this study to gain insight on the influence of parental involvement in the formal education of their children in high schools, and to evaluate how parents get involved in the Molekane's Hoek District, in Lesotho. The qualitative research design, particularly a case study design, was considered to be the most suitable one. The case study design assisted the researcher to understand better the social phenomenon of parental involvement, in its natural setting, with an emphasis on understanding the views of the participants (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston 2013:66; Hays and Singh 2012:417). The design explored the meanings and

intentions that underlie everyday actions regarding parental involvement in formal education (Hays and Singh 2012:423).

The following section describes the research approach used in this study.

3.3.1 Research Approach

The researcher used the qualitative research design because it is an activity that takes place where the participants are located (Denzin and Lincon 2005:3). The activity can take place at their work place in the case of educators, or where participants live in the case of parents, or at school in the case of learners, as done in this study. This design is more suitable for the study because it is made up of a set of material practices that make the participants' world visible to the researcher. These practices changed the world in which the research was carried out by turning it into a sequence of interviews, conversations and recording of the information as it was collected. At this stage, the qualitative research design included a naturalistic approach to the situation. Therefore, the research was carried out in the participants' real-life situation. The researcher went to the school and to parents' homes, and tried to make sense of, and interpret what was shared regarding parental involvement in formal education in accordance with the way the participants perceived it (Maree 2007:79).

Furthermore, this methodology assisted the researcher to arrive at an in-depth understanding of parental involvement in formal education at the high school level. The researcher was drawn to the qualitative approach in order to try and capture the voice of the participants as regards their experiences concerning parental involvement (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke 2004:362).

The qualitative research design indicates an interactive, cyclical relation between data collection and data analysis that alternate continuously and influence each other. It was through in-depth interviews that the range of feelings and perceptions of the participating principal, educators, parents and learners were obtained during this study. The interest focused on the perspectives of participants, in everyday practices and knowledge, regarding the influence of parental involvement in formal education (Flick 2007:1).

Manning (2008:4) views a qualitative research design as an approach that seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspective of the local population that it involves. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has decided to use this design in order to gain insight into the involvement of parents in their children's education.

According to MacMillan (2008:12), a qualitative research design stresses a phenomenological model in which multiple realities are rooted in the subjects' perspectives. The researcher uses this design with the belief that there are multiple realities represented in participant perspectives and that context is critical in providing an understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (MacMillan 2008:56).

As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, the research aimed at investigating the influence of parental involvement in formal education at a selected high school in the Molekane District of Lesotho. To reach this outcome, an intensive qualitative style of research appeared to be the best option as it allowed the researcher to interact closely with the participants in a gentle manner and to observe and interpret their world (Mahlomaholo and Netshandama 2012:42). The qualitative research design indeed studies the research phenomena in their natural setting and involves the collection of a variety of materials to determine the problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Moreover, the design was noted by the researcher as the most effective method that could be used in answering the research questions that guided this study (Maree 2007:78, Davies 2007:150; Creswell 2009:175)

In furthering the above argument, Creswell (2009:4) observes that a qualitative research design enables a researcher to learn at first hand, about the social world that he/she would be investigating by the means of involvement and participation in that world and focusing upon what the individual participants say. In this design, therefore, the method of data collection was open, flexible and not strictly systematised. This allowed the researcher to gather all the information that answered the research questions. The emphasis was actually on the quality and depth of information as the aim of this study was to find out and describe the depth of the opinions, values,

attitudes and experiences of the principal, educators, parents and learners on parental involvement in formal education at high school in Mohale's Hoek, Lesotho.

The qualitative research design assisted the researcher to develop her themes and structures, beginning with details and later moving on to more general principles. This process made the researcher to work on the information until she came up with a series of themes (Creswell 2012:150). The themes were also built from the researcher's working with participants. The themes, however, had to be checked time and again against the collected data. This is termed inductive-deductive way of reasoning because throughout the process of research, the researcher used complicated reasoning techniques.

Authors such as Creswell (2009), Mustafa (2010) and Manning (2008) emphasise that a qualitative research design employs various strategies of inquiries such as ethnography, case study research, phenomenological research and the grounded theory. Therefore, in this study the researcher used case study as a strategy of inquiry (Makura 2012:282). This was used in order to investigate the involvement of parents in the formal education of their children at the selected high school. The aim is to enhance active participation of parents concerning learning in Mohale's Hoek (Allmark, Tod, Thompson and Clarke 2006:154).

The researcher intended to conclude the discussion on qualitative research design by briefly exploring its values as observed by Lehohla (2011). According to Lehohla (2011:46) a qualitative research design is advantageous in the sense that the experiences and knowledge from the respondents, in this case the principal, educators, parents and learners, enables the researcher to derive meaning from the study. This research, thus, enabled the researcher to develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data, owing to the design's use of an inductive form of reasoning (Creswell 2007:262).

3.3.2 Case Study

As indicated in the previous section a case study research method was employed in this study as it allows the researcher to seek a range of evidence in order to get the

best possible answers to the research questions. It also added strength to what was discovered by the previous researchers in their search on parental involvement in their children's education (Gillham 2004:10). The case study offered the researcher the opportunity to investigate principal, educators, parents and the group of learners. This approach permitted the researcher to identify the benefits of involving parents as well as strategies that can be employed to improve parental involvement in formal education (Maree 2010:76).

The researcher collected data during the moments when the principal, educators, parents and learners were sharing their experiences concerning parental involvement in children's education. This was facilitated by the use of the case study method, which is aimed at gaining greater insight about people by researching them in their natural environment (Litchman 2013:233). This method enabled the researcher to use the case through which the information about the research problem was gathered. The case is School X, whereby some parents seemed not to be involved in their children's education, while other parents were interested in the education of their children (Lapan and Quartaroli 2009:165).

The case study enabled the researcher to examine the existing real-life situations of the participants and provided the basis for the application of ideas. This method, as Sharan (2009:40) stipulates, is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system, while Yin (2008:18) defines case study in terms of the research process.

Sharan (2009:51) commenting on the case study method posits that it is the best plan for answering the research questions. Hence, the researcher chose this method to answer a research problem. In actual fact the case study gave rise to a splendid and entire description of an event and thus, it gave the researcher the ability to view and understand the truth about the research problem.

A case study seeks to gain greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of a specific situation. This method enabled the researcher to gather information about parental involvement towards learning at high schools in Mohale's Hoek. The case study also enlarged the researcher's range of personal experience (Creswell

2013:98). Through the use of this method a whole range of the subject's life concerning parental involvement in formal education was studied and the knowledge was enlarged. Finally, the researcher decided to use a single case study which means the same information was collected from one high school, using more than one tool for data collection and many sources of evidence (Yin 2009:119; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011:289).

The following section focuses on the population, sample and sampling techniques, which are some of the strategies that are employed in the qualitative research approach.

3.4 The Population and Sample

3.4.1 The Population

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2012:52) define a population as the study object which consists of individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events or the conditions to which they are exposed. The population encompasses the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:199) stretch the definition of a population to include the totality of organisation units, case records or other sampling units which the research problem is concerned. It is the larger group to which one hopes to apply the results.

The population of the study consisted of the parents and learners at one high school in the Mophale's Hoek District, Lesotho. It also included the principal, and educators who have taught there for at least five years.

The researcher intended to come to a deeper understanding of participants in parental involvement in formal education in high schools. Therefore, only part of the total population which is the sample was used.

3.4.2 The Sample

The total number of people targeted by the researcher to inform the study is a sample. The sample is viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from an interested population, or a small portion of the total set of objects, or persons that together comprise the subject of the study (De Vos 2005:199; Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012:91; Check and Schutt 2012:92). Data for this study were collected from one principal, six educators, six parents and six learners from one school. This allowed the researcher to get in-depth information from participants (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston 2014:117). There was a reason or justification for why the sample of individuals would provide the best information to address the research question. In other words, this sample of six learners in Form D (Grade 11), was chosen because it is likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher was investigating (Check and Schutt 2012:104).

3.4.3 The Sampling Procedure

In the case of this study, the sample was purposely selected and the researcher limited the number of participants in order to make it possible for the use of case study method (Niewenhuis 2007:78). The researcher decided to collect data at one school out of ten high schools in the Mhale's Hoek District, because it is a church-owned school and produces good academic results every year. This high school, built in 1962, was the first one to be established in the district. Learners from the school come from both urban and rural areas. For that reason, participants were able to give the information needed by the researcher in connection with parental involvement in formal education in high schools in the Mhale's Hoek, Lesotho.

Mustafa (2010:135) views sampling as the process used to select a portion of the population for a study when it is impossible to have knowledge of a larger collection of the objects. As mentioned earlier, sampling in this study is purposive, because the researcher sought the views and opinions of a selected principal, educators, parents and learners. As with all qualitative research sampling, a small sample was selected to enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the concept, parental

involvement (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2012:188). On the other hand, Maxwell (2005:28) explains sampling as a decision about where to conduct the research and whom to involve. A purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select that school with its principal, educators, learners and parents, who were able to provide the essential information regarding parental involvement in relation to formal learning in high schools (Flick 2009:123; Maree 2012:79). The purposive sampling in this study, according to De vos (2005:207); Fraenkel, *et al.* (2012:100), based entirely on the judgment of the researcher in that sampling is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population.

Mustafa (2010) has the same idea with Maree (2007:79) that purposive sampling is a technique used to select participants due to some defining characteristic that makes them holders of the information required for the study. The researcher purposely selected a principal, six educators, six parents and six learners from one high school in the Mohale's Hoek District for interviews. Those educators were found to be more suitable because they have taught in that school for at least five years and work closely with learners as subjects and class-teachers. They also give and mark the learners' homework and are the ones who make contact with parents concerning their children's performance progress and anything concerning learners' behaviour. The researcher deliberately selected those parents because they were Form D (Grade 11) learners' parents who stay with their children, make sure that they attend school and have access to contribute in their children's education. The research participants were chosen because they were the ones who had direct experience of the influence of parental involvement in formal education and therefore appropriately gave these experiences meaning and interpretation. They supplied the researcher with rich and valuable information on her research topic (Welman, *et al.* 2012:189). The total sample from which the data were collected is nineteen.

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006:319) define purposeful sampling as selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study when one wants to understand something about those cases without desiring to generalise all such cases. Purposeful sampling is selected to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. It

requires that information be obtained about variations among the sub-units before the sample is chosen. The researcher then searched for information-rich key informants to study. The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in-depth yield many insights about the topic, thus studying one school, as is with this study, is a good example. More importantly, the researcher drew on her knowledge of the population to decide on who to include and the cases that were information-rich (MacMillan 2008:119).

Finally, there are a number of advantages associated with using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is best used with small numbers of individuals or groups which may well be sufficient in understanding and perceiving problems, needs, behaviours and contexts, which are the main justification for a qualitative research (Kumar 2005:178). The researcher chose this strategy for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions. Moreover, it is the sampling plan which enabled the researcher to achieve different degrees of accuracy from different segments of the population. Apart from that, purposive sampling is more precise and, to a great extent, avoids bias (Mustafa 2010:145).

The next section outlines the instruments that were used for data collection and analysis.

3.5 The Research Instruments

Semi-structured and focus group interviews were used to gather data. Thus, semi-structured interviews with the principal, educators and parents, were held first and then followed by focus group interviews with learners.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The researcher adopted a semi-structured interview as the principal, educators and parents could answer the questions in their own words. This data gathering technique is advantageous as it gives the researcher flexibility when asking questions, enables the researcher to get in-depth information, and provides a chance for the interviewer to find reasons for given answers (Marshall and Rossman 2011:157). Furthermore,

the interviewer is able to explore further by asking more questions that allow him or her to dig out more information (Mouton 2001:105). Since parental involvement in learning is a critical issue, a semi-structured interview was easier for participants, especially because the questions that were asked were opinion seeking ones. Finally, one of the advantages of semi-structured interview is that it makes data collection and analysis to be somehow easier than in other approaches (Maree 2012:87).

According to Harding (2013:31), semi-structured interviews are mostly used in qualitative research as a suitable method for data gathering and analysis. The semi-structured interview as observed by Sharan (2009:90) is in the middle, between structured and unstructured. In this type of interview, either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mixture of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the participants, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview was guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions was determined ahead of time. This format allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, the emerging worldview of participants, and to new ideas on the topic. It also allowed her to vary the questions as the situation demanded (Roulston 2007:289).

Another benefit of semi-structured interviews, as viewed by Kumar (2012:145), is that it gives a lot of liberty in terms of subject matter and design. The researcher was free to order these in whatever sequence she wished. She also had complete freedom on the wording she could use and on the explanation of questions to her participants. This technique allowed the researcher to develop questions and to say something at any time when the need arose in accordance to what took place while the conversation was in progress. In addition to that, a semi-structured interview does not contain any direct or predetermined questions. Thus, the interviewer started the conversation in some way and the interviewee keeps the conversation flowing through a free answer-type. Now and then the former delicately directed the flow of talk to relevant facts or events. At the end, the interviewer put questions for clarification and noted down what she had heard and appeared to be pertinent (Wertz 2007:302).

Similarly, semi-structured interview schedules basically defined the line of inquiry. As a result, this researcher was attentive to the responses of the participants in order to identify emerging lines of inquiry that were directly related to the phenomenon being studied, explored and probed them. At the same time, it was easy to get sidetracked by trivial aspects that were not related to the study. When that happened the researcher was able to guide the participants back to the focus of the interview (Maree 2012:87).

The use of semi-structured interviews by the interviewer enabled the researcher, by her own skills, to succeed in overcoming the resistance of the educators and parents. This is because this method gave the researcher an opportunity to probe and clarify questions with participants. There was a greater flexibility under this technique which allowed the researcher the opportunity to restructure questions. The researcher obtained the personal information easily under this method (Mustafa 2010:214).

The following section discusses focus group interviews as a qualitative data collection method. This involved a limited number of people who, through conversation with each other, provided information about specific issues considered in the current study.

3.5.1.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were employed as a method of data collection. The aim was to gain a broad range of views on the research topic over a period of sixty minutes and to create an environment where learners felt comfortable to express their views (Breakwell, Smith and Wright 2012:413; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:136). A focus group, in this study, is a discussion based on interviews between six learners. The interviews were carried out with a group of six Form D (Grade 11) learners, where the interviewer asked questions and the participants responded in turn. Those interviews, which were led by the interviewer, focused on the research problem. This technique allowed the researcher to study the viewpoints of the learners in relation to parental involvement in their children's education (Bryman 2012:503).

Furthermore, a focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people, learners in the case of this study, are asked to outline their perceptions,

beliefs and attitude towards a concept, such as parental involvement in children's formal education. In this approach, questions were asked in an interactive group setting where participants were free to talk with other group members (Flick 2014:250). De vos, Fouche and Delpont (2005:298) describe a focus group interview as a means to understand better how people feel or think about a research problem. This method enabled the researcher to understand learners' opinions and views more explicitly, for the participants were selected because they had certain common characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group.

The focus group was planned and structured, but also a flexible tool that encouraged interaction among participants in discussion on the research problem. The shared and common knowledge offered the researcher the opportunity to gather qualitative data from a small interactive group regarding the perceptions, thoughts and feelings on parental involvement in formal education (Flick 2014:243; Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook 2007:39). The method also helped the researcher to obtain a range of opinions from learners about their parents' involvement in their education. The goals in focus group interviews were to seek each learner's point of view and encouraged them to express their different perceptions. They were designed to obtain learners' opinions. Therefore, in the focus group interviews, the interactions between the researcher and learners and the interactions between the learners themselves are recognised as having the potential to add in-depth dimensions to the knowledge gained by the researcher, in this case, knowledge concerning the involvement of parents in formal education, during the interviews (Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook 2007:42).

Hays and Singh (2012:253) and Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007:42-43) also point out that one of the major advantages of focus group interviews is that they are carried out in a relaxed group setting. As a result, as in the case of this study, learners sense that their opinions and experiences are valued and are more likely to express their opinions and perceptions openly. Another advantage is that the focus group interviews helped the learners to give reflective responses as they listened to one or some learners' opinions on the target topic. The overriding assumption of focus group interviews, as observed by the researcher during the interview, is that participants are

valuable sources of information about themselves. Much was learned from direct and extended conversations with learners whose thoughts and opinions were critical as they discussed each of the prepared questions (Flick 2009:195).

One of the strengths of focus group interviews, for this research, is that learners were invited to participate in a forum where their diverse opinions and perspectives were desired (Breakwell, Smith and Wright 2012:429). Hence, the focus groups aimed at understanding more about what the learners' thoughts and feelings about the research topic. Learners also had the opportunity to clarify, extend and provide examples, especially because the researcher used probing questions to help them amplify their comments. The researcher was guided by the study's fundamental research questions and a well prepared interview guide, which was prepared and tested before the commencement of the interviews (Stewart, Shandasani and Rook 2007:97).

The focus group interview was the most suitable approach to investigating delicate issues as the interviewer had a chance to meet learners and prepare them before the commencement of the interview. This assisted the researcher to clarify some questions that might have been difficult for the interviewees, and to build a trust between the learners and the researcher (Kumar 2012:149).

Additionally, as viewed by Bryman (2012:503-504) the number of focus group interviews, which were carried out, allowed the researcher to explain complicated questions that, the participants had. This became advantageous in the current study as ideas emerged and the researcher managed to have the information regarding the involvement of parents in their children's formal education. Focus group interviews assisted the researcher to interpret learners' behaviour during the interview. They also allowed the researcher to probe learners' emotional reaction towards parental involvement in formal education.

During the focus group interviews the researcher was free to use the words of her own choice, and to arrange the questions to be asked the way she wished or found appropriate. The researcher was also free to formulate questions during the interview depending on how the group participants answered questions. She also had the

opportunity to ask questions in order to find out the truth or hidden information about the research problem (Kumar 2012:144).

The researcher created a tolerant environment in the focus group interviews. This encouraged learners to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns, without pressurising the learners to vote or reach consensus (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:380; Bryman 2012:503). The focus group consisted of six learners who led to a self-disclosure and perceptions regarding parental involvement in formal education in high schools from the Mhale's Hoek district, in Lesotho.

An interview, which is a person-to-person interaction, allows the researcher to use it for any particular group of people, be it young or old. In the case of this study, focus group interviews were successfully used with learners, whereas semi-structured interviews were fruitfully used for educators and parents, during data collection. The use of both semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews provided in-depth information, because they allowed the participants to respond in their own words.

Interviews from both semi-structured and focus group interviews continued until the point of saturation was reached. This means that the researcher went on interviewing participants until no new categories of data emerged. When the researcher found that she was no longer discovering any new inputs into existing categories of data, she stopped the process (Kumar 2005:123). These interactive sessions yielded rich descriptive data that contributed to the researcher's understanding of parental involvement in their children's formal education through the concrete experience of the individuals.

The following section discusses the pilot study, which is one of the instruments used for this study.

3.5.1.3 Pilot study

A pilot study determines whether a research instrument for data collection is able to serve the purpose of the research (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:202). Thus, in order to ensure that the semi-structured interview questions and the focus group

interview questions would serve the researcher conducted, this researcher engaged in a pilot study with selected principal, educators, parents and learners before the actual interviews. Since seeking permission is an essential part of any research project, the researcher first went to the school and requested the principal to allow her to pilot semi-structured interviews on the phenomenon parental involvement in formal education, with the principal, six educators and six parents, and a focus interview with a group of six Form D (Grade 11) learners. The permission was granted by the principal and parents on behalf of their minor children.

Thereafter, the researcher met the participants and explained the time required for participation. She gave them assurances on confidentiality and described the intended use of the data. The researcher asserted that the participants' views would be kept anonymous. A relationship of trust was also established and a rapport with the participants in order to know their perceptions, beliefs and feelings (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:64; McMillan and Schumacher 2006:334). The researcher encouraged the educators, parents and learners to freely share their experiences concerning parental involvement in formal education during the interviews. The participants were provided with sufficient information about the study and the procedures during the interview, or discussion (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:70). The principal, educators and parents were also free to respond to the questions and ask for clarifications where necessary during the interview and the learners were also free to interact with one another in the focus group.

The pilot study had a role of ensuring that interview questions were understood and to the point, and that the research instrument as a whole functioned well. This technique permitted the researcher to take note of questions that made the participants feel uneasy (Lapan and Quartaroli 2009:87). During the pilot study there were questions that seemed difficult to understand for the participants. For instance, one of the questions directed to parents was "How do you participate in your children's education?" Another question directed to educators, "How does your school involve parents in learners' education?" The question which was directed to learners was that "Are your parents taking part in your formal education?" Many participants were

unable to give their experiences. Thus, the researcher clarified and thereafter modified them. Some participants were able to consider how well the questions flowed and whether some questions needed to be moderated, while others observed that some interview questions seemed to be somehow similar in meaning, but differ in wording (Bryman 2012:263-264).

It was difficult to foresee how educators, parents and learners would understand the questions in a dialogue guide drawn by the researcher. This explains why the pilot studies were crucial; hence the interview questions were tested using individuals and groups with similar characteristics to the study population. The researcher also involved a group of six high school learners in the focus group interviews. Thereafter, some questions were amended (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:202). During the pilot study the researcher checked whether the information given in the introduction to the group of learners and individual educators and parents was adequate, and whether the questions were all understood as intended. The researcher also checked the appropriateness of the structure of the interview guides. The method also enabled the researcher to check whether the information gained answered the research questions and if the time taken was sufficient for data collection (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:149).

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process involved visiting schools and parents' homes in the Mohale's Hoek District in early 2014. Data, as stipulated by Sharan (2009:85), are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment. They can be concrete and measurable, as in class attendance, or invisible and difficult to measure as in feelings. Data conveyed through words is labeled qualitative. The researcher decided to use qualitative data which consists of "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge" obtained through interviews (Creswell 2009:193). The data collection techniques used and the specific information considered as "data" in this study are determined by the researcher's theoretical orientation, the problem and purpose of this study, and the selected sample (Welman et al 2012:251).

Interviewing, as one of the commonly used methods of data collection in the social sciences, involves asking participants questions and recording their answers. On the one hand, it could be highly structured and, on the other hand, extremely flexible and in between that it could acquire any form (Kumar 2011:389). It is, therefore, essential for the researcher to advance the steps necessary in conducting the interviews. As a result, the researcher followed a number of interviewing steps, as described below, during the data collection process.

The researcher decided on the research questions that would be answered by interviewees. Those questions were open-ended, general and focused on understanding the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell 2012:163). The researcher also identified interviewees who could best answer those questions based on one of the purposeful sampling procedures. In this study, the principal, educators, parents and learners were interviewed, while the interview of learners was in the form of focus group interviews.

Moreover, the researcher made contact with the principal of the purposely chosen high school in order to obtain permission and to explain the aim of the study as well as the purpose of the interviews. Before the researcher went to the interview site, she wrote letters to participants and then made appointments with them. She later introduced herself when she reached the place of interview and held discussions with the potential participants she had identified for the study. She also asked for permission from the interviewees to take part in the research. Subsequently, the researcher obtained permission from each participant to interview them during the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and to tape record the interviews. Participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that their responses would be confidential. The researcher also stressed that the data collected would be used for research purposes only.

The researcher had designed an interview protocol or guide. Two forms of six pages in length, with fourteen open-ended questions for the principal and educators were, thus, used. Another two forms of four pages in length, with approximately ten open-ended questions for learners, and fifteen open-ended questions for parents were also

designed and used. The researcher created a space on all the four forms that allowed sufficient space between the questions to provide for the interviewees' responses and comments. The questions were phrased in a way that interviewees could understand (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:220). There was also an interview protocol, which was bounded on the front end of the questions that invited the interviewees to open up and talk. The interview protocol allowed the researcher to take notes during the interview. It also helped the researcher to organise her thoughts on items such as headings, information about starting the interview, concluding ideas, and information on how to end the interview (Breakwell, Smith and Wright 2012:429).

The researcher conducted the interview appointments on the basis of the participants' convenience. She then chose, in this type of interviewing, the individuals who did not hesitate to speak and share ideas, and determined the setting in which this could be held. In the first place the researcher chose a site suitable for carrying out the interview. It was a quiet location free from distractions which allowed the accurate recording of information. She ensured that all the participants were comfortable during the interviews. The researcher assessed a one-to-one interview in the case of educators' and parents' and the group interviews for learners, where care was taken to encourage all the participants to talk. The researcher went over the purpose of the study, the amount of time that would be required to complete the interview, and plans for using the results from the interview (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:221).

During the interview, the researcher used appropriate interview procedures. She asked relevant questions, did probing where necessary, and showed respect to the participants. The researcher advised the interviewees to be free as they shared their experiences in the study. She asked for clarification, where necessary, and finished the interview within the set time. The researcher also tried to be a good listener rather than a frequent speaker during the interview (Creswell 2012:166).

The interviews for this study were conducted by the researcher. She was the one who actually gathered information by interviewing participants and watching the interviewees' behaviour (Creswell 2009:175-176). The researcher concentrated on what was said and seen with regard to the participants during the interview. This

helped the researcher to come up with numerous themes that reflected how the participants perceived the problem developed (Creswell 2013:45-46).

Therefore, the researcher collected data in a natural setting and was sensitive to the participants and the places used for collecting data. A conducive atmosphere was created by having only an interviewee and interviewer in the interview room, on each session. In the case of learners, it was only an interviewee and the group of the learners that participated in the interviewed room (Creswell 2013:44).

The semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to secure the most spontaneous reactions through the use of open-ended questions. The participants were free as they answered questions. As a result, the researcher was able to avoid misinterpretations. The interviewer also succeeded in collecting supplementary information about the respondent's personal characteristics and environment, which is often of great value in interpreting results, especially with regard to the influence of parental involvement in formal education in Mohale's Hoek high schools in Lesotho(Kumar 2012:98).

Finally, the semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded to allow for translation and a thorough transcription, as well as analysis afterwards. Field notes were taken during the interviews (Barbour 2014:173). The semi-structured interviews lasting thirty minutes were conducted separately with the principal, educators and parents. The researcher also realised that there was a need to probe more deeply and to extend the responses of the participants. The researcher did the translation, transcription and analysis of all the data. Therefore, for each of the interviews, the researcher only made input in terms of probing and clarifying questions. This allowed the researcher to follow up on a number of important issues that emerged from the interviews and to have a clear understanding of the participant's perception and understandings (Maree 2012:88).

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

This section focuses on how each research question will be answered using data from the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. The five research

questions were answered through a series of semi-structured interviews with the principal, educators and parents, and focus group interviews with learners (Bryman 2012:291). A thematic analysis was adopted in this study. The researcher examined the data to extract core themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts (Bryman 2012:578; King and Horrocks 2010: 165). Coding, one of the main elements of the identification of the themes, was used through each transcript (Bryman 2012:568). This enabled the researcher to link the process of making sense of data collected from participants with the research questions that provided the starting point, and with the literature relating to this study, as well as with the theoretical ideas that were used by the researcher (Bryman 2012:579; Sharan 2009:170).

Most of the data tool questions for the principal, educators and parents were somehow similar as well as the ones for the learners, only a few were different. They were arranged in a way that would answer the five research questions. The researcher looked at the data collected from semi-structured interviews with parents and compared it with that gathered from the principal and educators as well as that from focus group interviews with learners. Therefore, the researcher broke the collected data down into bits of information by grouping textual material into categories for the purpose of looking for similarities and variations. Then there emerged several themes (Bryman 2012:579). The answers were put together and the emerging themes were explained. Only data that were part of an answer to the research questions were used. The researcher, therefore, took information that spoke to the research questions and indicated something significant to the influence of parental involvement in formal education (Atkins and Wallace 2012:219; Sharan 2009:176).

1. What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the
Mohale's Hoek District of Lesotho?

The focus group interviews with learners and the semi-structured interviews of principal, educators and parents, asked questions on the influence of parental involvement in their children's study, homework, and behaviour. Other questions revolved around the key construct (influence of parents that volunteered to do school

activities) and whether there were aspects that discouraged them from volunteering. These were asked in order for the researcher to answer the above research question on the basis of the participants' experiences, views and answers.

The researcher was sensitive to what the educators, parents and learners had said about the influence of parents in the Mohale's Hoek District in their children's education. This was evident in the way the researcher organised, coded and categorised data collected from the semi-structured and focus group interviews. The themes that emerged from the answers of different participants during the interviews were identified.

2. How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mohale's Hoek District?

The researcher sought answers to research question 2 by soliciting the views of the principal, educators, parents and learners on the involvement of parents in the formal education of their children in the Mohale's Hoek District. This was done through the use of semi-structured interviews with the principal, educators and parents, as well as focus group interviews with learners. Here, the adult participants were asked about the involvement of parents in learners' formal education and on the importance of parental involvement. Learners were asked, in their focus group, whether parents monitored and assist them with homework, pay visits to school, or contributed generally in their education. The questions that were directed to parents and educators were also directed to the learners. The researcher then attempted at making sense of the data by coding, consolidating, reducing and interpreting what the participants had said and what she had seen during the interviews as well as what she had read as she analysed the information (Sharan 2009:176). The themes that emerged from the participants' answers were grouped together and explained.

3. What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?

The researcher asked the principal, educators, parents and learners to discuss factors that hindered parental involvement in formal education. In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and literature study. The

participants' opinions assisted the researcher to answer research question three. The themes that emerged were discussed and grouped together.

4. What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education?

Participants were asked, during the interview, to discuss the necessity for and importance of the parents' involvement in their children's education. This question was answered by the principal, educators, parents and learners. Thereafter, the researcher coded, reduced and interpreted the collected data. She then grouped the emerging themes.

5. What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

The researcher focused on the participants' answers to questions asked during the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews in an effort to answer the above research question. The researcher read and listened attentively to the views of the principal, educators, parents and learners with regard to the strategies that can be utilised to improve the involvement of parents in their children's formal education. These views were then considered when she organised, coded and categorised the data collected through the use of focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. The researcher compared the participants' answers to the tool questions with the above research question. She decided to do that because data analysis according to Creswell (2009:184); Savin-Baden and May (2013:434) and Sharan (2009:175) is an ongoing process that involves continual reflection about the data, asking of analytic questions and writing memos throughout the study. The researcher took what the participants said in the way they put it and commented on what they would have actually said.

3.7.1 The Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study

In this study the researcher used credibility and trustworthiness to determine how truthful the research results are (De Vos 2005:166; Henning 2004:148). According to

Maree (2012:80), a researcher engaging in qualitative research is the data collector. Hence, a qualitative researcher should be credible and trustworthy. The criteria for trustworthiness involve various aspects of qualitative inquiry, such as the overall research design, data analysis and the qualitative report. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 202) and Glaser and Strauss (1967:198) suggest that the key criteria of validity, what many qualitative researchers prefer to call credibility or trustworthiness (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Anderson and McSpadden (2011:399), in qualitative research, are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness also involves strategies such as reflexivity, crystallisation and member checking that are discussed below (Hays and Singh 2012: 200, 205-207). Therefore, the researcher used these terms throughout the study.

The researcher used multiple data sources to validate the dependability and credibility of the findings. A variety of data collection strategies, such as focus group interviews for the learners and semi-structured interviews for the educators and parents, as well as a literature study were utilised. These strategies are referred to as crystallisation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011:195; Bryman 2012:392; and Atkins and Wallace 2012:60-61). They define crystallisation as the use of more than one method of data collection or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be cross-checked. Crystallisation is used as a means of confirming that all data is reflecting the same story, credible and trustworthy. It therefore, provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

3.7.1.1 Dependability

Dependability, in qualitative research, refers to the consistency in the outcomes of any study (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:183. In supporting this view, Breakwell, Smith and Wright (2012:53) contend that dependability means that the results are reproducible and consistent. Bryman (2012:715) underscores fact that the greater the degree of stability and consistency in an instrument, the greater its dependability. The researcher therefore ensured dependability in this research through the use of three methods of data collection, which are semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and a literature study. During the process of this study, the researcher

described in detail how the data was collected and analysed. The results of this study adequately disclose the data gathered.

3.7.1.2 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the researcher's interpretation is endorsed by those who the research was conducted (King and Horrocks 2010:160). Lincoln and Guba (1985), in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:181) argue that rigour is achieved, within the criteria of the credibility, by engaging careful audit trials of evidence, such as respondent validation and confirmation by participants, after the completion of coding or categorisation of results. Jupp (2006:311) defines credibility as the extent to which conclusions drawn from the study can provide an accurate description of what happened or a correct explanation of what happens and why it takes place. For this study, validation was established in the following ways:

3.7.1.3 Crystallisation

Crystallisation is a common strategy for ensuring trustworthiness that involves using multiple forms of evidence at various parts of qualitative inquiry to support and describe findings (Hays and Singh 2012:207). Tobin and Begley (2004:309) propose that qualitative researchers should not triangulate but *crystallise* and thus; they view this process as one of *completeness*, not confirmation. Hence, in this inquiry, the researcher used the term "*crystallisation*" and not triangulation. As mentioned earlier in this study, crystallisation is the use of multiple sources of data collection or multiple methods of data to study a particular phenomenon (King and Horrocks 2010:164). This involves comparing and cross-checking data collected at different times and places, interview data collected from participants with different perspectives, and data from follow-up interviews (Sharan 2009:216). The participants' interview responses, which were collected from different groups of people at different times, indicate the multiple data sources that were deployed in this study. This is due to the fact that the principal, educators, parents and learners were interviewed at different times and places using different data collection tools.

The researcher used more than two data sources, which are a literature review, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, all referred to by Cohen, *et al* (2011:195) and Atkins and Waltace (2012:60-61) as crystallisation. Cohen, *et al* (2011:195) further state that multiple data sources assist the researcher to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. Flick (2014:183) notes further that crystallisation involves the use of multiple data sources, data collection methods and theories, in dealing with the phenomenon and in order to validate research findings.

Data crystallisation as the most well-known strategy was used to shore up the internal validity of this study and to get a fully, rich and complex understanding of the process (Sharan 2009:215; King and Horrocks 2010:164). This method assisted the researcher to check the findings against the results produced by the instrumentation of data collection that was used and to eliminate bias. It also assisted the researcher to get a more detailed picture of the situation and to expose contradictions which were often hidden. Thus, the researcher is much confident that her findings were accurate (Bryman 2008:379, in Harding 2013:172).

3.7.1.4 Reflexivity

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:146) define reflexivity as the active self-reflection of a researcher on the research process. The reflexive process allows a researcher's participants to grasp the phenomenon of inquiry and the development of this research itself (Watt 2007:89). Reflexivity is one of the benchmarks that can be used to test the credibility and trustworthiness of a qualitative research design for participants. The thoughts and feelings of the researcher, including her reactions to and interpretations of the data, are part of the research process. Hence, the reflexivity of the researcher is a lens into the research process itself (Hays and Singh 2012:137; Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson and McSpadden 2022:379).

The researcher indeed reflected objectively on the interview transcripts to avoid bias. The participants' perceptions were considered to be more important. Therefore, direct quotes were used to assist characterise the themes for the reader (King and Horrocks

2010:165), and the participants' exact words were separated from the researcher's interpretation (Flick 2014:483). This was done to make sure that the reader experiences the participants' actual language, dialect and personal meaning.

3.7.1.5 Member checking

The researcher also used the technique of member checking in this research to establish data trustworthiness (Ritchie, *et al.* 2014:358; Shumba *et al.* 459). Member checking has been cited as a key strategy for achieving trustworthiness. This involves participants in the research process and striving to accurately portray their intended meanings when outlining overall themes (Hays and Singh 2012:206). The researcher sent transcripts to the four participants to read and make comments where necessary (King and Horrocks 2010:163; Maree 2012:86). Although not all respondents sent comments, those comments assisted in enriching the research.

The following section outlines the ethical consideration to this study.

3.8 Ethical issues

Neuman (2006:129) and Mertler and Charles (2008:203) define ethics as what is or is not legitimate to do, or what moral research procedure involves. Many ethical issues involve a balance between the two values: the pursuit of scientific knowledge and the rights of those being studied. The researcher is bound to confidentiality. As a result, permission to conduct the research was sought from the Faculty of Humanities in the Department of Post Graduate Studies: Education, the go-ahead was granted (cf. appendix 1 on p.159, permission letter to supervisor). A letter seeking consent to conduct the research was written to the District Education Office, the primary consent body in the education system (cf. appendix 2 on p.161, permission letter to Senior Education Officer). The researcher wrote a letter requesting permission to carry out the research in the Mohale's Hoek District and to be supported by the Ministry of Education and Training, as she was working at one of the schools in the district. Permission was also sought from the principal of the school where the research was conducted (cf. appendix 3 on p.163, a letter to High School Principal). The researcher

also sought the support of the school principal in arranging interviews with educators, parents and learners.

In addition, the researcher put up a notice on the learners' notice board to invite learners who were interested in participating in the research. Thus, another letter of consent was sent to the parents of the learners who volunteered to be participants (cf. appendix 7 on p.165, a letter to parents), and to the principal in the case of under-age learners seeking both the principal's and parents' consent for their minor children's participation and their support when carrying out the research, especially during the learner focus group interviews. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, its confidential nature, duration of the interviews and how the results would be reported. In addition, for the sake of confidentiality in this report, the name of the selected school was not mentioned, it was named School X. With the permission of the participants all interviews were audio-recorded for the accurate transcripts. The interviews were conducted in a way that allowed the participants, their freedoms and the researcher to get in-depth information.

Finally, for ethical issues, the researcher decided to use letter codes for the reporting instead of using the participants' names. Learners were assigned the following letter codes: LA, LB, LC, LD, LE and LF, with L standing for "learner," while A stands for first learner. So LA then means learner 1, while LB is learner 2, LC learner 3, and LD learner 4, LE is learner 5 and LF learner 6. In the same way, parents were given the following letter codes: PA, PB, PC, PD, PE and PF. Letter P represents "parent," then PA symbolises parent 1, PB is parent 2, PC parent 3, PD parent 4, PE parent 5, and PF parent 6. Educators as well were assigned with the following letter codes: EA, EB, EC, ED, EE and EF. Letter E signifies "educator," while all the letters following Es symbolise the same thing observing the given pattern of letter codes for parents and learners.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the choice and advantages of the qualitative method that is used in this study. It also outlined the research design, paradigms, population and

sample, and data collection. The methodology utilised by the researcher to collect and analyse data on parental involvement in their children's formal education was discussed. Reasons for making use of semi-structured and focus group interviews in this study were also elaborated. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the advantages of pilot study, credibility and trustworthiness, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical consideration to the study.

The results of the study are presented, analysed and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to present, analyse and discuss data from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the principal, six educators and six parents. The researcher combined semi-structured and focus group interview responses in the report on results in order to portray the correlation and contradiction between them. The interview questions were analysed using a thematic approach. The study used a qualitative design to determine and describe the depth of the participants' experiences. The data consisted of tape-recordings and notes taken during interviews in an attempt to report on the valid findings. The participants' actual words are typed in italics. As mentioned earlier for ethical issues and in order to distinguish between the responses of the participants, letter codes LA, LB, LC, LD, LE and LF were assigned to learners, while parents were given the following letter codes: PA, PB, PC, PD, PE and PF; educators were assigned letter codes EA, EB, EC, ED, EE and EF (cf. 3.8 on p. 89). These letter codes were used to protect the participants' identity.

4.2 Data Presentation and analysis / interpretation

This study investigated the influence of parental involvement in the formal education of their children in high schools, in particular, parents in the Molekane's Hoek District of Lesotho. The presentation, analysis and discussion of the research data in this chapter focused on the following questions:

4.2.1 Research question 1: What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the Molekane's Hoek District?

The participants were asked to give their opinions on the influence of parental involvement in their children's formal education both at school and at home. The themes for research question 1 emerged as data was being coded and sorted out to identify similarities and variations in the information gathered from the interviewed

participants. The themes that were identified were as follows: learners' support and Parents' involvement in decision-making.

4.2.1.1 Learners' support

The findings of the study denoted that parents support their children with their formal education by taking part in their children's homework and put their signature as witnesses of the work done. Participants EB, EC and EF indicated that parents support their children by participating in their assignments and confirming their input by appending their signatures at the end of their children's homework. It was clear from the participants' responses that parents always made sure that the children have done the given homework. Participants' examples concerning the influence of parental involvement include: Participant EB's declaration that, *"Assignments given to learners are signed by parents at home as evidence that they take part in the learning of their children."* Participant EC also supported what was said by participant EB by saying that, *"It is a norm in my school that parents are to sign their children's homework as a proof that they have participated in their children's work."* Participant EF responded that, *"Seeing to it that assignments are done parents, put their signature at the end of the children's homework before it is submitted to the educators."*

Even parents who were unable to assist their children with their school work due to their low level of education feel urged to support their children's learning by asking other family members, who have high education, to help their children with homework. Participant PA explained that even though she has a low level of education, she finds ways of involving herself in her daughter's education. Participant LA, a daughter of participant PA, went on to highlight how her mother supports her in her study and how she feels about her mother being involved in her study and homework. When the researcher asked for participant PA's opinions about parental support, she said that, *"Although I do not have high level of education, I always allocate time for study for my daughter."* Participant LA confirmed this indeed as noted in the statement: *"My mother always asks my sisters to assist me with my homework and this support motivates me so much."*

Parents support their children by going to school to find out from educators their children's behaviour. They also encourage their children to live according to school regulations. Some parents checked their children's school work and were willing to assist them with their homework. The study revealed that other parents are concerned that their children have time to study at home to the extent that they created the good environment that encouraged learners to always study at home. The principal is also aware of the involvement of parents in their children's education. She stated that, *"Parents show their responsibility by seeking information from the teachers that work with their children. They also support school regulations by encouraging the good and discouraging the bad in their children, by so doing parents help in children's education."* Participant PE also emphasised that he shows interest in his son's study by asking him daily about what he has learnt at school and whether he would have been given homework. He also makes the schoolwork easier for his son by helping him when he asks for assistance. Participant LE, the son of participant PE, pointed out that his study has become the family's business and this motivates and makes him enjoy learning. The following data confirm their argument: Participant PE responded that, *"I often ask my child whether he is given homework and assist him where he needs help. I also create conducive atmosphere for his daily study and ask him to share with me what was discussed at school on daily basis."* Participant LE commented, *"I am fully supported by my father in my study so much that during the weekend he volunteers to help me with my school work. This assists me to look at the future with confidence."*

The findings also showed that parents are greatly supportive to their children's education so much that they supply their children with the human basic needs which help learners to perform well in their formal education. Participants PB and PC indicated that they always supported their children in their study in order to perform better at school. These parents were aware that a child who has the basic needs is able to concentrate in class and in his or her study which leads to success. Participant PB stated that, *"As a parent I make sure that I supply my child with the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education that is why my child is able to learn and perform well at school."* Participant PC added that, *"I always pay my child's*

school fees on time so as to assist him focus on his study. Everyday when my child goes to school I make sure that he has all what is needed at school on that day. I do not want my child to lack tools for the school since this might affect his performance negatively.” Ten participants out of nineteen reported that parents support their children in different ways in their formal education. Therefore, parents here create a conducive atmosphere for learners’ study and sign their homework and pay fees on time.

The above data show that three educators, two parents and two learners declared that parents support their children by being more involved in school activities taking place at home, such as helping the children with homework and study. Two parents and two learners showed that parents greatly support their children’s education by ensuring that their children have done the given homework on time and allocate time for the children’s study. In addition, the study found out that parental involvement did not depend on the parents’ education only, but on the parents’ determination to see their children’s learning and success. This is evidenced by what was practised by participant PA, who, despite her lower level of education would always allocate time for study for her daughter. Participant PA ensured that other family members who were educated helped her daughter, participant LA, with homework. One parent and one learner indicated that parents were also free to communicate with their children about their school work. The principal and two parents showed that parenting was also included, as part of great support, because some parents responded to their children’s basic needs, such as, shelter, food, education, clothing, security and health.

4.2.1.2 Parents’ involvement in decision-making

In accordance with question 1, the researcher further interviewed the participants about parental involvement in decision-making at their respective school. The data provided by the participants showed that although parents are involved in decision-making at school, they are less involved. Participant PD stated that, as parents they had only three representatives who were members of the School Board who did their duty as they were expected. They were the ones that discussed and made decision about children’s learning on behalf of parents. Participant PD answered that, *“I am not*

so sure of the extent in which I am involved in school activities, but I am hoping that the three parents whom we have chosen to be our (parents) representatives in the School Board in whatever discussion or decision is made they base themselves on our children's interests in learning rather than in their own interests. I am only clear about the extent in which I am involved in my child's learning at home."

The principal was not explicit enough regarding the influence parents had in the decision-making processes. She explained that the School Board was the overall body that saw to the well-being of learners, their performance and to decide on issues affecting learners. The principal declared that: *"The physical conditions of the classrooms whether they are conducive for teaching and learning process is the responsibility of the School Board. This implies that among the members of the School Board three members are nominated by parents as the body that represents them. This body accounts for the well-being, malfunctioning of the school and has the last word on matters involving learners. The School Board is also involved in the formulation of the school policies."* She further explained that all decisions made are based on the learners' interest.

The findings showed that parents were less involved in decision-making at school. They were mostly involved if their children misbehave. Worse enough they are called to school when their children's behaviour is out of control, which makes it difficult for them to come up with the effective solution. Participant EA indicated that parents were involved, as individuals, in the discussion and decision on learners' misbehaviour where they were expected to correct such behaviour. Participant EA said that: *"If a learner misbehaves he is disciplined by the school, but if he seemed to be disobedient the parents of such learner are called to school to assist in putting the learner under control."* In addition, participant PC declared that parents were often called to school if the child was defiant. This parent seems not to be pleased with this school policy. In support of what was shared by participant EA, participant PC added that, *"When I get the message that I am called to school, either by my child's class-teacher or school administrators, the first thing that comes into my mind is that my child has misbehaved."*

Participant PB explained, in agreement with participant PC that they were less involved in decision-making. The school administration called them to school only if their children's behaviour was out of control so that they could come to a conclusion together. In this case, parents managed to assist in the formulation of solution that put their children under the educators' control. Participant PB stated that, *"In one of parents' meetings after we have discovered from the educators that majority of learners were unruly, as parents through the guidance of the School Board and educators, we agreed that each individual parent should talk to his or her child about their prevailing misbehaviour. Although that decision helped put our children's behaviour under the normal situation, we had to work much harder than if the misbehavior was reported on time."*

During the interviews, for the current study, participants revealed that parents are less involved in decision-making. They were more involved in learners' misbehaviour as in the case of participant LB who seemed to agree with participant PB that parents discuss their children's misbehaviour during parents' meetings. In addition, it is noted that if parents discover instances of misbehaviour through their discussion, they would come to a resolution supporting that action be taken so as to correct it. Participant LB mentioned this in answering a question on parent involvement in decision-making, *"After one of the parents' meetings, my mother called me and told me that I should behave myself at school."* She strongly pointed out, *"throughout your schooling I do not want to be called to school because of your misbehaviour. I hate being called to school. As a child, when I attended school my parents were never called to school because of me." "I want you to do the same."*

The data provided by participant EC showed that parents are involved in decision-making only if their children's performance seems to deteriorate so that they can assist educators with the discipline or the solution of this problem. Participant EC stated that, *"Parents are called to school when children seemed to be weak or not serious about their school work. Some concerned educators may organise through the administration to see parents of such children."* Parental involvement in decision-making was appreciated by participant LC. That learner's parent helped this

participant to stop truancy. He is aware that if it was not because of his parents' involvement he would not be at school at the time when the research was carried out. The learner was convinced that involving parents in decision-making assisted in his discipline. Participant LC maintained that: *"The last time when I stopped to play truancy it was when my parents were called to school and were told about my bad behaviour. When we reached home, on the same day, my father punished me for playing truancy."* He added, *"If it was not because of my parents' involvement in my discipline I do not know what would have happened about my study. Now I perform well in my study and my school attendance also has improved."*

One of the ways in which parents were involved in decision-making is the calling of parents to school to correct learner misbehavior as pointed out by participants LD, LE and LF. This is the influence that the parents had in decision-making. Participants LD, LE and LF agreed with the following statement: *"Most of parents come to our school to pay school fees and other fees, or may be to collect their children's school certificates in the bursar and secretary's office. If it happens that we see parents going to the principal's office or deputy principal's we conclude that there will be a disciplinary hearing, because this is what once happened to us."*

Participants LA, LB, LC and LF explained that there are extra-curricular activities at their school, but their parents were less involved. As a result, the school decided to employ someone for that instead of asking for assistance from parents. Therefore, even parents with special skills were not invited by the school to assist in extra-curricular activities. According to these participants parents are not involved when deciding what to do regarding these activities. There was to pay money for learners' trips. Participants LA, LB, LC and LF pointed out that, *"At our school there are different types of activities, such as cultural day, farewell for external classes, school trips, school competition, debates, games, maintenance and prevention of soil erosion. However, since we came to this school we have never seen one of our parents involved in one of those activities. The school would prefer to employ someone if there is a need, such as helping the School Choir, for example, with the songs and/or hymns for competition. Our parents are asked to pay bus-fare or amount of money*

needed for such activities.” Nonetheless, thirteen out of nineteen participants declared that parents are more involved in decision-making through the members of the School Board. As individuals they take part in decisions if their children misbehave, or lose interest in their study.

From the above data, the principal and one parent stated that parents are involved in governance and decision-making through the representatives of parents in the School Board. Every high school parent is represented by members in the School Board. The principal indicated that the Board Members are the ones that are more involved in the formulation of school policies and make decisions on certain activities. Apart from those representatives, parents were more involved with the school if the children misbehaved or did not perform well in their study as they would be called to the school to help discipline their children. This was proved by the evidence given by the two educators, two parents and five learners during the interview sessions. Although a majority of participants agreed that parents are involved in decision-making, they were of the same view that parents were less involved. Four learners also are of the opinion that their parents are less involved in decision making, especially when it comes to school activities.

4.2.2 Research question 2: How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mohale’s Hoek District?

The participants were asked to comment on how parents are involved in the formal education of their children in the Mohale’s Hoek District. The researcher came up with different roles played by parents, from her transcription and coding of the data. The themes in this section were based on Maslow hierarchical needs, such as physiological, love, belonging and self-esteem.

4.2.2.1 Provision of initial education

Parents are involved in their children's education in different manners. One of them is initial education which takes place in learners' home. Participants' responses to the above question showed that learning begins at home and that parents are the first educators of their children, who play an important role in the development of children in all spheres of life. Their supporting examples were as follows: Participant EC responded that, *"Parents who take a good care of children at home easily get involved in the education matters of a child."* *"Properly fed children do not have problems of requirement of a balanced diet at school. Likewise, properly dressed children at home do not have a problem of keeping a proper uniform at school,"* added participant EF.

Participant EE added the following information, which underscored parents' involvement in their children's education at home and thus seemed to be an indicator of the link between education at home and education at school: *"Parents who teach manual practices at home like gardening or cleaning bring up children who get positively involved in manual activities at school, even to the practical subjects such as Agriculture, Integrated Home Economics and others."* In addition participant EA commended: *"Parents instilling the culture of reading literature or publications, or listening to current affairs on television and radio, help in building the character of a child in doing research and finding out or discovering things on their own."*

4.2.2.2 Responsibility and discipline

The principal observed that: *"Parents sending children out to help disabled or elderly members of the community on household chores like cleaning, cooking, washing, gardening and repairing instills the sense of responsibility and of belonging to the bigger community and builds present and future community leaders."* She indicated further that, *"With this kind of learners the school can have very good prefects who understand that a good leader is the one who serves not the one who is served."*

On the same note participant ED indicated that as educators, they are aware of the role played by parents at home and how this contributes to formal education: *"During the parents' meetings one can pick up from parents that they are aware that the*

teaching of good manners and discipline at home reflects on children's character and performance at school."He indicated further that, *"When dealing with learners one realises that those who are disciplined at their homes do not give the educators headache. Likewise the learners who are from the hardworking families work hard to improve their performance."*

4.2.2.3 The link between education at home and at school

Participant EB explored the issue of how parents are involved in their children's education with the following specific examples: *"At home the parents see to it that their children receive love and security, self-discipline, respect, food and shelter. These elements are also needed at school for the development of the child socially, physically, spiritually and mentally. The involvement of the parents shows love to educators as well as the school and this motivates both educators and learners."*The following learners' responses indicate the ways in which parents got involved in their learning: Participant LB highlighted the role played by parents as follows: *"I think discipline at home inculcates a sense of responsibility to me and helps me to feel with and for other children, hence abide by the school regulations."* Participant LF added that *"Cleanliness at my home brings about the love for a clean environment at school and to dress a proper uniform daily,"* while participants LC and LE had the same perception.

The above participants were aware of the important role played by parents at home in the learners' formal education. They even explained that there is a link between education at home and education at school. However, it was disclosed by some participants that education at home was not the foundation of education at school. They responded in the following manner: Participants LA and LD said that, *"The way things are done at home is totally different from the manner in which things are dealt with at school. As a result, we do not see the role which is played by our parents at home concerning our education at school."*Eleven participants reported that parents played a crucial role in their children's education in all spheres of life. Parents at some homes were able to lay the foundation of education which links to education at school. That is how they were involved in their children's formal education. However, two of

them failed to acknowledge the essential role played by parents in their formal education.

The data above shows that the principal, six educators and three learners were aware of the role played by parents in learners' formal education. The participants were able to make the connection between what the learners learn at home - the role which is played by their parents, and what they learn at school. This was indicated by participants in their observation. In addition, three educators indicated that the parents are already involved in their children's initial education. Hence, they are able to involve themselves in their children's formal education by making the link between education at home and the education at school. Furthermore, the study revealed that there were learners who were unable to see that the way they perceive things or their attitude towards other things at school was influenced by the education at home – initial education. Two learners gave evidence which supported that there was no relationship between school and home.

4.2.3 Research question 3: What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?

In the following section, the participants were asked to briefly explore specific barriers to parental involvement in formal education. There were many barriers that were mentioned by the interviewed participants. Five themes related to research question 3 were discerned from the participants' responses. The researcher structured the following: parents' low level of education, poverty, parents' and educators' negative attitude, lack of communication and fear of being involved and time constraints. The data were arranged according to the following themes in an attempt to address the sub-question 3 that sought to examine the barriers to parental involvement in formal education.

4.2.3.1 Parents' low level of education

The principal was of the view that the low level of some parents' formal education prevents them from involving themselves in their children's learning. She explored the issue as follows: *“Low self-esteem and lack of confidence in the parents because of*

being uneducated can make them to assume that now that their children are in higher classes they need not to be helped or controlled.” Similarly, participant ED responded that: *“Most parents are not learned, so they are unable to involve themselves into children’s learning. They somehow feel inferior in school affairs.”* In addition, participant PA argued that: *“My child is now in the high school, so her education is now higher than mine, because I only did Standard 7 (Grade 7). So now it seems as if I show very little interest in the progress of my child’s schooling while in actual fact I am incapable of assisting her with the school work.”*

Participant PE expressed the same concern regarding parents’ low level of formal education: *“I am afraid to go to school to seek information about my child, because I have a very little experience about the school. I only depend on what he tells me concerning his study.”* Four participants out of nineteen declared that parents’ low level of education is one of the barriers of formal education. A consideration of the participants’ responses, as confirmed by the principal, educator ED, parents PA and PE, shows that the low level of parents’ education is one of the contributing factors to lack of parental involvement in their children’s education. A low level of parental education, according to participants, hinders parents from certain activities that they could do if they were educated. This makes parents feel helpless and powerless in situations where they are supposed to assist their children with school work.

4.2.3.2 Poverty

The following evidence was noted in the responses of the participant EC who saw poverty as the barrier to effective parental involvement. She specifically focused on the fact that poor parents are afraid to meet educators and discuss their children’s performance: *“When parents are poor they reduce their involvement in their children’s education. They hardly take part and are afraid to visit the school in order to acquire knowledge of what their children need to perform at acceptable standards.”*

In addition, participants LB and LF indicated how poverty affected their formal education as individuals. Participant LF said that, *“There was a time when the school called our parents to a meeting in which they were going to discuss our school work*

and tests. My parents sent one of our relatives. When I asked my mother why she did not go she told me that she had no warm clothes since it was winter and she did not want to embarrass me by appearing with old clothes". Participant LB also added, *"My family is very poor, therefore, I begged my mother and father that even if it happens they come to school for any other reason they should make it a point that they do not meet me."* Participant PC on the other hand, disclosed that poverty has become a major obstacle on her side: *"I would like to create a conducive environment for my child's study, but I am helpless because our house is too small, she has no place to study since we are living in one room."* Four participants out of nineteen reported that poverty was a barrier to involvement of parents in formal education.

The above responses designated that four participants agreed that poverty affected parental involvement negatively. The educator EC, the parent PC and learners LB and LF showed that poor parents and their children were worried about their appearance before other people to the extent that they decided not to attend the meetings that the school had arranged. Parent PC and learner LF indicated that poverty became a block to parental involvement in the school's various calls for parents to come and discuss their children's performance.

4.2.3.3 Parents' and educators' negative attitude

The findings indicated that educators and parents have a negative attitude towards each other concerning parental involvement. The participants made the following statements with regard to this theme: Participants PB and PD complained that sometimes educators themselves were barriers to effective parental involvement by using discouraging words when they corrected the learners' behaviour. They indicated further that educators seemed to forget that a good relationship between them and learners opens the way to learning. Participant PD stated that, *'It is true that educators teach our children, but sometimes they do not treat our children respectfully as they humiliate and give them bad names.'* Participant PB also pointed out, *"I love my child's educators, but some of them are impatient with our children. This attitude may block our children from learning those educators' subjects. Again this makes parental*

involvement impossible, because as parents we are not free to approach educators who humiliate and disrespect our children.”

Contrary to what the above parents indicated, educators EE and EF emphasised the problem of time wasted by parents during the meetings. They also complained about parents who neglect their responsibility of involving themselves in learners' homework. Educator EE said that, *“Sometimes when the school has parents' meetings some parents have lengthy discussions that delay and take other people's time who are also willing to participate.”* *“Some parents do not bother signing their children's homework, but expect them to perform better academically,”* added participant EF.

Participants LA, LC and LD agreed that their parents consider their education as educators' business only, as demonstrated by their non-involvement in their children's homework. Participants LA, LC and LD responded that, *“If we are given homework and we ask our parents to assist us, our parents would tell us that the educators should do their responsibility, they should not impose it on them, because as parents they have their own duties to perform at home.”* Seven participants showed that parents' and educators' negative attitude towards each other was a barrier to parental involvement in formal education.

From the above data, parents PB and PD indicated that parents love their children and wish them to be disciplined with respect by the educators. Educator EE seemed to be impatient with parents who made lengthy statements during parents' meetings. This was considered as a waste of educators' and other parents' time. Learners LA, LC and LD showed their concern regarding parents who did not show interest in their homework, because they regarded it as educators' responsibility. Educator EF complained that parents did not take part in their children's homework. Both educators and parents failed to communicate on how to assist learners with homework. Educators EE and EF blamed parents for failing to assist children with homework, while the parents also thought educators impose their duty on them. This misunderstanding is a barrier to parental involvement in formal education.

4.2.3.4 Lack of communication

The following were responses given by the participants in their attempt to answer the question on the barriers to parental involvement. The responses focusing on the lack of communication between parents and educators noted that:

The principal stated that the learners' fear led to communication breakdown between the school and parents. Some learners when they were given invitation letters for parents' meeting they read them before they reach home. Thereafter they are afraid to give opened letter to their parents. This then led to poor attendance of parents' meetings: Her comment was: *"Communication break-down is yet another problem that lies between the school and the parents, in that learners fail to issue invitation letters to their parents, assuming that their misbehaviour and playfulness or lack of seriousness about their studies are the ones that prompted the school to invite the parents."* She stated further that, *"Parents of such learners ended up not attending the meetings and this hinders their involvement in learning process of their children."*

Participants EC and EF were of the opinion that parents need training and guidance from the school on how to get involved in their children's formal education. Participant EC reported that, *"When parents are not invited by the school regarding the performance of their children they may not know what to do in order to be involved in the children's education."* Participant EF added that: *"If the principal does not involve the parents to discuss anything concerning their children they may think that schooling is the educators' responsibility or business only."*

Participant PF stated that their involvement would be more effective if the school involved them in the discussion concerning the school regulations. Participant PF said, *"If changes in the running of the school are discussed and our (parents') suggestions are taken before the changes are passed as laws or regulations to be abided to by parents, it will be easier for us to help the school in the discipline of our children and in its development."*

In addition, participant PA indicated that the provision of the school calendar to parents will assist in making the parents avail themselves at the school activities and

meetings. Participant PA's response was, *"If parents' meetings are set in the school calendar to enable us (parents) to plan ahead it would be possible for us to be involved in our children's education. So the opposite of this may be a hindrance of parental involvement."*

The learners also complained about the lack of communication between the school and their parents. They seemed to wish for their parents to be involved more in their education and the changes being made by the school. Participants LA, LB, LC, LD, LE and LF stated, *"There is lack of communication on the part of the school because our parents are rarely called to school for meetings yet there are so many changes that take place at our school."* They added, *"There is little communication between our school and our parents as our parents are not consulted over the changes the school plans to do, but are just informed about the alterations. Even if parents are invited their suggestions are not always taken into consideration"*

Participants PB and PE also raised concern about the school over invitations to meetings where they would discuss some of the school's challenges and yet their opinions would be rejected or looked down upon. Participant PB said that, *"I am interested in meetings the school holds, but I am somehow discouraged by educators who seem to be bias during the meeting when we give our suggestions."* Participant PE added, *"Although the school's meetings are important, of late I irregularly attend them. For me it is a waste of time because our views as parents are not taken. In some cases one can sense that we (parents) are called to be told the decision the school has made about our children, which I think it would be given to us in the form of letter."* Thirteen participants out of nineteen revealed that one of the barriers to parental involvement was lack of communication between the school or educators and parents.

The above data show that a majority of participants were of the view that the parents' views are not taken into consideration during parents' meetings. This is regarded as an obstacle to parental involvement in the learning of their children. Parents PA and PF showed that decision-making, especially on issues that involve parents should encompass the greater involvement of parents. The other two parents PB and PE

indicated that educators did not pay attention to parents' insights, inputs or grievances and this closes the doors for parental involvement. The data also show that a majority of the participants, the principal, educators EC and EF, and all the six learners, were of the view that lack of communication between the school and parents and communication break-down act as obstacles to parental involvement in their children's education.

4.2.3.5 Fear of involvement and time constraints

The interview participants' response to the question: "What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?" indicated that the fear of involvement is one of the barriers to parental involvement. Some parents did not want to be involved in the disciplining of their children once they begin their schooling. Participant ED mentioned that, *"Some parents are afraid of being involved in their children's education that is why once their children start going to school, they somehow feel relieved from being responsible for their children. Even when the children misbehave at home they are frightened that the educators are going to be told about their misbehaviour."*

According to other participants, time constraints and fear of being involved are obstacles that hinder parental involvement. The participants agreed that parental involvement is valuable; as a result, the school and parents should create time for this involvement. Participant EB uttered that, *"My school calls parents' meetings very seldom and this may cause parents to feel that it is the responsibility of educators to see to it that children learn. Then parents are not sure on what the school expects them to do. They only do what they think might help their children with their learning at home."*

The principal complained that employed parents have no time to discuss their children's school work: *"The parents are too busy with other things like being at work and hence have no time to come to school and discuss their children with educators. Some of them leave their homes for the work early in the morning before children get up and when they come back it is too late and they are tired. As a result, they have no time to be involved in their children's homework and study."* Participants LC and LE

raised the same issue with the principal as noted in the statement: *“Our parents are farmers, so sometimes when they come back from the fields they are exhausted and have to do other family chores so much that they are unable to help us with our school work.”*

Participants PA and PE admitted that they struggle to find time to visit the school and learn about their children’s performance and behaviour because of their work. Although they are aware of the importance of being involved in their children’s education, they are prevented by the circumstances. Participant PA’s comments were, *“I would wish to be involved in my child’s school work, but I am always busy. I open my shop early in the morning even before she leaves for school. When she comes back from school I am still in the shop. So I really have no time to assist her, instead, she is the one who helps me in the shop because this is how the family generates income.”* Participant PE also declared that, *“It is very difficult for me to go to school and meet my child’s class-teacher, because I am a full time employee. When I come back from work it is school out.”*

On the same note, participants LA, LD and LF expressed that their parents work far away from home. Therefore, they are unable to attend school activities unless if they sent other people to present them. Participant LD’s response was, *“My parents work far away from home and they only come home at month end. As a result, they always have to send other people to attend school activities on their behalf. When they are on leave they have no time for my school work, because they have to settle other family issues within that short time they have come home.”* Participants LA and LF added, *“Ours come home once a year, because they work too far from home. They therefore have no time to attend any school activities. They just ask us whether we still attend the school”* Ten participants out of nineteen showed that fear of being involved and time constraints are barriers to parental involvement.

The study indicated that participants agreed that parental involvement is essential, but it was hindered by time constraints and the parents’ fear of involvement at the school. The principal, parents PA and PE and learners LA, LB, LC, LD and LE showed that many parents were busy so much that they were unable to involve themselves in their

children's learning. Educator EB indicated that the school did not reach out to learners' homes to help parents on how to be involved in their children's education. Another educator ED revealed that parents were afraid of being involved in their children's education; hence, they ignored their responsibility as parents. Learning is, therefore, hampered owing to these obstacles.

4.2.4 Research question 4: What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education?

The participants were asked to give their opinions on the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education. The following themes for research question 4 were identified from the participants' responses: caring and monitoring, academic support and negative attitude towards parental involvement.

4.2.4.1 Caring and monitoring

Both participants EA and EE appreciated the knowledge parents have about their children and how it helped in the development of learners. These participants were of the view that there are different ways in which parents showed their involvement in learners' education. One of them is that parents care for their children and monitor them. Parents would like to know about their children's school attendance and performance which compelled the educators to do their work properly. This is a form of support that parents showed to the educators. Participant EA said that, *"Parents know their children's strengths and weaknesses much better than us (educators). This is seen in our interaction with parents, especially when we deal with difficult learners. Therefore, in order for parental involvement to be more effective we (educators) have to make it a point that there is a good and strong relationship between parents and educators."* Participant EE explored the importance of parental involvement with the following specific example: *"Parents care in all aspects of their children's wholesome development that is why they inquire from the educators about the children's attendance and performance. This tendency does not influence learners only, we (educators) too feel we must work hard so that we are always in the position to give parents feedback about their children when they come to school."*

One of the participants, participant PE, was of the opinion that parental involvement is important in their children's education. She mentioned that parents easily accepted the influence of educators who encourage them to see to it that their children study at home. Participant PE reported, *"Parental involvement is essential in our children's learning, hence educators urge us to assist our children to always study at home in order to improve their performance."*

4.2.4.2 Academic support

The findings revealed that there are parents who support their children in their study. Such parents are aware of the necessity and importance of their involvement in children's formal education to the extent that they even volunteer themselves to assist their children with school work. For the achievement of learners, parents pay fees on time and keep on checking children's work. Participant LD indicated that her parents volunteered to assist her with her school work. This offer gave her confidence in her study. In the same way participant LD disclosed that, *"Parental involvement in my education is crucial because it improves my performance. My grandfather always volunteers to help me with my school work. During the weekend he goes through my school work with me with the intention of assisting me."*

The principal also observed the importance of parent involvement in their children's education. Parents pay school fees for learners on time which contributed in the smooth running of teaching and learning. The principal said the following words to stress the essence of parental involvement in learning: *"Parents see to the well-being of their children in school by paying fees on time, by showing interest in their children's school work as they check the work when the children come home."* Five participants out of nineteen indicated that parental involvement was necessary and important in their children's education.

4.2.4.3 Negative attitude towards parental involvement

There were some parents and learners who over-little the necessity for and the importance of parental involvement in formal education. Parents say that there is no need for them to be involved in their children's education, because it is the work of the

educators especially because they are paid for it. Some parents indicated that it is also the responsibility of learners to see to it that they are successful in their study. Some capable learners also do not see the importance of the involvement of their parents in their education.

The interview responses revealed that participants PC, PD and PF did not consider parental involvement in their children's education as crucial. The researcher also discovered that this played a part in their less involvement in children's education and lead to their children's failure or below-average achievement. These participants' statements were significant, with participant PC, who was one of the participants who did not see the necessity of parents being involved in the formal education of learners, stating that: *"Parental involvement in our children's education is not important because educators are paid monthly by the Lesotho Government, through the Ministry of Education and Training for teaching our children. Therefore, teaching is the educators' responsibility. Educators have to give our children skills of learning effectively for their success."*

In addition, participants PD and PF were of the view that learners' success depend on the effort that they put in their study: Participant PD disclosed that, *"Learners' success does not depend on the involvement of parents in their education. I myself was brought up by uneducated parents who never assisted me with my school work, but I passed my examinations. Therefore, parental involvement is not important at all."* Participant PF also pointed out that, *"In many cases children fail due to their laziness not because parents are not involved in their education. Whether parents are involved or not involved in their children's education, they will still fail if they do not study hard for their success. Their achievement depends on themselves not on us as parents."*

Some talented learners seemed to undermine the essence of parental involvement because they usually pass well regardless of limited parental involvement. Participant LC said that, *"Although my parents are illiterate and unable to help me with my school work, I always pass my tests and examinations, hence, I do not see the importance of parental involvement in my education."*The same views were held by participant LD as noted in the response: *"My parents are too busy doing their own businesses. Always*

when I reach home I have to see to it that I do my school work. Schooling is my own business, my parents used to tell me that theirs is to pay school fees and whatever is needed at school. Therefore, I made it my own and I always pass without them taking part.' Five participants out of nineteen did not regard parental involvement in their children's formal education as valuable.

The above data show that when the educators and parents were asked whether they consider parental involvement as important in formal education for learner success, ten of them revealed that the involvement of parents in children's education was indeed essential. Similarly, a majority of learners, during focus group interviews, disclosed that parental involvement in their education is necessary and important, because their parents encourage them to do their school work by praising and giving them presents when their performance improved. Although a majority of parents, educators and learners perceived involvement of parents as important and necessary, three parents and two learners failed to see its importance.

4.2.5 Research question 5: What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

The following data addressed research question 5 which asked the participants to outline the strategies that can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education. The researcher structured the themes in accordance with the responses given by the participants during the interview sessions. The themes are: diversity of communication between the school and parents and parent-child relationship.

4.2.5.1 Diversity of communication between the school and parents

During the interviews, for the current study, participants revealed that there is diversity of communication between the school and parents. According to the participants this strategy assists in their children's education in the sense that their parents know their progress and behaviour. The data provided by participant EF showed that the school's use of various forms of communication in order to deliver information to parents is one of the strategies that can be employed to improve parental involvement. Participant EF

answered as follows: *“The school communicates with parents by means of letters, learners’ assemblies and by inviting parents to the meetings whereby parents are given their children’s progress reports and discuss school matters to enhance their children’s learning.”*

According to a majority of the participants, the least effective communication devices the school uses with parents were: sending messages to parents through learners, church and radio announcements, phones and assemblies. This is confirmed in the following statements where participant ED pointed out that, *“In some cases the school uses the following mode of communication with parents: parents’ meetings, announcement in the assembly for learners to pass messages to their parents and the children’s progress reports. Phone call is also used as a follow up. For parents who stay around the school, educators are requested to go to the concerned parents.”*

Participant EE too in concurrence with participant ED stated that, *“The school uses letters to communicate with parents. Radio and church announcements are seldom used as a means of communication by the school. It is often used for urgent issues. If it is an urgent issue a phone call is also used to call parents, otherwise face-to-face form of communication is used.”* She noted further that, *“The school calls general parents’ meetings twice a year, that is, at the beginning and at the end of the year. Again if a learner is a troublesome, her or his parents are called to school by means of a telephone or a letter.”*

Furthermore, participant EC underscored that if there were changes concerning the school fees structure parents were invited to be informed in the first quarter. The external classes’ results are also discussed in that meeting, which did not replace the first session meeting. Participant EC explained that, *“Our school holds meetings on the first and second session, but parents can be invited to parents’ meetings on the first quarter for the New Year calendar discussions, such as the school fees structure and for a review of both Junior Certificate (JC) and Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) results. These two are external classes.”*

The principal indicated that parents are free to use various modes of communication with the school. This strategy contributed to the effectiveness of parental involvement. The principal's response was that, *"Among many different forms of communication that are used by the school with parents, the use of telephone is the most effective one. Parents are free to phone and write through their children and pass on suggestions to the school administration. Again, the school invites and insists that each parent be present at the meetings to represent the child so that parents do not get distorted information and also be involved in learning."*

The principal's response was supported by participant PC, who indicated that there was communication between the school and parents regarding learners' progress and behaviour. Participant PC said, *"In most cases the school uses meetings and progress reports which compel us to communicate among ourselves as parents and with educators. Apart from that I am free to go to school at any time and consult my child's class-teacher if I like to find out about my child's progress. However, this policy sometimes affects our children negatively, because some educators do not want us (parents) to come to them and learn about our children's performance."*

Both participants PB and PF emphasised that letters were written to parents, meetings were also held, parents collected their children's progress reports, and that the telephone also was used to call parents for urgent meetings. Participant PB's response was that, *"Each time after the school has planned to hold meetings for parents I receive an invitation letter which is brought by my child. As a result, I often attend meetings and collect my child's progress report."* Participant PF also added that, *"One day it happened that my child misbehaved at school and I was informed by the principal through the telephone call."*

Participants LA, LB, LC, LD, LE and LF indicated that diverse of communication forms were the strategy which was often used between the school and their parents. They emphasised that: *"Our class-teachers give us letters to be given to our parents to inform them about our winter classes towards the end of the first session. The date for the collection of our progress reports is announced at the assembly."* They added

further that, *“If there are changes the principal uses radio and church announcements to inform our parents that the date for commencement of winter classes is postponed.”*

This is also confirmed by some interviewed parents. For instance, participant PA confirmed that, *“The principal send letters to us (parents) through our children and out of curiosity some of them open those letters and afterwards feel ashamed to give us (parents) opened letters. Then we ended up not responding to the letters or missing some school important events.”* Furthermore, participant PB noted that, *“I am not well informed about my child’s school progress, learning as well as discipline problems because I rarely attend parents’ meetings.”*

Participants LC and LF argued that although the school invited their parents to the meetings, their parents are unable to attend them due to their own plans that seem to clash with the dates of school meetings. They put it in this way: *“Our parents seldom attend parents’ meetings because they are always held on Saturday and our parents used to say that they are busy and that day clashes with their plans.”* Seventeen participants out of nineteen indicated that diversity of communication between the school and parents is one of the strategies used to sustain parental involvement in their formal education.

From the above data, it can be discerned that there is a need for continuous communication between the school and the parents in order to enhance parental involvement in the formal education of the learners. The empirical findings in the current study indicated that a majority of participants pointed out that parents’ meetings are one of the most recurrent means of communication the school uses with parents. Most of the interviewed participants thus noted that parents who are unable to come to the meetings send representatives on their behalf. They also mentioned that letters, learners’ progress reports and meeting parents as individuals are the other means of communication that are by the school to link with parents.

4.2.5.2 Parent-child relationship

Another strategy that can be employed to improve parental involvement is by creating a good relationship between learners and their parents. The following evidence was given by the participants during the focus group interviews:

Participant LA stated that, *“There was a time I seemed to struggle with one of the subjects I was doing at school (Principles of Accounts). I shared this problem with my mother who asked me whether I asked my subject-teacher to help me and I responded that I was afraid of him. One day my mother came to school and met that subject-teacher through my class-teacher and discussed my problem with them.”* She added further that, *“From that time on the subject-teacher helped me to understand that subject. Now I am good in Principles of Accounts. If it wasn’t because of my mother I do not know what would have happened. Now my fear towards that teacher does not prevent me from asking for a clarification where there is a need.”*

Participant LC, shared the same opinion, as noted in the statement that, *“I once had the problem with Mathematics. I shared that with my mother, she then made some arrangements with an educator from another school to assist me with Mathematics during the weekends. At the end of the year I did well in that subject.”* Participant LF added that, *“One day one of the educators found me outside the classroom while I was supposed to be inside and was angry with me. For that matter I was also annoyed with him because he punished me. As we discussed that with my mum she discovered that it was my fault and encouraged me to go back to that educator and apologise. I did so, now we are in harmony with that educator, and I made up my mind that I will never be found outside the classroom when I am supposed to be inside.”*

Three participants out of nineteen reported that a mutual parent- child relationship is one of the strategies that can be used to enhance parental involvement in formal education.

From the above data, three participants revealed that learners whose parents were effectively involved in their education perceive the school positively and this resulted in an improvement of their performance. The responses by participants LA, LC and LF

underscored that there was a good parent-child relationship between them and their mothers which led to open communication. Therefore, the researcher noted that parents who were more involved in their children's learning were the main and routinely primary source of educational support for their children. Such parents were indeed able to motivate their children in their studies and opened up chances that lead them to higher academic achievement.

4.3 Data Discussion

The results of the study reflect the influence which parents had by being involved in their children's education, how they got involved, the barriers to parental involvement, the importance and necessity of parental involvement and the different strategies that can be employed to enhance the involvement of parents in formal education. As a result, the discussion on the findings is based on the following research questions:

4.3.1 Research question 1: What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the Mohale's Hoek District?

4.3.1.1 Learners' support

The researcher draws on the interviewees' profile and her own point of view in making the observation that the involvement of the parents assisted the learners with learning activities such as allocating time for study, homework and openly talk about daily school and/or class-work at home (Grace, et al 2012; Walberg 2011). It is also clear that it was impossible for uneducated parents to be involved in their children's homework and study at home, unless they referred them to other family members, as in the case of participant LA. Moreover, some parents tried by all means to create an environment that allowed their children to do their school work freely at home.

The parents supply their children with school materials, safety, food, clothing, health care, and shelter and created a conducive atmosphere that allowed effective learning (Epstein 2007; Hiatt-Michael 2010; Olsen and Fuller 2012). Learners who come from a home that provides support for learning often feel good about themselves and have a high self-esteem that leads to completion of study (Cox-Petersen 2011; Riojas-Cotez

2014; Weiss, et al 2014). This means that these learners will be able to develop physically, intellectually, socially and in other spheres of life. Furthermore, this support helped learners to trust and respect their parents in their education; it brought about a tremendous change in the learners, and enhanced their appreciation of school work (West, Noden, Edge and David 2013). Finally, the support also strengthened the educators' and parents' relationships and improved the learners' performance in their study.

It is evident from the literature reviewed and the data provided by the participants that education always begins at home hence parents are urged to take an active and keen interest in their children's education as they are the first educators of their children (Damien 2004 and Anguiano 2004). Parental interest motivates the children as they would be aware that they have their parents' full support and encouragement. The responses made by the participants showed that parents make every effort to attend school functions and meetings when advised about them.

4.3.1.2 Parents' involvement in decision-making

It is indicated in the literature that parents in countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, United States of America and Zimbabwe, are more involved in their children's formal education. They are involved in various activities, which include taking care of children's safety, paying school fees and books payments, subsidizing for the poor, in designing the curriculum, in assisting children with school work and in handling disciplinary issues (Epstein 2005; Ngwenya, et al 2010; Madukunye and Ndamba 2011). However, the study discovered that in Lesotho, parents are more involved in helping learners with homework and dealing with learners' disciplinary problems. As a result, the rate of parents' involvement in their children's formal education still needs to be improved.

The study also found out that parents were more involved in children's homework, study, discipline or problem-solving and decision-making through the School Board (Lesotho Education Act No.3 of 2010; Moles and Fege 2011). By so doing they took part in their children's education in a limited way and this requires improvement in

order for an improvement of the quality of the learners' education. In addition, parents were mostly called to school to solve their children's problems rather than preventing them (Pushor 2007). However, parents are usually enveloped with fear when called to their children's school as they do not want to hear bad news about their beloved children. For most parents, therefore, being called to school or being known by the educators or administrators is something very negative. For that reason, the educators need to work hard in order to change the attitude that parents have towards being called to school. This might help the parents to have a positive attitude when they are invited to school either by administrators or educators. Parents' positive attitude can also play an important role in parental involvement in formal education, especially with regards to the making of decisions at school that seeks to develop learners' education. Normally, effective decision-making involves a partnership between educators and parents in order to share opinions on how to solve the prevailing problem (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009; Couchenour and Chrisman 2011).

Although it has been indicated by Naidoo (2006) that in Sub-Saharan Africa parents are encouraged and given the opportunity to partake in decision-making to improve the quality of their children's formal education, the interviews for the current study, the participants revealed that parents in the Mohale's Hoek District are less involved in decision-making. The findings demonstrated that educators, learners and parents are aware of the fact that parents are less involved in school activities, mainly, in decision-making. The school did not create the opportunities for parents to be part of the activities that take place at school. This might contribute to the lack of parents' involvement in their children's education. It might also make parents grow negative attitudes towards other school activities as they would be thinking that their involvement in their children's education is limited to parents' meetings only, a platform where they would be more involved in. The researcher therefore concludes that parents appeared to be more involved in communicating, parenting and learning at home than in volunteering and decision-making.

4.3.2 Research question 2: How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mohale's Hoek District?

4.3.2.1 Provision of initial education

The results of this study and the literature reviewed show that a majority of participants are aware of how parents involve themselves in their children's education at home and the resultant positive effects at school (Epstein 2005; Patrikakou 2008; Rhimo 2011). They indicated that academic success in high schools is significantly influenced by parental involvement in their children's learning (Epstein 2007; Hands 2010). The study also found out that a greater number of participants agreed that parents involve themselves in the education of their children in many different ways. Parents are the ones who lay the foundation and develop their children's attitude towards education and other things (Comer 2005). Therefore, traits of a positive home climate have an equally positive impact on learners' education. Thus, the researcher concludes that a child's character reflects what is instilled in him or her by the parents who brought him or her up.

Furthermore, the study found out that as learning begins at home, parents and educators should work together to assist learners to enjoy and do their studies freely for a good purpose (Olsen and Fuller 2012). In this case parents are involved in their children's education, and their involvement assists in the smooth running of the school and in children's formal education (Mestry and Grobler 2007; Ajayi, Haastrup and Arogundate 2009). However, a minority of parents who fail to play their part in the education of their children could be a hindrance of parental involvement in their children's learning.

4.3.2.2 Responsibility and discipline

It is evident from the literature reviewed and data supplied by participants that parental involvement makes huge contributions to the maintenance of discipline at school and in moulding a positive learner attitude towards their success in education. Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein and Serpell (2001), in Hiatt-Michael (2010) and Peck (2014) contend that learners learn more and have a better understanding and

accomplishment when they are assisted to read in a relaxed climate at home. This shows that parental involvement has a positive influence on learners' success. The role that was played by parents as they brought up their children could have either positive or negative influence to learners at school, in their learning or discipline (Jordan, Orozco and Averett 2002; Mestry and Grobler 2007). In this manner, learners cannot succeed without parents playing their active role.

4.3.2.3 The link between education at home and at school

In this regard, the basic responsibilities of parents and guidance and supervision of the children offers these children a positive attitude towards living and relating with other people (Gonzalez 2009; Pushor 2007; Hallinger and Heck 2011). Thus, the researcher concludes from the participants' evidence that, education begins at home and is enhanced and promoted at school. The researcher also concludes, basing on statements by the majority of participants that, learners who are disciplined at home were easily disciplined at school and that parents should promote and maintain the discipline of their children, because if they fail to discipline them at home they would become problematic at school.

4.3.3 Research question 3: What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?

4.3.3.1 Parents' low level of education

It is evident from the collected information and literature that low levels of parents' education is an obstacle to parental involvement in children's learning. As much as parents would like to know what happens with their children's daily learning they are negatively affected their low level of education. Parents who have little education feel frightened and are not confident in education situations (Cork 2005). Hence, they fail to help their children with their homework and are afraid to visit the school. This shows that the principal and the educators have to find ways that can assist parents to freely and confidently take part in their children's education regardless of their low level of education.

The study found out that the literacy of parents who did not finish high school affects strongly the formal education of their children. It has been indicated that the education that children receive is much dependent on the education their parents received when they were children. Very few less educated parents have the sense to encourage and support their children to acquire higher education. Definitely, such parents are less likely to be involved in their children's education process, because they are not aware of the importance of their involvement (Stewart 2008). As a result, the children of uneducated parents are in most cases rarely educated due to the lack of their parents' influence in education.

4.3.3.2 Poverty

The researcher noticed from the data provided by the participants that the lack of financial resources may inhibit parental involvement. Poor people are sometimes afraid to meet other people, especially, highly educated people like educators. They are also less likely or do not want to be associated with educated people. They have low opinion of themselves, and it becomes difficult for them to involve themselves in school activities (Hands and Hubbard 2011). The researcher found that poor parents often have to work for longer hours to earn their meagre salaries. This situation leaves less room for them to spend time and getting more involved in their children's learning. As a result, their children are less likely to be successful in their education. It is not only parents who are badly affected by poverty, even the children of poor parents are ashamed of the poverty they would be experiencing in their families. They do not want their educators or other school-mates to know more about their poverty, hence, they tell their parents not to meet them at school in an attempt to hide their parents' poor status.

4.3.3.3 Parents' and educators' negative attitude

From the above data, seven participants asserted that both parents and educators have a negative attitude towards each other. As a result, there is less unity towards helping learners and they in turn developed a negative attitude towards educators as well, especially considering that learners are easily influenced by their parents. They

therefore suggested that educators and parents should work communally for the development of learners (Christenson and Reschly 2010). Interesting enough, if the learners' parents have a positive attitude towards educators they also would develop it.

From the argument of those seven participants, it can be concluded that educators do not recognise parents as partners in education nor do they create or promote harmonious relationships with them. As a result, this hinders parental involvement in the learning process. Moreover, parents love their children and wish them to be treated with respect by their educators. For them this might lead to a favourable learning environment. Finally, parents would like their children to be disciplined, but they prefer constructive criticism. Parents should be empowered if they are to make a significant contribution to their children's education (Ule, Zivoder and du Bois-Reymond 2015).

4.3.3.4 Lack of communication

According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) communication should include many aspects, such as information on school programmes and children's progress, and should allow for feedback from the parents, as all parents need to have effective channels of communication with their children's educators. Parents ought to know their rights and responsibilities regarding their children's learning (Hall 2015). These views corroborated the findings in the literature that it was the responsibility of the school to use two-way communication that reflects a co-equal partnership between parents and the school (Hornby 2004; Olsen and Fuller 2012). However, in response to the question "What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?" most participants were of the view that lack of teacher-parent meetings on learners' problems and other school activities like sports, school trips and excursions might be an obstacle to parental involvement. Although there existed some communication between the school and parents, it did not cover all school activities. Thus, the researcher concludes that parents were less involved by the school in their children's education and this practice influenced learners negatively. Those learners who did not see their parents often at school did not take their learning seriously, for

they thought learning should be dealt with at school only and that they should do other business at home not study.

4.3.3.5 Fear of involvement and time constraints

Despite the fact that parents were aware of their involvement in their children's education and wish their children success it seemed that some of them were afraid of taking part in their children's formal education, while others had no time to be involved. Christenson and Reschly (2010) pointed out that parents are usually afraid to become involved, because involvement implies that much of their time and energy would be demanded by school activities. The participants revealed, during the interview sessions that, parents have their own different reasons that make them fearful of being involved in their children's education. Some parents are not confident to assist their children in learning and are afraid to contact the educators. They also feel that they lack skills and knowledge to help their children at home.

Some parents according to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) may genuinely lack time to participate in school activities. This may be because of work commitments. Nowadays many parents, fathers and mothers are employed. In addition, single parents are unable to assist their children because when they come back from work they would be exhausted and have to do other family chores rather than find time to be involved in their children's formal education. Such parents are unable to attend meetings called by the school authority and would rather send other people on their behalf.

It became obvious from the data provided by the interviewed participants that parents' low level of education, poverty, parents' and educators' negative attitude, lack of communication and fear of involvement and time constraints are regarded as the most challenging issues with regard to parental involvement in formal education in Mohale's Hoek high schools. The data from the research revealed that parents are affected by the few obstacles in parental involvement than the obstacles discussed in the literature reviewed in chapter 2.

4.3.4 Research question 4: What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education?

4.3.4.1 Caring and monitoring

Hiatt-Michael (2010) points out that parents are the first educators of children and as such have a prominent place in the learning of their children at school. Parents are the ones who can supply the school with the information about learners (Olsen and Fuller 2012). Hence, it is necessary for them to know about their rights and responsibilities regarding their children's education (Hall). In South Africa, for instance, parents volunteer to assist learners with school work and the variety of school activities, such as class parties and field trips, thus showing how important parental involvement is, although the volunteering range in this country is low (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009; Olsen and Fuller 2012). In emphasising the importance and necessity of the involvement of parents Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) confirmed that parents are guided on how to help their children prudently with their school work that has to be done at home.

4.3.4.2 Academic support

The study, thus, found out that the groups of participants valued the importance and necessity of involving parents in their children's formal education. As a result, the researcher concludes that the knowledge and skills that the principal and educators have influenced their perception positively concerning the importance of parental involvement in children's education. The few parents who appeared to have seen the significance of involvement in their children's education are somehow more educated or wanted to be educated but failed to fulfill their intention as children.

The researcher also found out that learners who agreed that parental involvement is vital in their success were children of minority parents. Those learners appreciated the support of their parents concerning their learning at school and at home. Therefore, the findings disclose that those learners regard parental involvement as important because their parents take their responsibility fully.

4.3.4.3 Different views towards parental involvement

This study found out that participants perceive parental involvement differently. Some participants viewed involvement of parents in formal education as important, while others did not. Educated parents are able to involve themselves in the education of their children. Parents who are less educated or uneducated were less involved in their children's education due to ignorance. This might be on account of a majority of parents having low education levels since a few parents completed Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (C.O.S.C). However, capable and brilliant learners, who thought they could make it on their own, did not realise that their parents' less involvement in their learning could make them obtain below their potential performance even though they always passed. At the same time, the parents whose thoughts are similar to their children might not be aware that the children would improve and get much better passes if as parents they were more involved in their education.

4.3.5 Research question 5: What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

4.3.5.1 Diversity of communication between the school and parents

It was indicated that diversity of communication was one of the strategies that can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education, because it enables educators and parents to attend to learners' needs (Pushor 2007). When studying Ajayi et al (2009) the researcher discovered that parents in Nigeria participate in the PTAs that govern at particular schools. They are also required to attend parent-teacher conferences in which they discuss their children's progress (Ademola and Olajumuke 2009). Both in Nigeria and in Zimbabwe, through the governance body, parents are involved in the planning of their financial support for the school (Ngwenya et al 2008; Haastrup and Alonge 2012). This is not the case with the Mhale's Hoek District, in Lesotho. In Lesotho, Nigeria, South Africa, USA and Zimbabwe parents take part in the discipline of their children (Letsie 1998; Epstein 2005; Haastrup and

Alonge 2008; Ngwenya et al 2010). The literature reviewed shows that there are various forms of communication between the school and parents even though they are fewer than the ones that are found from the interviewed participants.

The study found out that a majority of the participants held the same opinion that the school uses diverse communication methods with parents. These methods included: sending radio messages, sending letters through children, parents meetings, church announcements, progress reports and contact via the telephone. The study further indicated that diverse communication in high schools is vital because it allows for effective parental involvement. Most parents of learners in Mohale's Hoek high schools take part in their children's learning because the principals and the educators try by all means to involve them in their children's education using different means of communication.

In the case of United States of America, Moles and Fege (2011) note with triumph that, the involvement of parents in formal education in governance is linked to parents attending meetings where they take part in decision-making regarding their children's success and better performance. Furthermore, Epstein (2005) corroborated the findings discussed above by indicating that in USA parents and educators are able to communicate learners' disciplinary problems and poor attendance which in most cases lead to poor performance. This communication, which is experienced in other countries, is also experienced, through the School Boards, in Lesotho, where children's education is shared by representatives of parents and educators.

In this regard, the study found out that there was a two-way communication between the school and home. This communication resulted in some measure of success as a majority of the parents attended parents' meetings that were organised by the school authority. Some of the participants' responses attested to this success as they indicated that the school called parents to meetings. In such meetings parents were given their children's progress reports and discussed school matters. In this situation, parents feel free to speak to educators about their children's work. Other participants also mentioned that parents received invitation letters or written information. As a

result, parents were able to assist the school with learners' discipline and other issues of concern, which led to their children's success in their high school education.

The outcome of this research shows that although letters and parents' meetings were stated as the common means of communication, those few parents who did not attend meetings regularly may have a negative influence on their children who never heard them talking about their school. Their children might think that schooling is less important and have interest in other things that are often talked over by their parents. Although communication through letters is one of the means of communication that is mostly used by the school, letters to the parents given to their children are not all received by parents.

The researcher concludes that parents who scarcely attend parents' meetings are less involved in their children's education as compared to their counterparts who often attend the meetings and are, as a result, more involved. Parents who attend the meetings participate in decision-making processes that concern their children. Decision-making according to Olsen and Fuller (2012) involves a partnership process in which parents and educators come together and share ideas and views that contribute to their children's education. This involvement of parents in the school's decision-making improved the learners' performance. Furthermore, parents, who often visited the school at any time when the need arose and consulted with their children's class-teachers, motivate their children in the sense that the children become aware that their education was important and needs to be taken seriously.

4.3.5.2 Parent-child relationship

The results of the study and the literature reviewed show that parent-child relationship plays an important role in parental involvement in formal education and learners' development. Normally, where there is a good relationship between a parent and a child the development of a two-way communication is possible. This enables parents to exchange conversation and views with their children. In this situation it is possible for parents to assist their children to socialise and be emotionally and intellectually mature (Astone and Mclanahan, in Koone and Harper 2005). Parent-child relationship

usually enables parents to discipline their children with love and support them in their development. Such learners are easily disciplined by educators at school and they perform well in their studies.

The study also found out that more mothers are involved in their children's learning than fathers. This might be influenced by our culture whereby children are more open to their mothers than to their fathers. The majority of attendees at parents' meetings were mothers who wanted to know more about their children's progress. Participants gave evidence that more mothers volunteered to be involved in homework and study.

4.4 Conclusion

The study concludes that parental involvement at high schools in the Mohale's Hoek District has to be regarded as an important aspect relevant to the establishment of power relations between the school, educators, parents and learners. These power relations should be identified and balanced in order for educators and parents to work harmoniously for the success of learners. Parents, as the ones who offer initial education to their children, should be acknowledged, especially by educators, as equal partners in their children's formal education. It is through the support, encouragement and assistance of parents that learners succeed in their academic education. Nevertheless, parents should realise that their support should not degenerate into some form of pressure on the children, which may lead to confusion, anxiety and stress, and ultimately end up leading to poor performances in those same children that they wanted to assist.

Moreover, it is important to support parents as this sustains their involvement in the children's formal education at high schools. Parents also need to be guided through the use of a number of strategies, as noted above, which can help them to work effectively with both educators and learners. More importantly, the school should train parents to accustom themselves with knowledge and skills that enable them to become more involved in their children's formal education. The study concludes that there should be effective communication between educators and parents in order to allow parents' contribution in the education of the children. This will ensure that the

parents contribute their knowledge, time, skills and resources to develop their children's education.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter summarises and concludes the study. It also discusses the recommendations and conclusions with the objective of assisting schools on how to involve parents in the children's formal education. The summaries of the empirical findings are presented in line with the themes categorised in the preceding chapter. The researcher investigated the influence of parental involvement in formal education in high schools. In this section, summary, conclusions and recommendations are based on research questions and the results of the data emerged from the data provided by the interviewed participants. Summary and conclusions will be presented in terms of categorised themes.

5.2 Summary

In evaluating the influence of parental involvement in formal education at high schools in Mohale's Hoek District of Lesotho, the researcher intended to summarise the research questions as follows:

5.2.1 Research question 1: What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the Mohale's Hoek District?

When answering the above research question 1 the following themes emerged from the evidence the participants responses affirmed:

5.2.1.1Learners' support

Data from the empirical study shows that parents' support to their children begins in the family. Children are physically, spiritually, intellectually, psychologically, and socially supported by their parents. Parents provide all their children's needs. Parental

involvement is always practised by parents who show interest in their children. Parents work hard for their children's success, send them to school and support them in their school work. Furthermore, parents create conducive environments at home to ensure that their children do homework and study. Parents also support their children by attending school meetings and making sure that their children attend school regularly. Although some parents do not show interest in their children's school work at home some parents, however, communicate regularly with their children about their school work. These supportive parents even check whether homework is done or not, and assist their children where possible. Parental support is noted further in their supply of school materials, such as books and uniform and by paying school fees for their children on time. They also supply them with the basic needs, such as, food, shelter, health, love, which play a very important role in learner's education.

5.2.1.2 Parents' collaboration and volunteering

Evidence suggests that parents collaborate and volunteer in their children's formal education. Although the previous discussion revealed that parents support their children, it is mothers who are more involved in their children's education than fathers. In most cases mothers are the ones who attend school meetings in large numbers and have interest in learners' schoolwork. They try all sorts of things that can help in the improvement of their children's studies. Parents also collaborate in the discipline of their children which leads to studies achievement. Moreover, uneducated parents take their children's education as the one of their high priority responsibilities even though they themselves might not have achieved any higher education. Thus, parents volunteer themselves in their children's formal education in various ways.

5.2.1.3 Parents' involvement in decision-making

The empirical study indicates that some parents are involved in the formulation of school policies and decision-making activities at school. This is evidenced by the case of three members of the School Board in the case of Lesotho who have become representatives of parents in the whole school. They now have more access and get more involvement in the learners' education, be it study or discipline. Other parents

are seldom called by the school and only called if their children misbehave. Moreover, other parents are involved in their children's discipline, problem-solving, study and homework and the learners' basic needs.

5.2.2 Research question 2: How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mohale's Hoek District?

When answering the above research question 2 the following themes emerged from the evidence the participants responses affirmed:

5.2.2.1 Provision of initial education

Evidence shows that the role played by parents in their children's formal education is important. The fact that parents are already involved in their children's initial education enables them to be involved in their children's formal education. Parents are the ones who teach their children how to socialise. The teaching at home makes it easier for educators at school. Home education is the foundation of formal education that takes place at school. A disciplined child at home is easily disciplined by educators as compared to an undisciplined one. The learners' positive attitude towards formal education is instilled by their parents through the education they received at home and what is said about their school.

5.2.2.2 Building a bridge between learners' home and school

Evidence indicates that the experience children have at their homes lays the foundation for children's learning at school. The participants outlined that children's home experiences support their learning at school. Parents seem to take an active interest in children's education. Educators support parents by helping them with homework and study. This fills in the gap between home and school as well as allow for a cooperation between the formal and informal. In most cases effective parental involvement leads to collaboration and an equal relationship between parents and educators. The direct involvement of parents assists in the achievement, development and well-being of learners throughout their school life.

5.2.3 Research question 3: What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?

In answering the above research question 3 the following themes emerged from the evidence the participants responses affirmed:

5.2.3.1 Parents' low level of education

The study indicates that parents who have low levels of education usually wish to help their children with their learning but feel powerless and helpless. They also feel inferior towards their children who managed to reach higher levels of education as compared to them. The low level of education prevents such parents from making follow-up on their children's education. Less educated parents lack the basic knowledge and skills regarding their involvement in school matters. As a result, such parents are less likely to help their children with their school activities, particularly academic ones which included writing and reading in English, unlike the case with educated parents who are able to assist their children with homework.

5.2.3.2 Lack of communication

Evidence shows that the lack of communication between the school and parents is a major obstacle to parental involvement in their children's education. The failure to attend the school meetings hinders involvement in the learning process of learners. Parents who are not invited by the school to discuss the performance of their children become marginalised and unaware of what to do in order to be involved in the children's education. This lack of communication makes parents perceive that schooling as the educators' responsibility only.

5.2.3.3 Time constraints

The study indicated that educators and parents play an important role in improving learners' educational development. The two parties are expected to have time to

discuss the formal educational issues that affect learners' development both at home and at school. It is expected that each party avails itself for the development of learners' education. However, the sharing of quality time between educators and parents does not happen as expected because parents do not always find the time to attend school meetings. Parents have their own businesses to attend to, nevertheless, failure to meet invitations to the school deny them the opportunity to make a significant contribution to their children's education.

5.2.4 Research question 4: What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education?

When answering the above research question 4 the following themes emerged from the evidence the participants responses affirmed:

5.2.4.1 Learners' performance

Evidence suggests that parental involvement is important because it improves learners' performance and attendance. Cases where parents are involved are known to have pushed educators to work hard knowing very well that parents would check on the teachers and their children's performance. Hence, the learners are more successful when their parents are actively involved. In this situation learners are more positive about their school itself and about their future and dreams.

5.2.4.2 Partnership between the school and parents

It is evident that partnership increases the types and levels of parental involvement in that, parents are more supportive of a school when they have knowledge of what the school is trying to do for its development. In a situation where parents view the school as a partner they easily share responsibility for their children's learning. Parents' knowledge about their children assists in learners' development. This knowledge enables educators to deal with difficult learners, especially if they involve parents in learners' discipline and learning. The knowledge that parents have about their children enables parents to share with educators regarding their children's learning and

development. This partnership encourages parents' participation, especially those who are keen to contribute their skills, support and knowledge.

5.2.5 Research question 5: What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

When answering the above research question 5 the following themes emerged from the evidence the participants responses affirmed:

5.2.5.1 Diversity of communication

Evidence shows that there are various means that can be used by the school to communicate with parents. These include phones, radio and church announcements; letters; learners' assemblies; parents' meetings and learners' progress reports. The empirical findings in this study indicated that among the modes of communication used by the school, parents' meetings and telephone calls are the most recurrent means of communication.

5.2.5.2 Parent-child relationship

Evidence suggests that mutual parent-child relationships improve parental involvement. Parents who have a good relationship with their children influence them to perceive school work positively and this improves their performance. Where there is good parent-child relationship there is open communication that motivates learners. This relationship motivates learners and open up chances that lead them to higher education achievement.

5.3 Conclusions

In evaluating and summarising the influence of parental involvement in formal education at high schools in the Molepolole District of Lesotho, the following conclusions are drawn from the empirical study and are based on the following research questions:

5.3.1 Research question 1: What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the Mohale's Hoek District?

5.3.1.1 Learners' support

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that, learners who come from homes where parents provide supporting learning feel good about themselves and have a high self-esteem. This support helps learners to trust and respect their parents, brings about a change in the learners and enhances their appreciation of school work. Thus, learners are able to develop physically, intellectually, socially and in all spheres of life, through parents' support.

5.3.1.2 Parents' collaboration and volunteering

The study concludes that although parents collaborate and volunteer to be involved in their children's education, mothers in particular are fully committed to their children's education. In addition, parental involvement does not depend on the level of education but on parents' passion with their children's education and success. They also use other members of the family who are capable of helping with homework. They also collaborate by creating a conducive environment which allows learners to study. Therefore, parents who allocate time for their children's study lead the way to their children's success.

5.3.1.3 Parents' involvement in decision-making

The study concludes that parents are not happy that they are mostly called to school to solve their children's problems rather than to prevent them. They seem to believe that prevention is better than cure, but this is not the way the school looks at the matter. In addition, one way in which parents get involved in their children's formal education is through the three parents who are members of the School Board. This, according to the parents, is not enough as they wished that a greater number be

involved. The parents want the school to create the opportunities for them to take part in school decision-making processes. This practice might have contributed to parents' negative attitude towards school activities. Parents seem to be more involved in communicating, parenting and learning at home than in volunteering and decision-making.

5.3.2 Research question 2: How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mohale's Hoek District?

5.3.2.1 Provision of initial education

The study concludes that learning begins at home with the parents' full involvement. Parents' involvement in their children's formal education assists in the smooth running of the school and improves learners' academic capabilities and discipline. The role played by parents as they bring up their children, could have a positive or negative influence on learners' activities at school. The study concludes that learners who are well-disciplined at home are easily disciplined at school. Therefore, education begins at home and is enhanced and promoted at school.

5.3.2.2 Building a bridge between learners' homes and school

The study concludes that there is a link between home education and formal education. The education that is offered by parents to their children in the family lays the foundation of formal education. The fact that children have the roles to play as they are brought up in their homes contributes a lot in their formal education. The children's educators seemed to be aware of the important role played by parents in learners' education that is why they include parents in learning.

5.3.3 Research question 3: What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?

5.3.3.1 Parents' low level of education

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that low levels of parents' education are an obstacle to parental involvement in children's education. It makes the parents afraid of going to school to seek information about their children. Little education makes parents lack confidence and undermines their ability to assist their children with homework. The researcher therefore, concludes that the children whose parents had low levels of education were at the risk of academic underachievement and failure than their counterparts whose parents had high levels of education. Instead, a higher level of education enables parents to be more involved in their children's formal education at home and at school.

5.3.3.2 Lack of communication

The study concludes that there is a lack of communication between the school and parents. Educators failed to communicate with parents, as a result the parents and educators could not share their experience regarding the learners. This resulted from some educators' failure to value the importance of parental involvement in the formal education of their children. The educators did not recognise parents as partners. This lack of communication accounts for parents' limited involvement in the formal education of their children. Furthermore, lack of teacher-parent meetings which would discuss learners' problems and other school activities such as sports and school trips are obstacles to parental involvement.

5.3.3.3 Time constraints

The study concludes that parents hardly find time to take part in a series of activities such as school meetings, sporting activities and social events organised by the school. This involvement becomes more complicated to working parents, who leave their homes early in the morning and come back home late in the evening and sometimes return home when their children are already in bed. Therefore, parental involvement can be hindered by the parents' lack of time or the school regarding meetings with the parents as a waste of time for the educators.

5.3.4 Research question 4: What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education?

5.3.4.1 Learners' performance

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that if the school and parents convey a common message about the importance of attending school and working hard for their children's success, learners are more likely to listen to their educators and perform well at school.

5.3.4.2 Partnership between the school and parents

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the existence of a partnership benefits both parties. As the evidence shows, both the school and parents benefit because there is a two-way information sharing. During the parents' meetings parents feel more comfortable with the educators if they are given a chance get actively involved in school activities and events. Parents collaborate in solving the problems educators' encounter, when there is a partnership between them and the school.

5.3.5 Research question 5: What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

5.3.5.1 Diversity of communication

The study concludes that the school used a diverse means of communication with parents. Its use is vital because it allows parental involvement to be effective. Parents in high schools participate in their children's learning because the principal and educators use different modes of communication in an attempt to involve them in their children's education. Parents who scarcely attend parents' meetings are less involved in their children's education as compared to their counterparts who often go to the parents' meetings and were more involved.

5.3.5.2 Parent-child relationship

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that parents who are more involved in their children's learning are the primary source of educational support for

their children. The existence of openness between parents and learners develops learners' education and helps them to unite with each other.

5.4 Recommendations

Empirical findings indicate positive and negative experiences with regard to parental involvement in the formal education of their children. The following recommendations are based on empirical findings from the current study. These recommendations are written to fill the gaps that were identified during the implementation of parental involvement in formal education in high schools. Attention is given to the recommendations of the study with a view to the influence of parental involvement informal education. In this section, the recommendations are discussed in the light of the findings that emerged as per the research questions.

5.4.1 Research question 1: What is the influence of parental involvement in formal education in the Mhale's Hoek District?

5.4.1.1 Establishment of teamwork

The study found that there is a lack of teamwork between the educators and the parents because the decision-making powers were still vested in the hands of the educators alone. Therefore, the study recommends that educators and parents should work together as equal partners in the education of the learners. This will change the mind of parents who think schooling is the prerogative of the educators. Thus, a collaboration effort between parents and educators allows both educators and parents to share the responsibility of teaching and learning, share power and make joint decisions regarding the learners, and ultimately lead to both being interested in their work.

5.4.1.2 Collaboration

The study and literature reviewed confirmed that the family is the initial school where learners at the early stage learnt things. They learn how to talk, walk, love and be loved, and how to relate with other family members and neighbours. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the highest priority by all stakeholders with interest in the

Lesotho Education should be based on the need for transformation. Educators need to remember that parents are the first educators of their children at home. Parents teach their children respect, with girls being taught to clean and care for the family by their mothers, while boys learn manly activities from their fathers. The study further recommends that educators work with parents and other stakeholders who are interested in learners' education in order to learn from one another and sustain parental involvement. Finally, the study recommends that any parents' meeting should be conducted in a language understood by parents. This will motivate and make them feel that they are part of that meeting and decisions that are reached.

5.4.1.3 Decision-making

The study found that parents are less involved in decision-making. In this regard the researcher recommends that there should be distribution of power (decision-making) among the educators and the parents. Educators should welcome parents and encourage them to raise questions and voice their opinions during the parents' meetings. They should also be encouraged to participate in the making of decisions on matters that involve their children. This will assist both parties to perceive decisions as collective and not imposed.

5.4.2 Research question 2: How are parents involved in the formal education of their children in the Mhale's Hoek District?

5.4.2.1 Poor parental involvement

The study found that there are accusations and counter-accusations between the educators and parents based on each one's suspicions about the role of the other. The educators often think that parents were deliberately not interested in their children's education. Parents on the other hand accuse the educators of excluding them from the main discourse on decisions that affected their children's education. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the cause of poor parental involvement should be identified and addressed, as this will assist both educators and parents to be aware of the roles that they should play.

5.4.3 Research question 3: What are the barriers to parental involvement in the formal education?

5.4.3.1 Time management

The study notes that parents' lacked the time to involve themselves in their children's education. For instance most parents reported that a lack of time prevented them from attending school activities, hence their low attendance at parents' meetings. The study recommends that sessions on time management be given to educators and parents so that they can learn the importance of managing their time and other people's time. Proper time management will thus ensure that parents have adequate time to attend to school activities and other personal issues and sustain their involvement in the children's formal education.

5.4.3.2 Effective communication

The study found that it is important to support parents to sustain their involvement in the children's formal education in high schools. In this regard the study recommends that there should be effective communication between educators and parents so as to allow parents' contribution in the education of the children. This will ensure that they contribute their knowledge, time, skills and resources to develop their children's education. Parents should be guided through the use of proposed strategies and others that can help them to work and communicate effectively with both educators and learners. The school should train parents to accustom themselves with knowledge and skills that enable them to become more involved in their children's formal education.

5.4.4 Research question 4: What is the necessity for and importance of parental involvement in their children's education?

5.4.4.1 Important aspects of power relations

The study indicates that parental involvement in high schools in the Mohale's Hoek District should be regarded as an important aspect of power relations. Therefore, the study recommends that these power relations should be identified and balanced in

order for educators and parents to work harmoniously for the success of learners. Parents, as the ones who offer initial education to their children, should be acknowledged as equal partners in their children's formal education. It is through the support, encouragement and assistance of parents that learners succeed in their academic education. Parents should, nevertheless, be mindful of the fact that any excessive pressure on their children may lead to confusion, anxiety and stress, and ultimately poor performance.

5.4.5 Research question 5: What strategies can be employed to sustain parental involvement in formal education?

5.4.5.1 Support from the school

The study found out that the school does not do much to involve parents in their children's formal education. Many parents have limited ideas on parental involvement in learners' schooling. In this regard the researcher further recommends that the school should support parents in order to get involved in learners' education. The principal and the educators, should jointly schedule specific times during which the learners' progress reports are handed over to parents by class-teachers so that they can communicate the strengths and weaknesses of the children either at school or at home. Frequent parents' meetings should be held, so that parents get to know the academic progress of their children. This will assist parents to support the educators as well as their children. The principal and the educators must encourage parents to make every effort to attend school functions and meetings when invited. In order to motivate parents, the attendance register should be signed by parents during parents' meetings so that names of those that do not appear can be identified. Rules and the consequences of breaking them should be clearly specified and communicated to educators, parents and learners. This should be carried out periodically. All these stipulated strategies might help build and maintain a harmonious social cohesion between the school and parents for the learners' success and development in formal education.

5.4.5.2 Support from the Ministry of Education and Training

The study shows that the policy on parental involvement is not clear so much that it causes confusion between the school and parents. The two parties that suppose to work together to develop learners' performance seemed to confuse roles. The educators have their own expectations towards parents that are not communicated so do parents. The study recommends that the Lesotho government should encourage parents, through the school, to actively take part in school activities and programmes. The school should have clear policies that allow parents to be active role players in formal education. If the procedure can be communicated by government clearly to parents, through the school, then their participation can be meaningful to both the school and learners. This implies that the quality of teacher training has to be taken into consideration, as some educators in this study did not value the importance of parents in their children's education.

Lesotho's Teacher Training Institutions, namely, the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and Lesotho College of Education (LCE) should include parental involvement as one of the major courses for both pre-service and in-service educators. This will prepare them on the strategies appropriate for parental involvement in high schools. This training should also equip educators with effective methods and strategies for involving parents in formal education. It will also allow effective and regular two-way communication between educators and parents.

5.4.5.3 Training

The study found that there are parents who do not understand or are not aware that they need to be involved in their children's education. This attitude according to the findings is influenced by various reasons one of them is parents' low level of education. There is also another group of educated parents who are too busy to involve themselves in their children's education. Such parents are helpless, but if they can be guided on how to involve themselves in learners' education they too can be actively involved. In this regard the study recommends that parents should be trained so as to equip them with appropriate knowledge and skills that assist them to become

involved in their children's formal education. This will assist many incapable parents who wish to help their children with schoolwork. Some parents are capable, but are hindered from assisting their children by a lack of training. The study also recommends the school should offer parent training workshops and encourages parents to attend them. These workshops will assist parents to acquire appropriate skills and knowledge on how they can get involved and what is expected of them in their children's formal education.

The study found that parents are the first educators of their children. The researcher, therefore, recommends that parents should be trained on parenting programmes. This will open many parents' mind since many of them are not aware of the important role they should play in their children's education as parents. Furthermore, the study recommends further training that will empower parents with skills to encourage their children to think about and work for their future. This can be done by relating their children's future ambitions to their current learning as high school learners. The training of parents will assist learners to choose the correct subjects that open the doors to their careers. In order to do this successfully, parents need to be provided with information about educational opportunities that are available at all the levels of the children's formal education.

The study further recommends that training be tailored to meet the specific needs and concern of high school learners' and advocate their needs in schools, especially in assisting them with homework. There should be a connection between parents and schools in order to improve parental involvement at high schools.

5.5 Chapter conclusion

The researcher set out to evaluate the influence of parental involvement in formal education at high schools in the Molekane District of Lesotho. The discussion of findings was presented based on research questions. The chapter summarised the empirical findings and found that parents support their children in their children's education even though it is in a low level. The chapter also made conclusions based on data collected during the interview sessions. It revealed that although parental

involvement is important, few of them are involved in school decision-making and there are many obstacles that prevent it to be more effective. Thus, the chapter revealed the strategies that can be used to enhance parental involvement. Recommendations based on the results that emerged from the data participants were discussed in this chapter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Permission letter to my Supervisor.

Holy Cross Convent

P.O. Box 1

Mekaling 840

Lesotho

28th February 2015

The Supervisor

Central University of Technology, Free State

Private Bag X20539

Bloemfontein 9300

South Africa

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO VISIT HIGH SCHOOLS FOR RESEARCH

I hereby require your permission to allow me to conduct a research in two high schools in the Mohale's Hoek district. I am currently registered as a student at the Central University of Technology, Free State for the degree of Master of Education in the faculty of Humanities.

The topic of my research is "The influence of parental involvement in formal education in high schools in the Mohale's Hoek district, in Lesotho." If the permission is granted, arrangement will be made with the principal, parents, educators and learners of the selected high school.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours faithfully



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www.cut.ac.za



28th February 2015

To: *Sr Clementina Teba-Teba's and to Whom it may concern*

Dear Sr. / Sir/Madam,

RE: A letter of reference /for permission to visit schools to conduct research in Lesotho

Your letter of 28 February 2015 refers.

I hereby write to confirm that you are a registered Master of Education student of the Central University of Technology, Free State, under my supervision. I 'inherited' you officially on 02 October 2013 from my colleague, the late Dr Regis Lithoko then your supervisor. Records in my possession also show that you were okayed to conduct research in the relevant school/s on the basis of communication from Mrs Mamalebanye, Senior Education Officer: Mohale's Hoek District, dated 15 September 2013 and the other one from The school head of St Stephen's High School dated 01 October 2013.

Since permission has already been secured, and as follow up on our discussion on the subject, you are free to reengage the school/s and interact with your sample. My wish is that you collect as much rich data as possible. Therefore, by note of this and previous correspondences, I hereby endorse your research errands.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on matters pertaining to this issue.

Regards

Yours Sincerely



Alfred H. Makura (Dr)

cc: Senior Education Officer: Mohale's Hoek District
H.O.D: Postgraduate Studies: Education, CUT.

Appendix 2: Permission letter from supervisor



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING - MOHALE'S HOEK

P.O. BOX 50, MOHALE'S HOEK, 800

TELEPHONE : 22785291 / 22780366

15th September 2013

St Stephen's High School

Mohale's hoek

Dear Sir/ Madam

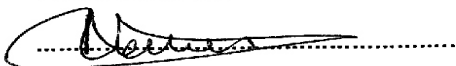
RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Sr Clementine Teba-teba is registered part- time student at Central University of Technology Free State.

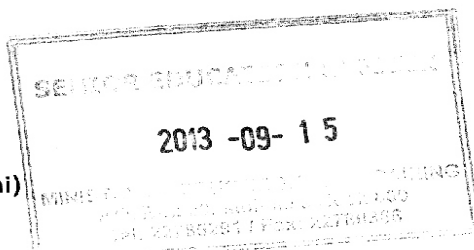
I humbly ask you to give her permission to conduct her research in your school. Her research topic is "**Parental Involvement towards Learning in High Schools, in Mohale's Hoek, Lesotho**". I hope that her presence will not interrupt the normal functioning of your school.

Your usual co-operation will be appreciated

Yours faithfully



Mrs Mamalebanye Lerotholi SEO (ai)



Appendix 3: Permission letter from Senior Education Officer

Holy Cross Convent

P.O. Box 1

Mekaling 840

Lesotho

10th September 2013

The School Principal
St Stephen's High School
P.O. Box 73
Mohale's Hoek 800
Lesotho

Dear Madam


RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I request permission to conduct research at your school premise. I am a registered Master of Education (M.Ed degree) student in the Department of Postgraduate Studies: Education at the Central University of Technology, Free State. The working title of my research is: **"The influence of parental involvement in formal education in high schools in the Mohale's Hoek district in Lesotho."**

I hope this research will inform the general practice of parental involvement in their children's education, with the potential to improve of school results. In particular, I wish to conduct interviews with you and six educators who have taught at least for six years preferably. I also would like to interview six parents of Form D students, and to have focus group interviews with their children who are in Form D class.

Your support in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Clementina N. Teba-Teba (50963056 / 0738386481)

Appendix 4: Permission letter to School Principal

Holy Cross Convent
P.O. Box 1
Mekaling 840
Lesotho
10th September 2013

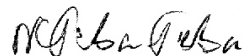
Senior Education Officer
Education Office
P.O. Box 507
Mohale's Hoek 800
Lesotho

Dear Madam

Re: Request to conduct a research at St Stephen's High School

I am a registered Master of Education (M.Ed) part-time student in the Department of Postgraduate Studies: Education at Central University of Technology, Free State. The title of my research is: "**The influence of parental involvement in formal education in high schools in the Mohale's Hoek district in Lesotho.**" I hereby request permission to conduct a research at St Stephen's High School. This project will in no way interfere with the normal functioning of the school. I promise to adhere to the generic ethical protocols particularly those relating to non-disclosure of collected data to uninterested parties.

Yours faithfully



Clementina N. Teba-Teba (58963056 / 0738386481)

Appendix 5: Permission letter to Senior Education Officer

St. Stephen's Diocesan High School

Address: P.O. Box 73 Mohale's Hoek 800 Lesotho Telephone:22 785 331

01-Oct-2013

Dear SR. Clementine Tebateba

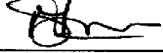
This letter serves a go ahead for your request to do your research at our school.

I further wish to inform you that you should feel free to consult any person at our school in the effort to carry on with your research project.

I look forward to working with in the pursuit of your research.

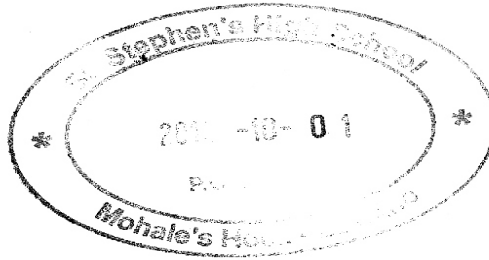
Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully,



Majoalane Mathebeng (Mrs.)

The Headmistress



Appendix 6: Permission letter from School Principal

Thoteng Ha Sechele

P.O. Box 20

Mohale's Hoek 800

Lesotho

25 September 2013

Dear Researcher

I write this letter as a proof that I received your invitation to participate and allow my child to take part in this study. I talked to my child who responded positively to your request. He is willing to be interviewed and I am also ready to participate in this study.

Yours sincerely

Mapapali Rabele

Mapapali Rabele

Appendix 7: Permission letter from parents

Appendix 8: Interview schedule for principal and educators

Principal and educators' interview questions

1. What does your school do to involve parents in their children's education?
2. What do you think are the importance of parental involvement in formal education?
3. Which ways does your school use to communicate with parents?
4. Are parents with special skills allowed to assist in extra-curricular activities?
5. Do parents volunteer to assist with school activities?
6. What, in your opinion, could discourage parents from volunteering at school?
7. How often does the school provide a range of appropriate opportunities for parents to see their children's work and discuss their progress?
8. Are parents involved in decision-making at school?
9. How often does your school call parents' meetings?
10. Do parents attend these meetings?
11. What, in your opinion, could discourage them from attending these meetings?
12. Are parents made aware of the vital link between education at home and education at school?
13. How do you think parental involvement in your school can be improved?
14. Which influence do you think parental involvement can have in learners' formal education?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Appendix 9: Interview schedule for parents

Parents' interview questions

1. What does your school do to involve parents in their children's formal education?
2. Do you think parental involvement in formal education is important? Why?
3. How often do you monitor your child's school work?
4. Do you motivate your child to do school activities?
5. How often do you assist your child with homework?
6. What problems do you encounter, if any, when helping your child with homework?
7. Which ways does your school use to communicate with parents?
8. Which school activities do you volunteer to assist with?
9. What, in your opinion, could discourage you from volunteering with other school activities?
10. Do educators call you to school in connection with your child's behaviour or performance?
11. How many times does your school call you for parents' meetings per year?
12. Do you attend these meetings?
13. What, in your opinion, could discourage you from attending those meetings?
14. Do you think parental involvement in formal education can influence your child's academic performance?
15. How do you think parental involvement in your child's school can be improved?
Give your own reasons.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Appendix 10: Interview schedule for learners

Learners' focus group interviews questions

1. How often do your parents monitor your school work at home?
2. How often do your parents help you with your school work?
3. How often do your parents visit your school to learn about your behaviour and performance?
4. What is the contribution of your parents in your education?
5. How often are your parents called to school meetings?
6. How do you think your parents can help you in your study?
7. How often do your parents volunteer to do school activities at school?
8. What, in your opinion, could discourage your parents from volunteering at school?
9. Do you think parental involvement in formal education can influence your academic performance?
10. How do you think parental involvement in your schooling can be improved?
Give your own reasons.
11. Are your parents involved in decision-making at school?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!