

**AN INVESTIGATION OF PARENTAL NON-INVOLVEMENT IN
THE GOVERNANCE OF A DUNCAN VILLAGE SCHOOL AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL: A
CASE STUDY**

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the whole work in this study is mine except where I have given a direct quotation or references.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions that parents have about their non-involvement in the governance of a Duncan Village High School, and considers the implications of such perceptions for the management of the school.

Recent discussions on Radio Talk Shows and articles written in local newspapers indicate that Black parents have generally not been involved in the education of their children at the traditionally Black schools. Parental non-involvement also emerges as a strong theme in recent research. However, most of the research and media coverage focuses on school management's perceptions of the reasons and consequences of such non-involvement. The parents' voices have rarely been heard.

Against this background, as well as the fact that the South African Schools Act presents a strong case for the involvement of parents in school governance and management, a phenomenological investigation was conducted at a traditionally Black Duncan Village High School. I chose phenomenology because I believed this approach has the potential for revealing my respondents' attitudes and perceptions. The sample consisted of four parent members of the school governing body who were key informants. The respondents were subjected to unstructured interviews which were held at their homes. The interviews probed the background and reasons for their lack of involvement, and the possible implications of this non-involvement for school management.

The most significant of the wealth of findings is that parental non-involvement is linked to the historical background of the culture of non-participation of Black people which was created and encouraged by the successive White Governments in South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The question of parental non-involvement in the management of schools has always been a problematic issue, especially for traditionally Black schools in South Africa (SA). Parental non-involvement in traditional Black schools manifests itself in various ways. The most common manifestations are explained below.

- ◆ Pupils with no parents or with “no show” parents.

The above does not mean that the pupils are orphans. It simply means that most of their parents do not involve themselves in activities of the schools which their children attend, especially the governance of the schools. When they are invited to parents' meetings and other school activities only a few attend. Even those who are members of the governing structures of the schools have excuses for not attending the school meetings and not coming to school promptly when they are called in crisis situations, like when teachers are locked up and held hostage by pupils. However, the same parents come willingly to schools when their children have committed an offence, or a crime, or have been offended either by a teacher or fellow pupils.

The contact between the parents and teachers is therefore based on negative events. Because of the negativity surrounding their contact with teachers some of them withdraw completely from any contact with the schools (Bryans, 1989: 36). This unavailability of parents results in major decisions, like the determination of the school policy, being postponed indefinitely, which makes the running of the school a difficult task to perform.

Eventually the principals are forced to make decision on several matters, like the policies, without parents' contribution. The nature of these decisions is undemocratic as they are taken unilaterally.

In conflict situations the implementation of such decisions are questioned by the same parents who forget their own unavailability when the decisions were discussed. This means therefore that parents do not participate in the policy and decision making of their children's education.

◆ Low pass rate at matric level.

The results of matriculants in South Africa's Black townships and homelands for 1995 were around 40% (Wits Educational Policy Unit, March 1996). The 1996 & 1997 results were not better than those of 1995. This state of affairs led to an outcry which was evident in discussions about these poor results held on radio talk shows like the Boom Breakfast Show of Radio Umhlobo Wenene and Radio Metro's Morning Drive Show. Articles were also written in local newspapers like the Daily Dispatch. Evident in such discussions and newspaper articles were accusations and counter accusations by parents, learners and educators.

What came out of the discussions was that each party failed to comply with its obligations as co-partners. Parents were not supportive of their children's schools. This low pass rate had bad consequences for some school principals. For example, a Principal of a school in Alice was sacked for a 0% pass rate, and this was repeated in Mpumalanga at Seikgoni High School (SABC TV1 19:30 News, March 1998) where the school had thirty students and obtained a 100% failure rate.

In both these cases an impression was created that the Principals were sacked for the failure rate and for other reasons. The questions arise as to who sacked the Principals? Were they sacked by the school governing bodies of which parents are part or were the school governing bodies merely informed by the Education departments concerned that the principals were sacked or should be sacked?

◆ Conflict.

Educational institutions in South Africa are currently fraught with conflict. The conflict is either within the student body or between the students and the administrators of their educational institutions. Not long ago (March 1998) the students at most tertiary institutions were in conflict with the management. The conflict came about because some students owed their tertiary institutions millions for outstanding fees. The rectors of universities met at Port Elizabeth University and decided unilaterally that no student will be allowed to register without the payment of the arrears and proper registration fee for the current year.

Consequently institutions like Fort Hare and Venda Universities had to be closed although they are now open. Masibulele College of Education in Sada was closed long before the break for the Easter holidays. Also in February 1998 the pupils at Duncan Village and other areas in the Eastern Cape took to the streets for a week protesting against the government's failure to honour the agreement of supplying the schools with textbooks. During 1997 the whole nation watched on television with horror as a school in Cape Town was being vandalised by its own learners (SABC TV1 News, April, 1997).

In all of the instances cited above nothing was reported either on radio, newspapers or television of the response of the governing bodies of such institutions. The only response was the reaction of the students which culminated in closure of some of these institutions. Finally, through negotiations between the management of such institutions and student representation, people saw via media the parents accompanied by their children, standing in queues and paying the fees. Those who could not afford to pay were making suitable arrangements with the universities' officials.

In conflict situations parents are the last to know and to be consulted. As a result, their role is perceived by educators and some parents to be that of "fire extinguishers" or "an extra pair of hands in an emergency" (Atkin, Bastiani & Goode, 1988:4). This means that parents' role is only acknowledged in crisis situations.

From my experience as a Head of Department as well as a Deputy Principal at various schools at Duncan Village, when parents are called to address a potentially volatile issue or a matter concerning a general policy of the school, they do not show up. They usually show up when the issues have exploded. This laissez-faire attitude of parents results at times in some principals deliberately neglecting to summon them in times of normality or crisis. The reasoning behind this is that the principals take it for granted that they will not come. Because parents are the last to be called in, this creates a no trust relationship between them and the school. The failure to inform the parents timeously has a potential of broadening the conflict to parents and teachers.

◆ Cancellation of classes due to strike action by either teachers or learners

During February/March 1998 the teachers belonging to the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) were planning to go on strike. The SADTU members were to strike because the government had reneged on the agreement they had reached of not dismissing temporary teachers. The strike would have taken place if it had not been held up by the procedure that SADTU failed to follow when they are to strike. Such strikes usually take place during tuition time. Consequently the classes are cancelled and tuition is suspended for the entire duration of the strike action.

This rather unprofessional behaviour is not peculiar to teachers only, but also to pupils. When there is a strike action by teachers or students, parents are not involved or notified of it. They only hear about it in the media. Teachers and student do not discuss with them the duration of the strike, or a plan of action on how to catch up for the lost time, etc. Although striking teachers envisage extra classes on Saturdays or after school on weekdays to cover the lost time, this does not always occur.

The use of Saturdays and the week day afternoons has its own disadvantages as most of the time this is not discussed and agreed upon by parents. In some homes these times are already allocated for home related issues that must be taken care of by the children. This too has the potential of creating conflict between parents and teachers.

These manifestations are clearly matters of policy which need to be discussed at school governing body level. However, this does not happen at some traditional Black schools as parents seldom meet the quorum so that the decision can be discussed fully with the parent body and be implemented.

Between January and March in 1997 I went on a pilgrimage to the world of parents in education. Many pilgrims before me, like Van Schalkwyk (1990), Jowett & MacNeil (1991) and Hess (1992) as cited by Kruger (1996: 30), also travelled to this sacred place. My mission was different from theirs as mine was to investigate the role of School Management Councils (SMCs) at Duncan Village Schools. I interviewed some teachers, parents who were members of SMCs and the students.

What came out was that SMCs were accepted for a limited period by the school communities and communities at large although they were later rejected. The study revealed also that during their reign there was some improvement with regards to school discipline and some schools were built. The bone of contention between the SMCS and teachers was that parents involved themselves in the day to day operation of the schools, like doing duty in the schools, asking teachers to sign time registers, be caretakers of classes that are not supervised due to the high rate of teacher absenteeism and late coming, etc. The students perceived them to be rigid disciplinarians. The community at large rejected them because they were seen as serving the interest of the government that was not acceptable to them.

It seems that for a limited period there was order and discipline at the schools because of the SMCs. It is my belief that what is happening now is the direct opposite of that time as parents are not involved and some schools are to a certain extent ungovernable. From the above it is clear that the picture puzzle of parents I drew up last year had some missing pieces. The missing pieces were the voices of parents which would describe their actions and the implications of their actions. I started to collect the missing pieces of this picture puzzle. I looked around for the pieces of the picture, but I came to a dead end. I was perturbed, astounded by the silence and absence of material to assist me in the

completion of my task. This led me to believe that this terrain was either totally forgotten or neglected by the pilgrims.

The absence of material led me to conduct an informal inquiry amongst a few parents in my neighbourhood about non-involvement. The responses to the informal inquiry were many and varied. These were some of the responses that I got: Parents were not involved in the formal education of their children because the current syllabi or curricula were totally different from theirs; parents perceived school and home as two separate entities, therefore neither of the two must invade the territory of the other; parents work awkward hours as a result they do not have time to attend to school matters; etc.

The above is in direct conflict with the following:

- ◆ The democratic/participatory style of management which the schools are supposed to be practising.
- ◆ The Schools' Act which clearly shows the legal obligation of the parents.
- ◆ Parents' rights.

The major question to ask at this point is: What makes parents “no show parents” in the education of their children? The only people who can provide the answer are the parents themselves. This question is a problem that needs to be put into a broader perspective so that it is fully understood.

1.2 The problem

“Traditionally, education has been regarded as the exclusive domain of teachers, and parents' participation has been limited” (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994: 91). This situation is not peculiar to SA only. Templeton (1989: 51) writing in the United States of America (USA) states categorically the conditions and context under which the role of parents was acknowledged there (see 2.3). By implication, therefore, parents in both countries had limited participation.

This limited participation in SA discouraged some Black parents from involvement, especially in the governance and decision-making of their children's schools.

In SA, initially, at the traditional Black schools, parental involvement was discouraged by the successive White governments. The governments indirectly encouraged parental non-involvement by Acts of Parliament like Physical Planning and Utilization of Resources of 1967. This Act, coupled with Border Industries and Apartheid Policies and other Acts, made it possible for parents not to be involved in the education of their children. As a result of these Acts parents' places of employment were located within the White SA which was far from their homes (Natrass, 1981: 183). This meant that parents had to leave for work early in the morning and return late in the evening. Consequently they were not able to attend school meetings which were normally held during the evening on week days or other activities held during the weekends.

During the 1976 period Black parents organised themselves nationally and locally and exerted pressure on the government by demanding democratic participation in school governance and decision-making. This was revived again in 1985 when parents, teachers and students, through the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC), demanded the formation of PTSAs and Student Representative Councils (SRCs) to govern the schools and be a mouthpiece of students. As a result the schools and government agencies have been stressing the importance of educators and parents working together as partners to further the educational aims of their children (Perumal, 1995: 25).

The new democratically elected government responded by passing the South African Schools' Act of 1996 (SASA) which states that parents have to be represented on the governing bodies of their children's schools.

However, there is a general lack of enthusiasm on the part of the parents to participate in the governance of their children's schools. The vigour they displayed when they

demanded involvement seems to have evaporated. Also, the manifestations of parental non-involvement found in many Black schools negate the efforts of the government.

If these manifestations portray reality in Black schools the question to ask is: what makes parents “no show” and non-supportive of their children as alleged by teachers and students? From an educational leadership and management perspective parental non-involvement is not acceptable. Parents as members of the management body of the school should be fully involved and play a meaningful role in educational settings.

Additionally, what is the implication of their “no show” on the management of the school in the light of what had happened to those Principals who were sacked because of the 0% pass rate? The SASA clearly stipulates that parents have to play an active role in the education of their children. This role is embedded in a democratic principle found in the constitution of this country. The principle states that every citizen has an equal opportunity to participate in the affairs of the state.

In the context of this study each parent has an equal opportunity to participate in the affairs of the school his/her child attends. If that is the case, are the “no show” parents not violating this principle? If South Africa is a democratic country surely its inhabitants must adhere to its democratic principles. The questions I posed in the preceding paragraphs sought to put the problem into broader perspective. The question at this point is why parental non-involvement is worth-exploring. The question is answered fully in the next section.

1.3 Motivation

Research studies have been carried out and literature produced on parents. Wolfendale supports this when she says “The case for involving parents in their children’s development and education has been established by innumerable studies” (Wolfendale, 1988: ix). However, mostly these studies have consistently concentrated on the benefits the parents, teachers, students and the schools could achieve by having parents who are

actively involved in the education of their children. Despite these studies parental non-involvement is a phenomenon which is alive and predominantly found in the traditional Black schools.. Few, if any writings, are available that describe parental non-involvement and its implications for the management of the schools.

parental non-involvement in New York (1996) and Perumal (1995)

come as a by-product that is not fully explored to give the parents' perspectives. This means that little attention was given to the processes which the educational pattern created and reproduced.

The evidence of this gap, the opportunity to develop means to get the non-involved parents involved, the urge to get direct evidence from parents of what makes them non-involved, motivated me to embark on another pilgrimage of discovery to the same world of parents. My research attempts to address the shortcoming identified by Atkin, Bastiani & Goode that "much collected wisdom for example, turns out not to be based upon direct evidence obtained from parents themselves, but upon teacher assessments of parental interest and involvement" (Atkin, Bastiani & Goode, 1988: 14-15).

I want to explore the area of parental non-involvement, focusing on the perceptions the parents have about their non-involvement and implications of such perceptions on the management of schools. I believe that parents' perceptions were not adequately explored. My findings therefore will bring light and to some extent articulate meaningfully the important deficiencies of evidence and perspectives that are missing.

As the parents of Duncan Village drew my attention to the problem, I decided to focus on a school in that area as it shares the same manifestations discussed in 1.1 with other Black schools country wide. In this study, therefore, I focus on parent representatives on the school governing council.

At this point I feel it necessary to explain some of the key concepts of this research in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings that might occur.

1.4 Definition of terms

Parental non-involvement: refers to the unavailability of parents to:

- work with teachers in the governing structures of schools in determination of school policy and vision
- manage the resources and budgets
- select the staff

The word is also used interchangeably with participation. Although these words have different meanings, they are used as synonyms in this study.

Blacks: refers to African people irrespective of ethnicity. Having defined the terms, the following is the research approach I used in gathering the data for the study.

1.5 Research Approach

I did not deviate from the epistemology and methodology that I used previously when I investigated the role of SMCs at Duncan Village Schools. The epistemology that I move from is that “the social world is essentially relativistic and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 5). I hope to understand parental non-involvement from the inside perspective.

According to the methodology I follow, “one can only understand the social world by obtaining first hand knowledge of the subject under investigation” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 6). Therefore the research approach I used in this study is phenomenology. My concern is not with social facts to be used as a basis for generalisations about parents.

On the contrary I am interested in the complex lived world of parents. Therefore I want to explore avenues concerning parental non-involvement. I want to listen, question and

probe for clarification where there is ambiguity about how parents see non-involvement and then give a detailed descriptive account of how things appear to them. The methodology is fully disclosed in chapter three.

1.6 Aims

The aim of the study is to investigate parental non-involvement in Black schools so that parental non-involvement can be understood. I want to do this so that an informed conclusion about parental non-involvement and its implications for the management of the schools can be available. These conclusions can be used as a basis for further research on this subject.

1.7 Objectives

With this study I hope to provide answers to the questions raised by describing:

- parents' perceptions of their non-involvement in the education of their children
- the implications of these perceptions for the management of the school
- effective comprehensive developmental and capacity building programme. I believe that these programmes can empower parents by providing them with skills of effective participation and also promote, encourage and enhance their future involvement.

1.8 Outline of the study

In chapter one I presented the introduction to the study, a background which tried to put the question into a context, a motivation, a definition of terms, the research approach, aims, objectives, and conclusion of the chapter. Other chapters are as follows:

- chapter two is a limited literature review on parental involvement and a historical background of parental non-involvement in SA.

- chapter three provides a discussion of the methodology used to investigate parental non-involvement.
- chapter four gives an analysis of the data as given by the participants.
- chapter five provides a contextualisation of my participants within their lifeworlds.
- chapter six provides a synthesis of what was said by my participants.
- chapter seven provides a discussion of the findings, recommendations, strengths and weaknesses of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present a selective overview of the direction the research has followed and the findings on parental involvement in education. The overview is necessary for this study for the following reasons. Firstly, to show the one-sided approach applied in these studies by the researchers. To achieve this I look at the focus of these studies as well as the methodology often used by researchers. Secondly, to highlight the absence of an important dimension, namely parental non-involvement which is also vital for understanding the parents' actions. After dealing with these issues I present parental non-involvement.

2.2 One sided affair

Many pilgrims from all walks of life in social sciences have embarked on a pilgrimage to the world of parents in education. Van Wyk citing Epstein bears testimony to this when she states:

Progress in research on parental involvement in education has been made across academic disciplines. Researchers in sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, social work and other fields are conducting studies, building on each other's work and contributing new perspectives, which are, in turn assisting policy and practice (Epstein in Van Wyk, 1996: 19).

Most of the pilgrims firstly take the direction of focusing on parental involvement and the benefits that the parents, teachers, students and the schools could enjoy when parents are involved in the education of their children. The knowledge they gain on parental involvement in education mostly supports the view that parental involvement:

- ◆ has a positive impact on pupils' academic achievement (Peterson, 1989; Van Schalkwyk, Jowett & MacNeil and Hess in Kruger, 1996; Epstein, 1992; Chavkin, 1993; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Ndlazi, 1997).
- ◆ leads to better school attendance and reduced dropout rate (Flaxman and Inger, 1991; Squelch & Lemmer, 1994)
- ◆ helps parents to develop positive attitudes towards school (Brown, 1989; Squelch & Lemmer, 1994).

The above finds support from “a lonesome voice” on the internet which argues that:

Over thirty years research have proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent involvement and successes. Effectively engaging parents and families in the education of children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of education reform (<http://www.wastatepta.org/programs/>)

Experience has shown that the school can successfully achieve its task of perpetuating the values of its larger community by involving parents in the management of the school and thus ensuring ongoing interaction between the school and the community. Maxwell & Thomas (1991) are of the view that the involvement of parents in the secondary schools has the potential of improving communication between schools' internal communities and the external communities.

Presumably it is because of these studies in SA amongst other reasons that “parents and teachers realised that effective education requires close co-operation between teachers and parents, and positive home school relations” (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994: 92). Van Schalkwyk cited by Kruger acknowledges the importance of parents in education in the following manner:

Formal education on its own cannot fully satisfy the demands of the twenty first century. ... Parents must support and assist formal education in the interests of more comprehensive education (Van Schalkwyk in Kruger, 1996: 33).

In SA at traditionally Black schools, some parents felt among other reasons that their inclusion and participation in school governance and management will give them opportunity to root out students who are perceived as protest leaders set to destroy the learning efforts of other pupils who genuinely want to learn (Moeketsi, 1989: 4). Experience has shown that when parents are included in delegations that are sent to the government with an educational request most of the time the government's response is positive.

Gordon writing in the USA claims that the knowledge about parental involvement is obtained mostly from studies conducted amongst the middle class and well-educated people in the USA. It was later that the emphasis shifted to include the American lower classes (Gordon, 1997: 72). By implication parental involvement was essentially perceived as a prerogative of the middle class and well-educated people. The trend followed in the USA as explained by Gordon above seems to be followed in SA by researchers, although here it was done along racial lines.

In contrast to Gordon, Atkin, Bastiani & Goode (1988: 14-15) say "much collected wisdom for example, turns out not to be based upon direct evidence obtained from parents themselves, but upon teacher assessments of parental interests and involvement".

Between April and June 1997 I conducted research on parental involvement and how it impacts on the results of their children at Duncan Village. My findings revealed that professional Black parents were involved in the education of their children, and that their involvement had a positive impact on the academic achievement of their children (Ndlazi, 1997). These findings were consistent with Gordon's assertion. The same study, however, revealed that blue collar workers' non-involvement in the education of their children was a significant factor in the poor academic achievement by their children. I am aware that this implication is a highly debatable issue amongst educationists and is not discussed in this study.

Secondly, from the literature I read on parental involvement, it seems that the most commonly used methodology by the pilgrims to gather their knowledge about the phenomenon is more based on natural sciences i.e. positivistic (Majoribanks and Epstein in Lareau 1987; Jubber, 1994; Perumal, 1995). The world of parents belongs to the field of social sciences or human sciences and is investigated by social scientists. Epstein cited by Van Wyk makes a similar point:

... research on parental involvement in education has been made across academic disciplines. ... in sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, social work and other fields ... (Epstein in Van Wyk, 1996: 19).

What is surprising, though, is the consistent use of natural sciences methodology in the investigation of a human phenomenon. Does this imply that the social sciences do not have rigorous methods of investigation similar to those of the natural sciences? Stones voices the same concern, though somewhat differently:

... approaches and methods which are considered appropriate for studying physical or biological realities are not at all applicable to the study of human experience (Stones, 1988: 145).

Thirdly, the pilgrims in SA focused on parental involvement in education to the exclusion of parental non-involvement and its implications for the management of a school. This is evident in the literature that is available.

My approach, therefore, is to investigate parental non-involvement in education contextualising it in a broader perspective of political, social and economic environments. By so doing I hope to bring knowledge about parental non-involvement from the parents' point of view. The next section attempts to give this picture.

2.3 Towards a holistic picture

I exposed in the preceding section the one-sided approach applied in the investigation of the world of parents in education. Despite the importance of parental involvement shown by the different studies cited in the previous section, parental non-involvement seems to be the thorn in the flesh, especially in traditionally Black schools in SA. The majority of parents in traditional black schools seem not to be involved in the management of their children's schools. A study conducted by Khumalo in the former Ciskei in 1991 amongst traditionally Black schools reveals that parents are generally not involved in the management of most Black Secondary Schools and the management-parent relations are poor.

Unterhalter (1991) suggests that one of the factors which seems to have contributed to the management crisis in Black Secondary Schools is the insignificant role played by parents in statutory bodies such as committees. The same situation is also found in the USA. Templeton writing in the USA, says "only in crisis situation has the role of the parent been acknowledged and often at that point the context and dialogue have been negative. On general school issues parents have rarely been consulted" (Templeton, 1989: 63).

Both Khumalo and Unterhalter do not mention anywhere or show by means of evidence that the parents were given an opportunity to describe what inhibits their involvement in the management of these schools and the effect of their non-involvement on management. This situation applies also to Templeton as she does not provide parents' perspective about their selective involvement. This is the issue, namely parental non-involvement, I wish to pursue and explore in this study, as it is often not fully investigated from the parents' perspective, as claimed by implication by Atkin, Bastiani & Goode (1988: 14-15).

In my exploration, firstly, I investigated the issue of parental non-involvement in the management of schools concentrating on a traditionally Black school at Duncan Village as a matter of educational policy which is affected by the political, economic and social

policies. The educational policies are made in such a way that they are in harmony with others. Therefore the changes that occur in other policies are associated with major changes that occur in educational policies.

My point of departure for this pilgrimage is clearly explained by Kallaway when he says:

The investigation of educational issues has to be located within the broader context of political, social and economic change if we are to grasp the more general, structural significance of shifts in educational policy (Kallaway, 1984: 1).

Secondly the success of my exploration largely depended on correct matching of the phenomenon under investigation with a suitable methodology. It is clear that parents who are not involved behave in a manner that is contrary and unacceptable to their being. In most situations where such unorthodox behaviour is displayed by parents, they have valid reasons. As pilgrims in a quest for knowledge about this unorthodox behaviour we have to take cognisance of their understanding, context of interaction and their experiences with the phenomenon as they present themselves to their consciousness. These play an important role in shaping their views of themselves, others and their philosophies of life. Eventually perceptions are formed and these affect how they behave in education.

This requires that we as pilgrims should not be concerned only with the number of times the parents exhibit such behaviour. Quantifying such behaviour and generalising results thereof do not always give a full perspective of the matter as some aspects of human behaviour are not considered, because they are regarded as psychological or unquantifiable. It is therefore important to make provision for those unquantifiable and psychological aspects by using the relevant methods of investigation which accommodate them. These aspects contribute to the information that will be provided by parents about their behaviour. Polanyi, cited by Van der Mescht, seems to agree:

The original intention of logical positivism was to establish all knowledge in terms of explicit relations between sensory data.

In the course of the last twenty years this program has been gradually relaxed, by admitting more complex data and making allowance for 'open textures' and 'flexibilities' of framework. The most recent direction came to my notice in Michael Scriven's assertion that problems of structural knowledge in science can "only be solved by reference to concepts previously condemned by many logicians as psychological not logical" e.g. understanding, belief and judgment. I suggest that we transform this retreat into a triumph by the simple device of changing camps. Let us recognise that tacit knowing is the fundamental power of the mind, which creates explicit knowing, lends meaning to it and controls its uses (Polanyi in Van der Mescht, 1996:11).

Therefore in the words of De Koning:

In order to do justice to the phenomena as they are experienced by human beings one has to approach the matter in a certain way and apply methods consistent with the approach as well as content (De Koning, 1986: ix).

The above implies that it is not wrong for us as pilgrims of social sciences in quest of truth to change our strategy of investigating the human phenomena for the betterment of our knowledge. Atkin, Bastiani & Goode put it as follows:

The study of home/school matters is rapidly coming of age. For significant changes are now taking place both in the conventional wisdom and widely accepted practice; new perspectives, which give rise to different views of the key issues and problems, are emerging, and call for different methods of study and enquiry... (Atkin, Bastiani & Goode, 1988: 8).

However, the view that contends for the change of strategy of investigation must not by any means be taken to mean that the literature gained by the natural scientific methods is irrelevant to this study, but emphasises the fact that parental involvement and non-involvement are human phenomena, being such, they should be investigated for what they are using the relevant methodology of human sciences.

To give a picture of parents in education requires a paradigm shift on the part of the researchers from thinking that there is only one research approach to be followed in order

to obtain knowledge. This shift is necessary so that a global view of parental involvement can be given. I mention the issue of methodology here to illustrate the fact that the observable parents' behaviour is taken as the absolute truth, although the parents voice or their side of the story is not fully known. It also gives the reader an idea of the methodology I applied in this study. The issues of methodology are not discussed in this chapter but further expounded upon in chapter three.

Thirdly I explore parental non-involvement in the management of the school with its implications. I feel that I must get the parents' understanding on how they see their perceptions of non-involvement affecting the management of the school. I looked at these implications *vis-à-vis* the new government policy and the SASA that encourage the equal participation of all stakeholders in education. This will assist the teachers, pupils, principals, as well as other parents, to know exactly the areas that need to be changed or improved. At this point it is proper for me to present an important part of this section, namely parental non-involvement. In the next section, therefore, I present its historical background.

2.4 Historical background of parental non-involvement in South Africa

My journey in this section is already mapped out by Kallaway as previously mentioned in 2.3. Kallaway seems to be consistent with Cross when he states:

...The attempt merely to describe the development of education policy, without at the same time trying to problematise either the process itself of schooling or the historical context of which it forms a part, is also criticised (Cross, 1986: 185).

I therefore outlined this section in the following manner:

- ◆ history of parental non-involvement in South Africa in relation to denial of blacks' political, economic and social rights
- ◆ parents as primary educators sidelined in education of their children

- ◆ parents as partners in school governance (democratic participation)
- ◆ parental involvement - as a legal obligation/ Schools Act

2.4.1 Black parents denied political rights

The history of parental non-involvement closely followed that of educational provision for Black South Africans. The educational provision for Black South Africans was guided by a policy of separate but equal facilities. This policy changed when the National Party government took over. Politically Blacks were not part and parcel of the decisions taken about them and the country as a whole. It is difficult therefore to divorce Black education in South Africa from political, social and economic life.

From 1652 the laws that were enacted barred Blacks from taking part in political decision-making about themselves and their country. This situation was entrenched by the Act of the Union in 1910. Blacks were finally not admitted into the Union Parliament (Van Jaarsveld, 1975: 226). Only White males were allowed to vote with the exception of the Cape where the Blacks had a vote. In 1936 the African voters in the Cape were removed from the common roll and instead elected three (White) members to the House of Assembly and to the Senate on a separate roll (Lipton, 1985: 17).

When the National Party came to power in 1948, with its stated policy of apartheid, the fate of Blacks was finally sealed as far as Whites were concerned. It closed the only gateway to parliament, thereby making them foreigners in their land of birth. The National Party government legislated the 1951 Bantu Authorities and 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Acts which resulted in a separate political system for Blacks.

The Blacks were to exercise their political rights in their tribal homelands even those in urban areas (Lipton, 1985: 23). In time the urban Blacks were given the right to participate politically in the local authorities at their segregated residential areas. The Blacks rejected these Acts and considered the structures associated with them illegitimate especially during the 1985 period. Those Blacks who participated in such government

structures based on apartheid policy were forced to resign by their communities. Those who refused were targeted for destruction. For example, in 1985 the whole nation witnessed on television the brutal killing by necklacing (tying of a car tyre with petrol around the neck of a person and ignited) of the Kinikini family in Uitenhage, because the father, who was a councillor of the local authority, refused to resign when asked to do so by the community.

The creation of separate political institutions for Blacks meant exclusion from the democratic participation in the political system of their land. The implication of this for my argument is that, if parents were denied the political rights which they fought for, rejected the government structures established with Acts they perceived to be illegitimate, how were they to participate in the school governance structures created by the system they were revolting against? Would that not be hypocrisy on their part, rejecting and participating simultaneously? I argue therefore that the acts of different governments in SA, like removing the Blacks from Parliament where Educational Acts and others concerning Blacks were discussed and legislated, and not listening to Black people when they voiced their dissatisfaction, discouraged Black parents from being involved.

2.4.2 Black parents denied economic rights

The act of removing Blacks from Parliament in whatever manner had a detrimental effect on them. They could not participate in policy discussions and have a say in Acts that would affect their well-being. Some of these Acts affected their economic livelihood. The 1913 & 1936 Land Acts confined Blacks, who constituted 70% of the population, and their animals to almost 14% of the land, namely the reserves or homelands. The reserves could not accommodate the large influx of people and their animals and eventually they were economically dispossessed of their land and animals. Some Blacks left the reserves and came to start new lives in urban areas and were consequently introduced to the capitalist system. Outside their reserves Blacks could not own or rent land even in their segregated townships. Though that was the case, those fortunate enough became traders, but most were labourers. On the job market they were faced with

discriminatory laws and Acts that secured preference for Whites, to cite a few, the 1911 & 1926 Mine & Works Acts, the 1922 Apprenticeship Act, the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act, and the 1924 Civilized Labour Policy Act.

When the National Party came aboard and took the reins of governance the economic lives of Blacks worsened. It legislated all types of laws that curtailed their economic movements and prohibited their economic activity. It came with the 1950 Group Areas Act which restricted the trading rights of all Blacks, the 1951 Native Building Workers' Act which excluded Blacks from skilled building except in their reserves, and the 1956 Industrial Conciliation Act which gave the Minister the right to reserve jobs for a specific racial group, etc. The educational policies and training policies underlined the intention of ensuring job preference for Whites.

The success of some of these laws depended on the type of education offered to Blacks at school. The education given to them inculcated a mindset in preparation for their future economic positions. This is evident in Dr Verwoerd's, the then Minister of Bantu Affairs, famous speech on the 1953 Bantu Education Act (Lipton, 1985: 24). Dr Verwoerd was reiterating the views articulated in Parliament in 1945 by Le Roux, a government official, (Molteno, 1984: 66). The education for the Black people was offered as means of communication between them and colonists. This is evident in Molteno when says:

It is safe to assume that the colonists' real concern was that the slaves should serve the purpose for which they had been bought, namely to labour for their masters. They would have been able to do so more efficiently if they understood the language of the master. The relationship between slave and master was a most unequal one; it was therefore not the master who had to learn Dutch. Further the more total subjugation was the less they would have resisted the system of forced labour in which they were trapped (Molteno, 1984: 45).

2.4.3 Black parents denied social rights

The introduction of Blacks into the capitalist system uprooted them from their land.

Natrass says:

The transition from a primitive economy, to a capitalist market economy essentially involves the separation of the major portion of the population from their dependence on the land, a process that is sometimes called proletarianization (Natrass, 1981: 59).

This process destroyed their family structures. The husbands left their wives in reserves and went to seek work in urban areas. They could not bring along their wives as they did not have Section Ten rights. The Section Ten Act provided that Africans could only remain in a prescribed area for longer than seventy two hours if he or she (a) had resided there continuously since birth; or (b) had worked there continuously for the same employer for ten, or for more than one employer for fifteen years; or (c) was the wife, unmarried daughter, or son under 18 of a man with Section 10 (1) (a) or (b) rights who 'ordinarily' resided with him and had entered the area lawfully. Whilst struggling to meet the Section Ten rights they were to leave their families behind in the rural areas. Bringing their wives to the urban areas would be tantamount to contravening the Section Ten rights, and consequently arrest and jail for the wives. Section Ten rights made it impossible for parents to live with their children. As a result a culture of leaving children in rural areas with extended family members was created. This culture affected those children who would have enjoyed the Section Ten rights.

This culture has been prevalent amongst Blacks until recently, but it seems to be dying slowly. The extended family members had little control over these children, especially with regards to school matters, which were postponed until the parents returned from work in urban areas. The schools had to wait for the money to come from the parents in White South Africa for the payment of fees. The influx of the Black population was also controlled by Pass laws and a host of others. The Minister of Bantu Affairs had envisaged future SA cities that will be occupied by Whites only (Lipton, 1985: 34).

When it was inevitable that Blacks were to be part of the White SA economy the National Party government controlled their influx to the cities by creating townships in their respective homelands.

Dr. Verwoerd, in his speech on the Group Areas Act, emphasised the above when he said:

... The black townships must be 'an adequate distance from the white township ... preferably separated by an area of industrial sites ... [with] suitable buffer spaces around ... and a considerable distance from the main, and more particularly national roads' (Lipton, 1985: 27).

To make sure that the above was effected, the government passed the Physical Planning Act of 1967 which enabled the Minister of Planning to impose restrictions on the expansion of industry in the established areas. The Border Industry policy was introduced as an incentive to industrialists to establish factories on the peripheral of the Bantustans. Therefore Black parents as workers were to be migrants in that they had to leave their homes very early in the morning, go and work in White South Africa and then return to the Bantustans late in the evening. This situation is still prevailing in SA, but squatter camps have mushroomed in every urban suburb irrespective of race.

In the above sections I presented a brief description of the situation under which the Blacks used to live. I exposed how they were isolated politically, economically and socially. They were isolated also from the education of their children. This situation is presented below.

2.5 Parents as primary educators sidelined in the education of their children

In SA the White governments continuously sidelined directly or indirectly Black parents in the education of their children.

Keto explains this in the following manner:

Control has always been uneven with Black parents having limited power over the decision-making processes that determine policy regarding the education of their children (Keto, 1990: 22).

Previously in South Africa, Black children were taught at home by mothers, fathers and the extended family members. They were taught according to the needs of the societies and the families. When they reached a certain age they were taken to special formal schools called “intojane” and circumcision school, where specific education concerning particular matters was taught by specialised people. Freda Troup cited by Keto observed that:

Education in South Africa started long before the arrival of the Dutch colonist in the middle of the seventeenth century. Traditional African societies educated their young as all societies do ... (Troup in Keto, 1990: 25).

The educational system followed in SA by Blacks was in line with systems of other nations like the Ancient Israelite, Athenian and Roman education (Verster et al, 1982: 25-32). On the basis of this information it is clear that education by parents has been practised for years. Brubacher makes a similar point:

The issue of parental involvement in education is not an inspiration of the twenty first century. Pestalozzi contended that the home was the principal centre for the education of children. Johan Comenius (1592-1678) supported this idea with his reference to the ‘school of the mother’s knee’(Brubacher in Perumal, 1995:3).

The arrival of Europeans with their education shifted the playing fields to the school. Education was no longer based on indigenous social structures and conducted at home. Amongst the reasons for this was that the skills taught at home by parents were no longer helpful, since the economy was changing. As a result the education taught at home found no continuity at school. The need to accommodate the changing economy

necessitated that the children must leave home and get education in formalised institutions called schools to prepare them to participate in the economy. The schools with their specialists, in the form of teachers, took over the responsibility of teaching the children from parents. The result was the alienation of parents from what was happening at schools.

Kruger summarises this position:

... School has gradually begun to take over these tasks from parents, with the result that parents have become less and less involved in the education of their children (Kruger, 1996: 29).

When the children left home for school, Black parents had no say and control over the curriculum, who taught them, and in decision-making processes that determined the educational policies that affected their children. Keto portrays the position of parents in the following manner:

Someone, (certain groups or certain classes) decides on what they consider the “best” educational system and selects that system over others, adopts a policy to support that system, creates a curriculum and courses to be taught and selects teachers to transmit the appropriate skills, information and values to young people during their early impressionable years (Keto, 1990: 26).

Though the parents were sidelined, some educationists saw the need for them to be involved. This is evident in the quotation by Smith cited by Kruger, “The best curriculum, facilities and teachers in the world will be of no avail unless the investor (parents) are clearly seen as the *raison d’être* of the whole process” (Kruger, 1996: 26). The parents did not take this position lying down, they demanded involvement in the education of their children. The demand for involvement by parents is presented in the next section.

2.6 Parents demand involvement in the education of their children

Sullivan as cited by Smith states:

Major struggles and periods of change in the purpose, organization and control of education have been associated with societal change (Sullivan in Smith, 1996: 128).

Such a conclusion by Sullivan clearly defines the situation in SA, especially the period starting from 1976 to 1993. South African parents in their communities rejected the Acts and laws passed by the White governments. They showed their rejection through the defiance campaigns, strikes and other methods that they embarked on. The process of rejection brought another dimension of parental involvement. The parents demanded vociferously the right to participate in the education of their children. This is evident in what Hartshorne says:

The period between 1652 and 1976 was characterised by parents or adults taking the lead in the struggle for control in education (Hartshorne, 1992: 63).

With the student uprising in 1976, students demanded the abolition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, and the prefect system, and parents defiantly demanded involvement in the education of their children. According to Van Wyk (1996: 114) the 1976 uprising brought the subject of education into Black homes, country wide. To a large extent the unrest actually revealed the paucity of Black parental involvement in education matters and how the parents were out of touch with what was going on in education and the role the government was playing in it. Chikanda puts it this way:

Black parents became better informed and more involved in these matters and the education crisis also became a family crisis. In many families children began questioning and defying parental authority. These parents were rudely awakened when children blatantly told them to step aside as they confront the education authorities to demand improvements in education (Chikanda, 1994: 185).

This led to the establishment of the Soweto Teachers' Action Committee and the Soweto Parents' Committee in 1976 and 1977 respectively. The strategy was the rejection of the state structures and generation of alternative structures to legitimise parental participation in the governance of education (Van Wyk, 1996: 114). According to Mkwanazi (1993: 54) the term "parent" legitimated opposition and resistance to an unjust system.

It is a known fact that parents, teachers, students and their communities joined hands in pursuit of a common goal, that of a democratic participation in the school governing bodies. They pursued their goal through an organisation called NECC which was formed in 1985. It was formed to address the education crisis in a more organised, co-ordinated and deliberate manner (Squelch, 1993: 179).

The strength of NECC lay in the fact that it operated and embraced a multiplicity of groups, but spoke as parents both as a political constituency with an interest in education and as parents who were genuinely concerned about the quality of education (Mkwanazi, 1993: 57). Alternative structures were established like Parent, Teacher and Student Associations and Student Representative Councils which Mashamba (1991: 8) called organs of people's power.

The concept of People's Education was born out of the deliberations in NECC conferences held in 1985-86. According to Hyslop (1990: 86) the strategy of People's Education of NECC did three things. Firstly, it stressed unity between students, workers, teachers and parents; it helped to overcome divisions. Secondly, it helped in developing a popular conception of education as an alternative to the state's education policy. Thirdly, it drew the Department of Education into negotiations, thus creating mechanisms through which popular education demands could be addressed.

This last point is illustrated by my participant in a study I conducted last year (1997) at Duncan Village in the following manner:

We were angry as parents, we did not know what was happening, ... we then stood up and demanded that, we as parents be involved in running (governance) of the schools at Duncan Village (Ndlazi, 1997: 7).

It is clear and undisputed that the White governments were frustrated by the oppressed from the beginning. This is evident in Molteno (1984) when he depicts how the authorities' ability to implement policy was constrained and rejected. Parents formed associations to oppose the Native Education. The missionaries were frustrated by the inability to have schools full with children. To conclude, the demand for democratic participation in education by Black South Africans is not recent. Sayed & Carrim explain:

The demand for democratic participation in SA has a long history starting from the flight of first slaves from the colonial masters in the early 17th century to the intense and bitter student protests of the 1980s.

Central to these struggles were two key ideas:

- that decision-making in schools and school governance structures should include all sectors/role-players/stakeholders
- that greater representation would ensure educational accountability, legitimacy and democracy (Sayed & Carrim, 1997: 91).

The uprisings of 1976 necessitated that the government must respond to the parents' demands. The government's response is presented below.

2.7 The government's response to parents' demand

The government's response to the educational uprisings of 1976 was the Education and Training Act of 1979. In this Act the government legislated SMCs to govern the traditional Black schools at micro level. These councils were to comprise parents with children attending schools. - The word "parent" was broadened from meaning the

biological parents only, to include non-biological parents, and guardians not necessarily appointed by law.

The powers of parents were also widened to have a say in matters such as appointment, promotion, and dismissal of staff. The Act therefore allowed the parents a meaningful and greater parent participation in the school governance. Though the government envisaged that parents were to be elected to SMCs by other parents, it seems not to be the case as claimed by Sayed & Carrim. "These councils comprised individuals nominated by the minority white state" (Sayed & Carrim, 1997: 91) .

Though the government had passed this Act some parents seemed reluctant to be members of the SMCs. This is evident in the cry below.

... Come on, parents, here is a golden opportunity, grab it and make maximum use of it - it is in the best interest of the nation.
... For how long have we been spectators in the learning/education field of our children. ...It is high time we stood up as responsible groups of parents and boldly register our concern through active participation in these newly created Management Councils ... (Moeketsi, 1989: 4).

The reluctance of parents to be members of such councils can be attributed to the fact that these councils were riddled with controversy which culminated again in uprisings in 1985. For example, though the word "parent" was amended to be inclusive, there were subtle limitations which created some problems. One of the problems was the inclusion in the management councils of parents categorized by the government as political activists or who had served jail sentences for political offenses. "This category of parents was prohibited from serving in statutory bodies governing the schools in some areas" (Khumalo, 1997: 2).

Where such parents were members of the SMCs those councils were viewed suspiciously by the officials of the Department of Education and Training. As a result any educational matter that they brought to the attention of the Department was seen as politics or an act of sabotage directed at the government.

Consequently it did not receive its immediate attention or conversely the parents were investigated for political activities that they might be involved in by a special political investigating unit. The threat posed by these investigations managed to do two things. The politically-minded parents became worse and those not active were deterred lest they be accused of activities they did not perform or know about. Eventually the parents did not participate on those bodies because they perceived them as toothless rubber stamping bodies of the government. Furthermore participation was also considered as an act of “sell out” by those who participated in them as the government was seen to be dividing the Black people.

In spite of this some parents did participate in these councils without the blessing of their communities. When the 1985 uprisings came about with teachers, students, parents and communities demanding school governing bodies of their choice, these councils were rejected. In the words of my participant on a study I conducted in 1997 on the role of SMCs at Duncan Village:

School Management Councils (SMCs) were not fully representative of the stakeholders in education. They were the puppets of the state. Teachers and students were not involved in their election ... (Ndlazi, 1997: 11).

Monde, former chairperson of the sub-regional structure of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas), said:

We did not want them, because they were not representing our parents. They were bullying us and the Act which guided them was not acceptable to us ... (Ndlazi, 1997: 11).

The members of these councils were forced to resign by their communities and those who refused were victimised, their homes were targeted for arson and the schools were targets of destruction as they were perceived as symbols of apartheid. In the words of Jack Komani a former member of SMC at Duncan Village describing their rejection:

...it was terrible, our own children were killing us calling us “impimpi” i.e. informers (Ndlazi, 1997: 12)

Prior to the SMCs there were school committees and school boards. Moeketsi explains the procedure followed for school committees as “The school committee, which in some instances was chosen by way of co-option by the principal” (Moeketsi, 1984: 4). The committees performed their functions successfully for a limited period.

However, they were considered illegitimate by the Black communities and as a result they were rejected and those who participated in them were asked to resign. Ntantala explains the situation in the following manner:

...Members of one congregation called upon the minister who had accepted the chairpersonship of the local Bantu School Board, to resign ... (Ntantala in Kallaway, 1984: 98).

Their rejection was based on the perception that they were supporters of apartheid. Moeketsi describes the school committees as “those ineffective dummy rubberstamp bodies” (Moeketsi, 1984:5). Ultimately students, parents and teachers demanded a democratically elected fully representative governing structure for their schools. This led to the demise of the School Management Councils.

2.8 Parents as partners in School governance - Democratic participation

Parental involvement is not only a matter of necessity in terms of what can be attained in education but a matter of principle. The parents, as primary educators, are responsible for their children’s well-being, their future and their education. It must be borne in mind that children are educated by the parents from birth. By the time they are received at school on the first day, they have already acquired a host of social skills which make them acceptable to society at large and the school in particular. It is at this point that the third individual, namely the teacher, is introduced. The teacher is entrusted with continuing the education process by exposing the children to the formal aspect of education.

It would, indeed, be naive to imagine that home life and school life are rigid compartments and that the parents' interest in their children is completely severed for the period that the children are at school. The parent - child relation is not substituted by the educator. Van Schalkwyk explains the situation:

Instead, the educator should be seen as a professional who contributes towards the education of the child in areas where the parent cannot meet the requirements in terms of time, expertise and resources. It is, therefore, not logical to exclude or limit the parent, who is the primary educator, from the formal education of the child (Van Schalkwyk, 1990a : 19-20)

I deliberately quoted Van Schalkwyk in full because in this exposition he detailed what should be the case but, as argued in the section dealing with the history of parental non-involvement this was not the case in South Africa, particularly with Black education, where formal education was severed from informal education, thereby excluding parents from the education of their children and alienating children from their parents. Parents were not seen as partners in education. In reversing the situation, particularly within Black education, and having parents as partners, Van Schalkwyk states the following:

When parents and the school work together meaningfully, there is a greater likelihood of improvement in the attitudes of the parents towards the school and the educators. They are more willing to follow the school's programme positively in the interest of the child and the teacher and to contribute toward the corporate life of the school (Van Schalkwyk, 1990a:26).

Van Schalkwyk's view above shares Jowett and Baginsky 's view (1988:42). In support of this view Berger (1987:3) pointed out that teachers and principals know parents by virtue of their participation in school activities and treat those parents with great respect and as co-educators and partners in education (underlining mine).

2.8.1 Trust generation --

According to Van Schalkwyk (1990a:27) the aim of educating the child cannot be achieved by the school alone. The task is too enormous and complex. In order to attain the desired goals, it is necessary for both the teacher and the parent to work as partners. Thus, the inevitable by-product of the recognition of each other and the co-ordination of their efforts is the generation of trust.

2.8.2 Parents as decision makers

There are various views about the role of parents in education. According to Perumal (1995:45) there is no consensus among educators as to the precise delineation of the nature and scope of parental involvement. He asserted that some view it as a sincere interest in the teaching of the child at home, others view it as a service to the school in the form of collection of funds, help rendered during school functions, the development of school grounds, maintenance of school structures and helping in certain administrative tasks.

This view is at last changing and in its place a genuine interest in having parents participate fully in the affairs of the school is taking root. Mitchell asserts though:

Blanket demands for greater participation or for more effective consultation or simply to have a greater say in what is decided, mask a variety of possible formal and informal administrative practices not all of which may be consistent with each other (Mitchell, 1985:2-3).

The central point in school administration which parents are interested in is decision-making. According to Mitchell (1985:2-3) decision-making is crucial and it embodies greater participation, effective consultation and a say in what is decided.

Mitchell further distinguished between strong and weak forms of participation, the strong form being participative decision taking and consultation prior to decision taking being the weak form.

The justification of parental participation in decision-making is given by Gittell when she states:

Democracy requires that citizens be engaged in the policy process directly, not through representatives and not only as voters (Gittell, 1977:8).

She pointed out that the attitudinal studies of political effectiveness suggest that when people feel they can control what goes on, they are more likely to participate. This notion was supported by Fraser when he said:

As a result of democratic governance of education, parents teachers and students feel a sense of ownership of the school (Fraser, 1988: 32)

Gittell (1977:8) distinguishes between administrative decentralisation and political decentralisation. Under administrative decentralisation, internal re-organisation takes place resulting in the sharing of power among professionals at different levels and not providing for increased community participation. Political decentralisation, on the other hand, varies from the election of parent bodies to direct parental participation in decision-making in individual schools.

Onstein (1980:83) makes a similar point though in a slightly different form. He distinguishes three forms of parental participation, namely: administrative decentralisation, community participation and community control. Unlike Gittell he sees administrative decentralisation as a prerogative of community control in terms of reducing school bureaucracy. According to him community participation means the primation advisory committees or groups that may operate at various levels within the system.

Their main function is to make recommendations (not a policy) and to serve as a liaison between the school and community. Community control on the other hand, means a legal provision for decision-making authority and power to be shared between the community

and the professionals. Therefore to him political decentralisation embraces both community control and community participation.

2.9 Parental Involvement - Legal Obligation

The coming to power of the ANC led government provided a legislative framework that guides the transformation of school governance. It legislated for the SASA . Chapter Three, clause 23(2) of the SASA stipulates:

the elected members of the governing body shall
comprise a member/members of each of the following
(a) Parents of learners at school ... (Schools' Act, 1996).

The clause states how parents are to be members of the school governing bodies. The word "parent" is not confined to biological parents but includes any other community members who can be co-opted to help the bodies. However, the co-opted members have no right to vote. It states also that the parents must be in majority. Accordingly the idea is to involve parents much more fully in school governance, enabling them to actively support the schools (Act made easy, April-May 1997: 1-3). Dekker & Lemmer explain their role when they assert:

Parents can play an important part as policymakers
(participants) whose decisions directly affect the
school their own children attend (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993: 159).

The implication of Dekker & Lemmer's assertion is that parents as members of the governing bodies are to provide an input into the schools' policies, rules and regulations and programmes. This assertion seems to be supported by the SASA. The SASA states also that the governing bodies will have to ensure that the policies and rules are carried out (The Schools Act made easy, April-May 1997: 1).

From the Act it is clear that not all parents can participate, however they can elect their representatives to the governing bodies. The above advocates a model of management

that Bush termed the democratic or collegial style of management which accommodates such situations. Bush defines this model as follows:

Democratic models assume that organizations determine the policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Power is shared among some or all members of the organization who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution (Bush, 1995: 52).

Bush gives central features of this model which he believes to a certain extent are found in main sectors of education. These features are:

- ◆ authority of expertise
- ◆ common set of values
- ◆ size
- ◆ decisions reached by consensus
- ◆ normative orientation (Bush, 1995: 53).

These features can be found in the school governing bodies if they follow this model. The members of bodies are elected to represent their constituencies because they possess some knowledge of the views of their constituencies and are able to articulate the views. They are small in size because they are representatives of the larger communities, therefore everybody stands a chance of being heard. They can reach decisions by consensus as they are guided by the principles of democracy. All of them have a common set of values which can be shown in the mission statement of the school. Democracy by its nature is prescriptive of how decisions are to be made. This makes the model normative in orientation. According to Campbell & Southworth (1993), cited by Bush, this model is associated with school effectiveness and improvement and is increasingly regarded as 'the official model of good practice' (Bush, 1995: 52). By implication therefore, South African traditional Black schools striving towards effectiveness and improvement, should embrace this model.

The SASA stipulates also the responsibilities of parents as follows:

- ◆ parents must ensure that their children attend school every day of the term from the year the child turns seven until the year the child turns 15 or has completed the ninth grade whichever ever happens first.
- ◆ a parent's failure to send the child to school without permission, may result in a fine or imprisonment .
- ◆ parents must play an active role in supporting a positive learning environment at their child's school.
- ◆ parents must help a school decide if it should charge school fees.
- ◆ parents must pay school fees if they are set, if possible, unless exempted
(South African Schools' Act , 1996).

The parents strive to fulfill their role with regards to these responsibilities. The ones they seem to falter on are the last three. The current situation with regards to the SASA is that parents seem unwilling to be members of these bodies. Are they not flouting the SASA?

Recently (March 1997) the Council of the University of Transkei suspended the Rector, Professor Moleah, but were told by the Minister of Education, Professor Bhengu, that it had no legal standing to do so (Adkins, Sunday Times 09: 03: 1997 :2). Given this situation, how can parents be expected to participate in the governing bodies of their children's schools if this type of uncertainty can prevail at an institution of higher learning where it is taken that members of governing bodies are more knowledgeable about their role in the governing council.

The government is commended for providing this framework but it has failed to empower them with the necessary skills for active participation in such structures. According to The Schools Act made easy (1997: 3) the government is to provide training sessions for the newly elected representatives and continuing training to improve their performance or take additional functions. I believe that the concept of democracy for Africans is new. Africans grew up and were socialised in an authoritarian society. To me they seem to be

left in the lurch to fend for themselves. How are they supposed to act or behave in such a situation? Their behaviour is obviously that of non-involvement. At this point it is imperative that I dwell on the means of how I got information from parents about their behaviour. In the next chapter I present an exposition of the methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this study I want to identify and describe parents' perceptions of their non involvement in the formal education of their children and how these perceptions will impact on the management of the school. I seek knowledge about experiences that prevented parents from being actively involved in formal education of their children. Furthermore I need to know what meanings parents give to these perceptions and experiences. The question at this point is: how to obtain this knowledge. This brings me to the question of methodology.

There are many avenues open to choose from and travel in the quest for this information. To cite a few, I can:

- observe parents in their interaction with education and develop universally valid laws on these observations and then make generalisations about their perceptions and experiences.
- ask other people like teachers, students etc. what they think prevents the parents from being involved in the formal education of their children, and lastly,
- ask parents about their perceptions of non-involvement as they are the people who are not involved in the education of their children.

The last seems to be the most promising; consequently I chose and travelled it. I feel travelling by this avenue will afford me an opportunity to take the bull by the horns, i.e. ask and talk directly with parents about their experiences. I believe by doing so I will obtain the knowledge and truth I need. My belief in this road is also influenced by an

idiom in my culture which says “Umazi wendlela ngumhambi wayo” , literally translated as “The one who has travelled the road knows it better”. The meaning of this idiom is, “the one who has experience tells the story best and most meaningfully”. Van den Berg’s observation supports this idiom:

Only he who knows the sea, the river, the stream,
the lake, physically can write about what it really is like
(Van den Berg, 1972: 77).

Wiersma explains “ the meaningfulness” of the idiom as follows:

... The meaning of reality is, in essence, in the “eyes
and minds of the beholders”, the way the individuals being
studied perceive their experiences (Wiersma, 1995: 250).

Burrell & Morgan also endorse this belief:

... Only the already experienced is meaningful (Burrell & Morgan,
1994: 244).

Wiersma and Burrell & Morgan above illustrate explicitly the fact that the meaning of a phenomenon is not necessarily a universal thing. It depends largely on the person who experiences it.

The question that bothers me at this point is: how can I apply this idiom as an empirical investigation approach so that the data I obtain can be reliable and trustworthy? I took my time, and read about research approaches searching for the one which was relevant and suitable so that the traveller can tell his/her story meaningfully. My search for the approach was also influenced by the epistemological question of: how can I understand the social world and communicate this knowledge to other human scientists (Burrell & Morgan, 1979)?

I settled for the phenomenological approach because I am concerned with understanding the complex lived world from the perspective of those who lived it (Schandt, 1994: 188).

In this chapter I limit myself to describing phenomenology in terms of its origins, definition and its features, especially those that have a bearing in this study. Additionally I justify the use of this methodological technique and detail the procedure I followed in collecting the data.

Though I deal with procedure lastly, this does not necessarily mean that the procedure I used is a recipe for conducting a phenomenological research. If I did that, I would have prematurely fixed the procedure and curtailed other useful means to elucidate the experiences of parents (Stones, 1988). Shaffir, Stebbins & Turowetz, as cited by Schurink & Schurink, make a similar point:

... There is no “recipe” for conducting qualitative research and “... the so called rules and canons of fieldwork are frequently bent and twisted to accommodate the particular demands and requirements of the fieldwork situation ...” (Shaffir, Stebbins & Turowetz (1980) in Schurink & Schurink, 1988: 80).

Giorgi seems to agree:

It is phenomenologically unsound to establish a method that must be used that is prior to and independent of the phenomenon to be investigated. The problem of methodology cannot be considered in isolation, but only within the context of the phenomenon to be investigated and the problem aspect of the phenomenon (Giorgi (1971) in Stones, 1988: 150).

Therefore the procedure must be viewed as a detailed exposition of the steps and decision which I took and employed to bring out the knowledge without interfering with data as given by parents. Natanson, as cited by Stones, summarises this as follows:

Phenomenological methods must thus be ‘reflexive in nature and intent’ in order to remain faithful to their purpose (Stones, 1988: 150).

3.2 Phenomenology

3.2.1 Its origins

Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl as a branch of European philosophy and later by his pupil, Alfred Schutz (Haralambos & Holborn, 1990: 807). Husserl, a mathematician and a physicist, developed phenomenology out of concern about how the empiricist viewed the social world. He believed that reality as portrayed by them was cosmic and artificial as they claimed universality (Nel, 1989 lecture handout).

For him people experience the lived world differently, hence the meaning changes. For example, a boxer who is beaten in a boxing match, could interpret the three minutes duration of a round as three hours. On the other hand the boxer who is winning could interpret the same three minutes as three seconds. Therefore the structures of boxing experience present themselves to the boxers' consciousness uniquely, in a certain context and are perceived subjectively by the boxers. This means that an individual and his/her lived world are co-constituted, i.e. interrelated and interdependent, for existence. As a result Husserl believed that there was no objective knowledge. In seeking knowledge, the subject and the object must be looked at simultaneously (Nel, 1989 lecture handout). By so doing he diffused the Cartesian split.

3.2.2 What is Phenomenology

According to Van der Mescht (1996: 39) phenomenology as a research approach and methodology has been extensively described and applied. Though this is the case I feel that it is imperative for me to describe it for the purposes of this study by using Wiersma's description that:

Phenomenology is a study of phenomena; it stresses the careful description of phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing it. ... Essentially, the phenomenological approach is based on the concept that reality consists of the meaning-of experiences by

those being studied. It emphasizes that the meaning of reality is, in essence, in the “eyes and minds of beholders”, the way individuals being studied perceive their experiences (Wiersma, 1995: 250).

The above description of phenomenology explains precisely the way I followed in investigating parental non-involvement. Cuff & Payne justify my actions for using this method in the following manner:

... members of society are seen as active agents who construct their social action on the basis of the meanings and interpretations they give to their environment. ... (Cuff & Payne, 1979:16-17).

This view also finds support in Schwarts & Jacobs (1975) and Pfuhl (1980). The question that arises is: how can I experience and understand the life world of parents from their frame of reference? That is the crux of phenomenology as a method, where the researcher becomes the instrument to probe deeply into the phenomenon but at the same time keep his/her distance. The first part of the next section answers the question posed earlier.

3.3 Requirements of the method - Understanding the world of my participants

The method that I chose for this study requires that I gain entry to the world of parents so that I can experience and understand the phenomenon from their frame of reference. According to Burrell & Morgan (1979: 8) gaining entry to the world of parents will bring me closer to the phenomenon and at the same time unfold its nature and characteristics. Two questions arise: why do I have to understand the phenomenon from parents' frame of reference? How do I understand the phenomenon from parents' frame of reference? Van den Berg comes to my rescue:

He who desires to know what, in a given situation, is happening psychologically, does well to put himself in that situation (Van den Berg, 1972: 63).

The answer provided by Van den Berg is a paradox that requires me to perform the impossible task of experiencing the psychological lived worlds of my participants. Metaphorically to me all of these are similar to the question posed by Nicodemus to Jesus when he asked:

How can a grown man be born again? He certainly cannot enter his mother's womb and be born again a second time (John, 3: 3-4 in Good News Bible, 1977:).

What do I gain by putting myself in a situation envisaged above? Van den Berg answers the question well when he says:

... he who puts himself in the place of the patient, in his situation, in his observation sees the objects differently (Van den Berg, 1972: 64). (Emphasis mine)

Another answer comes from Taylor & Bogdan when they say:

qualitative researchers empathise and identify with people being studied in order to understand how they see things (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984: 6). (Emphasis mine)

The above quotations show explicitly the benefits I enjoyed in entering the world of my participants. Though I empathised and identified with the parents I exercised caution to the effect that I did not over-identify to the extent of disrespecting the phenomenon. Stones puts this in the following manner:

The phenomenological investigator thus exhibits 'a respect for the phenomena' to the extent that he may be described as 'obsessed by the concrete' (Stones, 1988: 143).

I therefore gained first hand experience of the phenomenon under investigation although I tried to maintain objectivity. This section clearly depicts that the social world is essentially relativistic and can be understood from the point of view of those who are directly involved in the activities which are studied. The question that arises from what I

have stated above is: why do I enter the world of parents? The next section attempts to provide an answer to the question posed.

3.3.1 A justification for entering the world of parents

It is necessary for me to enter the world of parents as I need to gain insight into how the lived world of parents is constituted. This means that I am closer to the data, thereby developing the analytical, conceptual and categorical components of explanation from the data itself. Cuff & Payne seem to support this when they say:

... research should be both intensive and typically accomplished through the acquisition of a detailed and rich acquaintance with the life, circumstances and ways of those being studied (Cuff & Payne, 1979: 107).

In gaining insight into the constitution of the parents' lived world I am also exposed to intentionality which is encapsulated in the lived world. Intentionality is explained as "the fundamental action of the mind reaching out to stimuli which make up the real world in order to translate them into its realm of meaningful experience" (Spinelli, in Van der Mescht, 1996: 40). Giorgi also explains intentionality as follows :

The core meaning of intentionality is that consciousness is always directed to something that is beyond the act of consciousness in which that something appears (Giorgi, 1986: 12).

This "something" which, according to Giorgi, consciousness is directed to, is termed by Kruger as an "object". Kruger, explaining the consciousness, claims that the following occurs:

Consciousness ... always intends an object - I do not just love, I love someone, I do not just see, I see something ... being conscious means an intentional act through which man lets the world appear to him (Kruger, 1988: 28).

Therefore when parents in a certain context carefully direct an intention towards the phenomenon, it (the phenomenon) acquires a new meaning. For example, a starving man intentionally looking at a plate of food shows his intention to eat. In the context of starvation the plate of food ceases to exist in his mind. It becomes a saviour, that is going to save him from death. So in that particular context of starvation the plate of food acquired a new meaning when a man interacted with his world. Van der Mescht explains this scenario:

To live is to be constantly in the world, intentionally making meaning and being endowed with meaning (Van der Mescht, 1996: 41).

The implication of the above is best explained by Kruger when he says:

Man is neither an encapsulated subjectivity nor an organism but rather a dialogue with a meaningful world. Man lives in and as relationship to the world (Kruger, 1988: 30).

Furthermore on entering the world of parents I was also exposed to the subjectiveness, uniqueness and perceptions of parents. These had a direct bearing on their bestowing of meanings to the phenomenon.

3.3.1.1 Perceptions

I took cognisance of parents' perceptions as they play an important role in their actions and behaviours. Phenomenologically the individual's perceptions give rise to thoughts, feelings, actions and eventually the meanings. According to Cockerham " ... reality is socially constructed as it emanates from the perceptions ... of those involved" (Cockerham, 1981: 59). Therefore these perceptions constituted the data to be explicated (Van der Mescht, 1996: 43). Giorgi, in Van der Mescht puts this in the following manner:

... in other words it is the perceived reality that phenomenologists

are interested in, and often 'distortions' are more vital than veridical perceptions (Giorgi (1994) in Van der Mescht, 1996:43).

How parents act in their social world is also affected by their perceptions hence these perceptions have to be considered as well. Van der Mescht (1996:43) acknowledged that perceptions are not fixed or glued but they are constantly shifting. The implication is that meaning given to a phenomenon is not fixed but changes as the perceptions do. To illustrate, in the example given in section 3.3.1.1. of the starving man, the same man can use the same plate of food as a weapon if he perceived the situation to be dangerous to him. The point mentioned above is explained by Van den Berg in the following manner:

The fact that an object carries the same name under different circumstances does not guarantee its being the same under those different circumstances (Van den Berg, 1972: 37).

The above clearly shows that the man sees the plate of food within two different contexts which are only relevant to him. This point is emphasized by Van den Berg:

We see things within their context and in connection with ourselves: a unity which can be broken only to the detriment of the parts (Van den Berg, 1972: 37).

Also implied is that perceptions are subjective to every individual. This is clearly illustrated in the example given in paragraph two of 3.2.1 where two boxers could perceive the same three minutes subjectively and interpret and give them different meanings.

3.3.1.2 Uniqueness

It is given that people do not experience the same events in exactly the same way. The end result of this is the different interpretations given to those events. The example in 3.2.1 clearly explains this position. This does not necessarily mean that I deny the existence of sharable experiences which result in commonalties. People come together, agree and make values and norms intersubjectively hence there is no objective

knowledge. Kruger (1988: 35) agrees with this when he says “the world we live in is *mitwelt*, a world which we share with others”. What we share with others (values, norms and beliefs) are what we know and are exposed to since birth. Referring to these Van der Mescht said:

Indeed these form the structure of life as we know it, and serve to highlight the uniqueness of individual *lebenswelt* elements (Van der Mescht, 1996:42).

The uniqueness of experience is affected by the time. To illustrate, in the example of the boxing match, the beaten boxer or the one who is winning gives the meaning immediately to what happened. On the other hand it is possible that both boxers out of the ring, reflecting on their experiences of the match, can bestow different meanings to the ones they have already given. The above examples depict the situations termed by Valle & King in Van der Mescht, (1996:42) as “immediate and reflective experiences”.

3.3.2 How did the researcher enter the world of parents

In this section I explain how I attempt to “see objects differently” as Van den Berg (1972: 64) puts it. This is a necessary step in the process of gathering the data so that I can put aside whatever theories I have about the phenomenon. The procedure is suitable to the general principles of phenomenological research. This procedure allowed me to enter the world of parents so that I could be closer to the data whilst it spoke for itself.

3.3.2.1 Bracketing and reduction

Comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon is sought as it manifests itself, with the least possible imposition of psychological theory, method, personal and cultural prejudice or need, and language habit (Van Kaam in Stones, 1988: 143).

The implication of the above is that I must put aside the preconceived constructs, values, norms, beliefs, prejudices, etc. and approach the phenomenon as objective as possible. Giorgi summarised the position as follows:

The putting out of play of what we know about things in order to experience them freshly (Giorgi, 1986: 6).

This statement requires that I be encapsulated in my own world, i.e. be naive and forget that I am always out there in the world and approach the phenomenon under study in complete silence. The situation advocated above is impossible and impractical. The question that arises is: how can I maintain complete silence when I, as well as the environment in which I am socialised and still living within is full of prejudices, theories, beliefs, etc? Van der Mescht solved this paradox when he said:

one has to subject oneself to such rigorous examination as will expose any presuppositions one may have, approaching the object of study with an open mind (Van der Mescht, 1996: 45).

The approach advocated by Van der Mescht above is in agreement with Stones' view when he acknowledged the paradox and solves it as follows:

... the presence of human element in the research situation should be taken into account ... researcher should specify the extent to which he is present to that which he is studying by making explicit the perspective from which he proceeds (Stones, 1988: 143).

In this process of bracketing the researcher must try to get to the essence of the phenomenon by reduction. Giorgi justified reduction as follows:

Phenomenological reduction was an important procedure for being able to depict precisely how perceptual objects were given to experience since it helped us to delineate how things present themselves regardless of their ultimate "reality status" (Giorgi, 1986: 8).

In this process of reduction the phenomenon is subjected to vigorous reflection so that essential themes may emerge. That is, when the researcher analyses the relationship between the subject and object, i.e. looks at the intention of the subject and comes closer to the phenomenon. According to Thévenaz, as cited by Burrell & Morgan (1994: 24) “the fundamental, original and essential purpose of the reduction is to bring to light the essential intentional contact between consciousness and the world”.

3.3.2.2. Description

After conducting the interviews and transcribing the data, the next logical step was to make sense of the data so that I could communicate the findings to the world of critical opinion (Stones, 1988). Van den Berg cautions me when he says:

He is a phenomenologist ... he respects what is put on record, the incidents just as they are occurring ... he disturbs the objects by closer inspections, so he refrains from inspecting them (Van den Berg, 1972: 63).

Van den Berg cautioned me to respect parents' views of the phenomenon and write them as they told me. The big problem was how do I present and communicate the findings whilst being true to the data? According to Stones (1988: 143), “The researcher aims to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon as it appears, rather than indulging in attempts to explain it”. This is in line with what Giorgi (1986:8) says: “description is the heart of phenomenological analysis”. The implication is that I am to describe what was said by parents. Phenomenologically this description is supposed to go to the extent of using the participants' phraseology. Mohanty, cited by Giorgi in support of this view said:

A description must stay close to the given ... thus a description is meant to relate how a given presents itself to conscious experience (Mohanty in Stones, 1986: 9).

Though I aspire to give a pure description of the phenomenon as provided by parents, phenomenologist like Giorgi (1986) argue that there is no pure description as different factors enter to contaminate it. To me this means that the assumptions and biases that I have about the phenomenon must not infiltrate the description. If that does occur it would mean a failure to remain faithful to the data (Stones, 1988:144).

3.4 Technique

As I am on a journey of discovery, the technique that contributed to the success of my journey is the interview. I conducted unstructured interviews with the parents which lasted approximately one and half hours each. These interviews gave parents an opportunity to describe the phenomenon as they saw it. Below is an exposition of how I conducted the interviews.

3.4.1 Interview

In conducting the interviews I took into consideration the following skills:

- (a) I should avoid asking leading questions, which would influence the participant in answering questions and seek clarification when there was ambiguity (Stones 1988: 151) .
- (b) I looked for cues of non verbal communication. Non-verbal communication has the ability to emphasise or negate what is said.
- (c) Listening is an important skill and takes place on three levels according to Seidman, 1991: 56-57.
 - On level one I concentrated on the substance to make sure I understood it. This required that I must listen to what the participants were saying.
 - On level two I listened for inner unguarded voices as the outer voice was always protected.

- On the third level I was aware of the process and the substance, i.e. I was conscious of time, the participants' energy levels and non verbal cues offered.
- (d) Questions should be open-ended to allow the participant to elaborate so she/he could give a complete answer.
- (e) I should keep the participants focused and ask for concrete details or examples as they are related to experiences.

The success of these interviews was largely dependent on the relationship that I enjoyed with participants. According to Stones

Rapport should exist between researchers and subjects and it is important that the researcher create a situation in which the subject can feel relaxed and where anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed if so desired by the subject (Stones, 1988: 151).

The point made by Stones was not difficult for me to attain as I knew my participants as neighbours. Though this was the case, the grounds on which we were meeting were different, and it required that I approach it as such. The driving force or the philosophy I adopted was "do unto others as you would like them to do unto you". The philosophy guided me from the beginning until the end of our interaction.

The starting point was honesty which I believed they would reciprocate. I explained the study to them and its purpose. Further I explained to them that as a researcher I was bound to ethics of research amongst which were confidentiality, respect and courtesy and integrity. I fully explained what these meant to them and me.

The openness I displayed to them was to encourage them to follow suit. Another advantage of this openness was that our relationship would be based on honesty and trust. Lastly I demonstrated to them that whatever information I have about the phenomenon I will not use it to condemn or be judgmental about their actions.

3.4.1.1 Justification of the unstructured interview

The focus of the study is to understand and describe the parents' perception of their non-involvement and the implications for the management of the school from the point of view of parents. To get this knowledge I interacted with parents through conversations I had with them. These conversations were the interviews which I used to explore the subjective reality from the perspective of insiders (parents) (Schurink, 1988: 138). Patton explains the value of qualitative interviewing as "it... begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to make explicit" (Patton, 1990: 278). Consequently I obtained rich data that showed the uniqueness of the parents' perceptions.

The next step was for me to make meaningful what was said by my participants to the reader.

3.5 Analysis of data

After I had transcribed the taped interviews I started the process of explication. I tried to discover what makes parents not involved and the implication of non-involvement on the management of the school. In doing this I followed the steps Kvale (1996: 194) provided.

Firstly I read through the interviews and bracketed my *a priori* frameworks so that I could remain true and faithful to the data as it was presented to me by my participants.

Secondly whilst reading I identified natural meaning units which were self-definable and self delimiting statements in the expression of a single recognizable aspect of the [subject's] experience (Cloonan cited in Stones 1988). I also tried to maintain the terms or phrases used by my participants so that the data might speak for itself. Where terms or phrases were not clearly stated by my participants I was able to understand them and

articulate the intended meaning clearly by virtue of sharing the lived world (Stones, 1988: 153).

Thirdly I stated in a very simple manner the dominating natural meaning units of interviews, by thematising each unit.

Fourthly I interrogated these meaning units in relation to parental non-involvement and its implication for the management of the school.

I addressed these themes to questions such as “What does this statement tell me about the parental non-involvement and its implication for the management of the school?”. These questions were related to the main questions of the study which were “ What do you perceive as parental non-involvement? How do your perceptions affect the management of the school?” (Kvale, 1996: 194).²

Lastly I put together the themes that were dominant and took into consideration those that were different or unrelated to these themes. I arranged them coherently and presented them in a meaningful description. At this point it is necessary for me to justify why I used phenomenology rather than other methodologies.

3.6 Justification of the method

I chose to use a method normally used in the treatment of mentally disturbed patients to gather knowledge from the mentally sound people. My use of this method does not imply that the participants are mentally disturbed, in contrast, the participants are completely sane but the method allows them to describe the phenomenon as they see it in their direct day to day observation, i.e. the parents described their “different existence”.

The method therefore allowed me the opportunity to “understand the social world by obtaining first hand knowledge of the subject under investigation” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 8). I obtained this knowledge by empathising with parents so that I could

experience their lived worlds. This assisted me in understanding and describing the structures of parental non-involvement experiences as they presented themselves to the consciousness of parents in an unprejudiced manner as it occurs in their lived worlds. The approach also allowed me to get from parents the meanings they attach to these experiences and thereafter give a description of them.

Firstly I asked my participants to describe the phenomenon as they perceive, experience and understand it in their contexts. The description of a different existence by parents requires that I must dispose of my biases and prejudgements about the phenomenon and its implications. This receptiveness assisted me to listen to what was said by parents

Secondly I used the method because I was investigating a human science phenomenon. I allowed my participants in this investigation to bring in their experiences, perceptions, understanding and the contexts in which they perceive the phenomenon. Therefore I gathered knowledge about the phenomenon from numerous units. Thus a holistic, lived experience is allowed to emerge (Van der Mescht, 1996: 53). Van den Berg, in support of this, says:

We see things within their context and in connection with ourselves: a unity which can be broken only to the detriment of parts (Van den Berg, 1972: 37).

The above emphasises the “concrete situatedness of the patient” as stressed by Van den Berg in Van der Mescht (1996: 53). Ferreira summarised what I said above in the following manner:

The commitment to get close, and to be factual, descriptive and quotive, is thus a commitment of the qualitative researcher to represent participants in their own terms and to give a living sense of day-to-day talk, activities, concerns and problems in a such way that the audience is at least partially able to project itself into the point of view of the people depicted (Ferreira, 1985: 110).

Given this background I present to the reader how I started this study.

3.7 Initial setting

I approached the Principal of School X and explained to him that I was a student at Rhodes University and asked that I be permitted to conduct another study at his school amongst the parents. I explained to him the focus of my study. He agreed and I approached ten parents whom I knew had children at this particular school. These parents met the selection criteria guidelines as provided by Stones (1988: 150)

- They “have had experience relating to the phenomenon to be researched”, i.e. all were parents and had children at School X, staying at Duncan Village.
- They had the same home language as the researcher, i.e. they were Xhosa speaking like myself. Though that was so, the study was conducted in English. All, except for one, could express themselves in English. I had, therefore, to translate for her. I tried to eliminate the risk of missing subtle nuances of meaning by translating as faithfully as I could.
- Their commitment to the upliftment of the Duncan Village community strengthened their participation and willingness to be open with me.
- They were all verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to the researched phenomenon.

All of them agreed to participate. Whilst I was talking to them informally about the phenomenon I listened carefully to what they said in order to be able to sort them out and select those I felt presented what I wanted fairly well. Of the ten, four fitted the profile I needed for my study. In the next chapter I present the data collected and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

From meaning units to description

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the collection of data and its analysis as well as a description of parental non-involvement and its implications for the management are presented. The fundamental principle of this study is the understanding of parents' perceptions of their non-involvement at School X, Duncan Village. To accomplish this mission I conducted interviews.

The interviews had two structured questions from which unstructured questions resulted. I asked my participants unstructured questions for clarification and probing purposes. The recorded interviews were transcribed into written texts (see appendix), which were then read for accuracy purposes. After that I took them to my participants to verify with them whether what I transcribed is what they had said. At the same time I used this opportunity to ask my participants to clarify those areas that were left out when I first conducted the interviews. I amended the transcripts where necessary.

Unstructured questioning by its very nature results in haphazard and disorganised data, which was indeed the case. According to Van der Mescht (1996: 60) the disorganised data is the very essence of qualitative data. This process of data gathering was not an end in itself but only a means to an end. The end was the analysis of the data and presentation of a description of non-parental involvement as experienced by parents and its implications for the management of school. This haphazard data had to be organised in order to give a meaningful description. The first step I took was to analyse the data. The purpose was to attempt to discover exactly what constitutes parental non-involvement for parents in their lived worlds (Kvale, 1996:194). To accomplish this I used the phenomenological analysis that I know of, namely the delineation of natural meaning units which is explained fully by Giorgi (1979: 24).

From the descriptions made by my participants I extracted the natural meaning units thereby creating a list of them for each participant. I wrote them in the left column and in the right I condensed and stated the theme that dominated the natural meaning unit in simple words. Where I felt I could not express what was said by the participants lest I distort the message and because of the commitment to be factual I used the participants' exact words. By doing so I wanted to represent my participants in their own terms so that the reader can see the phenomenon through "the minds and eyes" of my participants (Wiersma, 1995: 25). This process of delineation of natural meaning units required me to forget whatever knowledge I had about the subject because of my experience and to listen objectively as the data spoke for itself.

I allocated the letters of the alphabet A,B,C and D to the natural meaning unit lists. The letters represented each participant in the order I interviewed them. I coded each natural meaning unit, e.g. **A1**, where A refers to the first participant interviewed and 1 to his first meaning unit (refer to appendix). I scrutinised these natural meaning units to determine exactly what they were telling me about parental non-involvement. Thereafter I was able to articulate what was said by each participant. Below I give these descriptions as given by my participants. These descriptions are preceded by the biographical details of the participants. The biographical details are important as Atkin, Bastiani & Goode show:

The biographical element will be made up of past experiences and the way these have shaped their view of themselves and each other, ...on the task in which they are engaged, and the knowledge they have of the particular context in which the encounter is to take place (Atkin, Bastiani & Goode, 1988: 23).

4.1.1 The unheard voice - Parents talk

The success of real partnership between parents and teachers at school level as envisaged by the SASA depends to some extent on the democratic principle of one having a right to air one's views. The reciprocal of this right is the right to be listened to and to be heard. The parents, because of being an essential component and unique educators have to be

listened to by the other partners (teachers). Below is an exposé of parents airing their perceptions.

4.1.2 Brief biographical profile of Jack

Jack is the father of three boys. The eldest is at Eastern Cape Technikon, the second is doing Grade 7 and the youngest is at pre-school. He stays at Duncan Village, having been born and schooled there. He is serving on the governing structure of School X. He obtained a Senior Certificate at Blythswood High School in the former Transkei.

4.1.3 Description of structure Jack as a parent and member of governing body

Jack, as a parent and a member of a school governing body, perceives parental non-involvement at School X, Duncan Village, comprising four elements, namely financial, socio-economic and illiteracy, which he termed the “divorce of parents from school by teachers” (A1). He sees himself as an “in-between parent”, meaning he is half involved and half non-involved. This position is the result of his inability to have what he termed the “financial muscle” (A3) and an economic problem, which is his work commitments.

He says the inability to have the “financial muscle” is not peculiar to him, but is generally common to parents. This problem makes it difficult for parents to meet the financial demands of the school, like paying the school fees, fund-raising, buying books on time, etc. Because of this insufficiency, they do not attend school activities and meetings, especially when money matters are on the agenda. He says that some parents know that they do not contribute too much financially to their children’s education. As a result they feel that they are unsuitable to attend the meetings when they are summoned (A2). Sometimes this inability to provide the “financial muscle” becomes public knowledge, which embarrasses them.

This situation in which Jack finds himself affects him negatively. It contrasts with the way he was brought up. As a father, the head of the family, traditionally he is supposed to cater for the needs of his family. If he was staying in a rural area with his cattle, he would sell some of his cattle to meet these needs. For him to be unable to provide financially gives an impression or proves that he is a failure and his children would not be proud of him and respect him. He feels that he has not kept to the standards which his father instilled in him. His father was just an ordinary driver in town but he could provide for the educational needs of his children. In a way he feels that he has let his father down.

Another element that makes him an “in between parent” is what he calls an economic reason which is his work commitment. He is a traveller which makes it impossible for him to be available when needed urgently at school or home during the week. He is only available during the weekends or when working locally. Drawing from his experience he says it is difficult to get a quorum of parents when a meeting is called during the weekend. This is because some parents attend church guilds, funerals and other domestic matters that are postponed for the weekends. The problem of work commitment generally affects all parents. He refers to “they are working shifts, 12 hours a day, so by the time they come home are tired, do not have the opportunity even to look at the school books of children, listen to complaints or requests made by the school” (A6). The parents find themselves in a catch twenty two situation, where they have to choose between work that would yield a salary to meet the needs of their families and attendance to school activities. Most of the time they choose work and become non-involved parents. He appreciates the value attached to work, but he feels that parents should sacrifice, as it is on rare or urgent occasions that meetings are called during the weekend.

He perceives parental non-involvement for other parents as socially constructed. Some of the children are staying with one parent. The other parent, most of the time the mother, lives in rural areas and looks after the animals and the rural home. The father works, lives with the child, but does not have time to look after or supervise the child's school work or attend to other school activities. He says with Black people there is a

culture that it is the mother's duty to see to the children's educational matters, like registering the child at school, buying a school uniform, etc. The father has to provide only the money needed.

He also refers to "biological parents being not there" (A4). The children are staying with extended family members (grandmothers/fathers, aunts or uncles). These people have limited responsibility over the children and usually do not want to involve themselves in educational matters affecting these children (A7). Therefore, when educational matters arise, needing the attention of a parent, they prefer not to involve themselves, but to put the matter on hold until the biological parents are available to attend to it. It is no wonder therefore that the child during school hours is a pupil but in school activities a parent.

Jack says sometimes "ukufa kuse 'mbizeni", literally translated as "death is in the pot". He feels that the teachers themselves are to blame for parental non-involvement, because they "divorce parents from school because of their illiteracy"(A1). Some parents and guardians have not gone beyond Grade 4 or 5 at school (A8). He believes that some teachers are prisoners of their own thinking, and they think only the educated can bring valid suggestions or solve a problem. As a result of this thinking teachers do not involve parents, because they think that it is only they (teachers) who know what and how to govern the school. When parents come to school they are made to feel their illiteracy. Consequently the parents are not willing to participate in school matters (A19).

He goes further to say when teachers want to be "silly/naughty" or want to push their views, they express themselves in English at meetings. As a result the whole meeting is conducted in English and only those who can express themselves in English participate (A9). He says one can sense that the teachers have already discussed the matter, but they brought it to the governing council to get approval. In such situations as parent members of the council they feel used. This attitude of teachers discourages parents from attending the meetings. He is uncomfortable with the situation as he feels that people who can make positive and important contributions are left out. If things could go his way he

would stop teachers from using English at meetings in order to reach the levels of literacy of different parents and because all are Xhosa speaking.

He also feels that the school does not commit parents in matters pertaining to attendance of general or school governing meetings or any other activity. He refers to “nothing is committing them to acknowledge that they have received the notice of the meeting either by signing or whatever and to give their response” (A22). Because they are not committed to the school, they do not come or send an apology for their absence. To illustrate he cites an example of a school where parents are not willing to commit themselves to accompany the teachers to the regional office of the Department of Education and Culture to plead for a principal.

Subsequent to the unavailability of parents is the communication breakdown between the school and the home which affects the management of the school. What and how things are done at school are not known at home. The management of the school experiences the effects of parental non-involvement in an adverse manner. The issues concerning the governance of the schools are sometimes postponed or decisions taken cannot be implemented because of the inability to get parents’ views on the matter.

The postponement of these matters results in accusations of the governing body’s failure to deliver. The governing council members cannot take a decision and implement it without the parents discussing and blessing it. Should they do that, it will lead to problems. He says “parents themselves question the decisions taken and implemented without their knowledge” (A21). To clarify his point he gives an example of where teachers were locked up at school by students. The school governing body members were called to come to the school. Most of the parents who are governing council members had reasons not to come promptly and the only one who responded was a policeman. When he arrived at school, he climbed over the gate as the students refused to open for him. Once inside he negotiated with the students to let the teachers go, but to no avail. His superior, who was outside the school gates, panicked and with the help of other policemen forcefully opened the gates. A small tiff occurred between policemen

and students resulting in minor injuries sustained by a few students. In a meeting which parents attended as a result of all this, they questioned the presence of policemen at school.

At times he would like to make decisions without parents but he is careful to be democratic. Though democracy is a good thing, he feels parents do not understand its meaning. As elected members of the school governing body they have some knowledge of parents' views and ability to articulate them. He sees the governing body as a form of government. As such they have the right to make decisions without consulting parents. He says no government has ever consulted the people on every matter. He sees democracy as practised at schools as slowing down progress and a platform for parents to throw stones at the school governing body.

This communication breakdown also affects the class teachers or subject teachers as the class managers or subject managers. The end result of the communication breakdown at this level is the "I do not care attitude adopted by the teacher". He refers to, "if you have no parents or your parents cannot look after your books at home or they cannot help you, at school we also do not have time for that" (A13).

Because the children see that nobody cares about their educational matters at home or at school, they tend not to give their learning first priority. They do not attend school, and do not hesitate to take any actions that will take them out of the classroom (A15). The end result is a high failure rate.

4.2 Brief biographical profile of Sheila

Sheila is a mother of two boys and two girls. The eldest son matriculated in 1998 from the local school, the eldest girl is at the University of Transkei, the younger ones, a boy and a girl are doing Grades 6 and 10 respectively. They live in Duncan Village. She completed a Senior Certificate at the Technical College in Umtata, in the former Transkei. She obtained a teachers' certificate, but she has never taught. She is a clerk for an insurance company.

4.2.1 Description of structure Sheila as a parent and member of governing body

Sheila's views on education are clouded by the role her mother played whilst she was a student. She grew up in an environment where her mother was the housewife and actively involved in the education of her children. Her mother was a member of the school committee for the different schools which she and her sisters attended. As a result she strongly believes that parents and teachers have to work together in the process of educating the child. She refers to "... the teacher, parents and whoever is responsible for the children are expected to work together" (B2).

She perceives the school and family life as changing through time. Family life is changing because the changes in life necessitate that both parents be workers. She says, "parents are waking up very early in the morning, go to work and come back late" (B2). As a result the absence of the mother who normally takes the lead in educational matters is felt strongly. She says this absence of the mother manifests itself in "the way students wear their uniforms, mixing it with clothes unsuitable for school" (B3). It becomes clear that there is nobody to discipline the child at home. This lack of discipline is transported to school and manifests itself in the use of drugs, especially smoking of dagga (B13). The end result is that the students fail and show no progress at school.

She feels that the value attached to education by parents has diminished. She refers to "... they (parents) were keen to produce educated children or professional children" (B21).

To show their keenness parents used to give educational matters first priority. She says parents used to give preference to the necessities for the school before buying Christmas presents and clothes. She acknowledges the state the economy is in and the fact that parents do not have money to provide for everything that is needed at the school. A point of confusion for her is that the same parents who cannot provide financially for school necessities do have the money for expensive hair styles, clothing, etc., which their children wear to school. As a result she feels that parents of today do not give education the priority it used to enjoy. She says the financial provision for schooling is not associated with wealth as perceived by other parents but with the aim to produce an educated child **(B4)**.

Sheila asks that given this situation, how do you expect a member of the governing council who himself is behind with payment of school fees, for example, to come and address the parents about the same problem? She cites an example of the chairman of a school governing body who borrowed a sum of money from the school and promised to pay. He did not pay on the agreed date and when he was reminded the following year he questioned those who reminded him. She acknowledges her example is one of those limited cases, but she is using it to illustrate how financial limitations can affect a good person. To solve the problem is to strategically leave the office by being absent from the meetings. The absence from meetings shows how busy one is. As a result, when one tenders a letter of resignation, no one questions it.

She says that some children do not live with their parents. The parents are staying in the “Bhundus” (rural areas) **(B19)**. Some children live alone because they want to study in urban areas because of the status accorded to the urban areas. Their parents stay at their rural homes. Some schools in rural areas are Junior Secondary Schools with no Grades 9 and 10. This forces them to change the schools to schools in urban areas where they can be accommodated. The absence of parents within the homes makes it difficult to get hold of them. These children assume the responsibility of being their own parents. As a result the notices for parents’ meetings do not reach the people they are intended for **(B18)**, thus the children attend the meetings themselves **(B19)**. Eventually there is no

communication between the school and the parents. She blames the parents because she feels these children play a dual role which in the end affects their performance at school. The parents also seem to run away from their responsibility of being parents.

She sees the illiteracy of parents as another cause for parental non-involvement **(B20)**. She refers to “the use of English drives the parents away, in the meeting we always speak English” **(B25)**. She understands the use of English in schools that have multiracial teachers, but fails to understand it when the teachers are all Xhosa speaking. The use of English alienates the parents and the feeling of inferiority on the part of parents grows. To her the use of English when everybody is Xhosa speaking is a sign of an ulterior motive. As a result parents develop a bad attitude towards the teachers which is not corrected by the teachers. Instead they increase it through their actions. She feels some teachers, as they become more qualified, tend to forget their roots and culture. She says in the Black culture it is the norm to greet a person irrespective of whether you know him/her or not. If a person comes to your place or territory you have to make him/her feel welcome. To welcome him/her you greet, enquire about his/her health and give him/her something to drink. She termed this “Ubuntu” which characterises and distinguishes Blacks from other nations in S.A. This culture, however, is discarded by some learned people as they feel that they have nothing in common with illiterates.

When such an attitude develops the person loses the essence of being a black person and is no longer held in high regard by their communities. However, when you visit the school, it becomes clear that this culture is dead. Sheila says “... when parents come to school, they do not receive a warm reception like “molo mzali, molo mama, unjani, tyhini siphilile nathi apha esikolweni” **(B24)**. The absence of a warm welcome drives parents away from school. She feels that in a way the missionary educators are smiling in their graves when they see that they still have disciples in this era who see an African way of life as old fashioned or “heathen ways” as claimed by them. She feels that parents, illiterate as they were in the old days, used to attend the activities of the schools. She says parents used to come to schools to watch “drills, sketches”, but they are no longer done at school **(B28)**. The parents who had such skills used to come to school and give

help. As a result the bond between the teachers and parents was solid. In a way the school and home were not two separate entities. She says "... there is no relationship between the school and the home because the parents and the teachers are two extremes... there is no communication at all" (B25). Because the parents are not involved students do not adhere to the policies of the school. Students are not disciplined. She believes that if parents were involved students would know what to do, especially about the use of drugs and the smoking of dagga at school (B13).

The students fail because parents do not encourage their children to read (B14), "the child would not show any progress at school" (B3). This affects the management of the school, especially the principal, who has to account for everything that goes wrong.

4.3 Brief biographical profile of Thoko

Thoko is the mother of four children. The eldest son is a soldier in the South African National Defence Force, the second son matriculated last year and the two younger ones are doing Grade 8 at Mzokhanyo and Kusile High Schools. Both of her elder sons studied at the local schools at Duncan Village. She is a cleaner at a day care centre. The highest standard she passed is Grade 8.

4.3.1 Description of structure Thoko as a parent and member of governing body

The context in which Thoko interacted with education is a negative one. She grew up in an environment which attached no value to educating a girl. At home she was raised to be somebody's wife, because the culture that prevailed then was for girls to be married. Therefore most parents, including hers, perceived education as a prerogative of the boys and a waste of money for girls. As a result her parents' involvement in her schooling was limited to providing her with the basic necessities required at school; attending to her school activities, visiting and attending her school meetings was out of question for them. Her views about education changed with the uprisings of 1985 and the unbanning of the African National Congress. She vowed to participate in the governance of her children's schools.

Currently she sees the behaviour of her parents which she did not like resurfacing and herself replicating it on her children. This is evident when she says "it is a mistake to send a child to school and not follow-up ... it is my duty to visit the school to meet the teachers" (C3).

She perceives non-involvement as the "lack of follow-up" (C1) on her part to visit the school. She likens this lack of follow-up to the dumping of dirt on the rubbish dump. She says when the owner of the dirt leaves it at the dump, she/he is no longer responsible for it. Therefore when parents leave their children at school they cease to be their

responsibility, but become that of teachers, which she feels is wrong. She acknowledges that in her absence at school the teachers resume the responsibility, but that does not exonerate the parents. This act of irresponsibility on the part of parents manifests itself by the regular non-attendance of meetings of the school governing body by the parents. This situation is not peculiar to the parents who are members of the school governing body, but to parents generally. Though that is the case, the members of the school governing body are to be blamed. They are to be blamed because the decisions which they are supposed to make include the dates for the parents' meetings, but the dates are not set. They are not set, because the parents are unavailable for the governing council meetings. The result is that the parents are informed about the parents' meetings in a short space of time, consequently they do not attend (C22).

She associates the poor attendance of the parents' meetings with the fact that when meetings are called, finance is always on the agenda. She feels that the money demanded at school is unaffordable. She feels teachers buy new sport kits yearly (C11). The question that remains unanswered for her is: what happens to others bought previously? At the end of the day it proves that teachers do not have a system of keeping the kits. She thinks that some parents do not take the education of their children seriously. She feels that some parents perceive attending school meetings as a waste of time (C10), because of the school governing body's failure to give feedback timeously and sometimes because the decisions agreed upon are not implemented. The decisions are regarded as impossible even though they are not put into practice. As a result in most meetings time is wasted by discussing new strategies which will never be implemented and evaluated. When feedback is given the parents are told that when the governing body was about to implement the decision they forecast a negative response that would be evoked. Parents perceive the governing body members as people who regard themselves as superior to them (C20). This feeling of superiority creates a rift between them and the parent body which results in parents not supporting them.

-She does not attend some of the school governing meetings because of her work commitments. She says "I leave home at 7 a.m. for work and return at about 6 p.m.

daily” (C8). When she arrives home, she must prepare supper for her family. By the time everybody has finished eating and the dishes are washed she is too tired to even look at the books of her children. It is possible to attend meetings when she is informed well in advance, because she can make the necessary arrangements to leave the workplace earlier. She is not happy about this because previously she used to visit the school and teacher of her children. She concedes that this was possible as she was self-employed as vegetables seller.

As a member of the governing body she expresses the feeling of being undermined by teachers. She says “these teachers ziyasiklasa”, which means teachers undermine them as parents (C16). She cites as an example that the school principal calls the school governing body meetings though that is not his duty because the principal feels the chairperson is conducting the meetings in the correct manner. In meetings he presides although he is not the chairman. She feels that some parents because they are illiterate have a limited knowledge or no knowledge of the SASA as a result they do not know their positions within the governing body. Consequently she cannot correct the principal because she might be seen as a trouble-maker and not be supported by others. These feelings of being undermined are fuelled by the manner the teachers relate to them as parents. She perceives that teachers seem to think that they know everything about children to an extent that they think parents do not know the strengths and weaknesses of their own children (C13).

She says some of these problems cause a rift between teachers and parents. This rift is exploited by students because they tend to do as they like at school. She gives an example where if students decide that teacher X must leave the school the parents sometimes agree without the necessary proof and investigation, which shows their feelings of resentment towards teachers. Parents believe their children above teachers (C6).

4.4 Brief biographical profile of Mziyanda

Mziyanda is the father of four children, two boys and two girls. The eldest is at a tertiary institution doing his first year, the elder girl is at high school and the younger boy and girl are at lower primary and pre-primary school respectively. He works at a factory in East London. The highest standard he passed is Grade 10.

4.4.1 Description of structure Mziyanda as a parent and member of governing body

Mziyanda's non-involvement is influenced by the conservative approach he has adopted towards school matters. This can be traced to his early student days. During that time a teacher was perceived to possess the monopoly of knowledge for school matters as well as the running of the school. Consequently a teacher was a respected and honoured person held in high esteem by the members of the community. The relationship between a teacher and pupils was authoritarian with an element of fear, though still friendly. To illustrate this relationship he says, "the pupils used to change their direction when they saw their teacher approaching their way out of fear and respect" (D15).

Conversely the situation that prevails appalls him. He refers to "this democracy of Mandela has killed our schools" (D12). He finds it difficult to discuss school matters with the pupils and teachers of lower ranks whom he calls "my children" (D4). He finds similarity between the running and making of school policies and the home. He states that when he makes a policy at home he does not discuss it with his children but with his wife. He merely informs his children and expects them to obey. Therefore to discuss the school matters at the governing council with children present is a very odd and awkward situation for him.

He perceives democracy as a platform for ill-disciplined pupils and teachers to show their disrespect for the elders. This conclusion he has drawn about teachers and pupils is a result of how he perceives them during their discussion in school governing council

meetings. He has a feeling that teachers are insensitive to the feelings of other people. He says this comes out strongly when they articulate their opposing views. As a result he interprets this attitude as disrespect by teachers for parents **(D10)**. He refers to “you give birth to a child and all of sudden he tells you how to do things” **(D11)**. He would be happy if teachers could only just attend and not participate in the discussions **(D12)**. The fact that the teachers and pupils who are his children have different opinions to him is a sign of disrespect. The basis of this thinking is found in the Black (Xhosa) culture where a child is supposed to accept as correct whatever a parent tells him/her. Mziyanda liked the previous principal who had a conservative approach to school matters. As a result he then was an active member of the council.

He says this disrespect of parents by teachers is also shown in how teachers welcome parents at school. This is contrary to Black culture which advocates that when a visitor arrives at your home, before discussing the matter he/she must give something to drink. Another sign of disrespect is the fact that parents are not informed formally by the teachers when they are to embark on strike action. He feels it is not enough to hear about it in the media and to inform Cosas, but that parents have to know **(D22)**.

He interprets the act of informing Cosas and the solidarity normally pledged by Cosas to teachers as a sign of friendship between the two. He perceives this as an unholy union which is not acceptable to God. It is no wonder therefore that it ends disastrously. (He means the conflicts that normally occur between teachers and pupils and parents called to mediate).

His non-involvement is the result of his social commitments. When the school governing council meetings are called during weekends it is impossible for him to attend. He is committed to attending the funerals, traditional rituals like circumcision celebrations, etc. in his community and church guilds **(D2)**. His attendance of these commitments is influenced by the notion of “Ubuntu”. He identifies the characteristics of Ubuntu as “ubudlelwane” – (co-operation), “ilima” and “umgido” – (to pull together or help each other in time of need), and “ububele” – (warmth). The attendance of these gatherings is

important for him as it shows “ubudlelwane”. This act conveys the oneness and the commitment to be with the person who organised the gathering until the end. Therefore social commitments take a precedence over his weekend activities. The underlying belief is that tomorrow it may be him in need of neighbours’ support.

His involvement is affected by his work commitment. He works 12 hour shifts at a factory **(D1)**. When he is working night shift it is impossible for him to attend anything concerning the school whether it is held during the day or evening. In the evening he is at work and during the day he is asleep in preparation for the shift. He feels it is better when he is doing the day shift. He is able to attend some meetings held in the evening, although he arrives late. This depends largely on how tired he is. He refers to “sometimes I come home dog tired”. With regards to other parents he feels that they do not attend school activities because of circumstances beyond their control. He says some parents, especially the wives who have the responsibility of attending school activities, normally stay in rural areas **(D3)**. The wives have a double responsibility of looking after the urban home as well as the rural one. When they are absent nobody attends on their behalf.

CHAPTER FIVE

A different description

5.1 Introduction

Polanyi (1969: 147-148), cited by Van Mescht, said:

... an external observer will tend to look at things happening in the body, seeing it as an object ... He will miss the meaning these events have for a person dwelling in the body and fail to share the experience the person has of his body (Van der Mescht, 1996: 45).

Polanyi cautions explicitly that if one excludes the experiences of the lived world it does not give a full picture of the phenomenon under investigation. The exclusion of these experiences seems to be incorrect, as Van den Berg argues:

The relationship between man and world is so close that it is erroneous to separate them ... If they are separated, the patient ceases to be this particular patient and his world ceases to be his world (Van den Berg, 1972: 39).

Van den Berg (1972: 40) goes further to say “if we want to describe a subject, we must elaborate on the scene in which the subject reveals itself”. To be in line with Polanyi and Van den Berg, in this chapter I let my participants share the experiences of their *lebenswelt* which are missing from the previous chapter. These experiences are essential and contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon from the participants’ point of view. This is consistent with the phenomenological stance of examining the individual holistically, i.e. to gather data from numerous sources.

To gather this data I contextualised my participants in their *lebenswelt* which, according to Van den Berg (1972), has four elements, namely the body, world, others and time. Similarly Ludwig Binswanger, cited by Van der Mescht (1996: 86), identifies three dimensions of *lebenswelt*, namely *Umwelt*, *Mitwelt* and *Eigenwelt*. The fourth, *Überwelt*, is an addition of Van Deurzen-Smith. Van der Mescht (1996: 86) explains these dimensions and shows how they are related to each other. These elements contribute to

a different description which, according to Van den Berg (1972), is a “description of the patient’s unique relationship”. This is in line with Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein* as cited in Van der Mescht, which holds:

... not only are we unique (as far as we know today) in our ability to be aware of our existence, but this awareness reveals an inseparable relationship between existence and the world. Our awareness is not solely subjective but rather intersubjective (Van der Mescht, 1996: 85).

Consistent with Van den Berg’s (1972) insistence of the interrelatedness of the dimensions, I present the descriptions as a single coherent description of each participant.

5.2 Jack

Jack experiences his world as frustrating, disappointing and inconsistent. What makes matters worse is the inability to correct the situation, though he tries. He wants to be involved, especially in the governance of his children’s school. He cannot play this role to his fullest potential because his work commitments override this ability, resulting in his inability to live his life world.

Though he tries to use the time available to him, i.e. weekends, he is frustrated because some members are not willing to avail themselves during this time. As a result, he sees them as selfish, although he does not say this loudly. This is captured in the statement he makes that parents should sacrifice for the sake of their children’s education. What frustrates him more is the fact that parents are not willing to sacrifice their time, but are willing to ask questions that have the potential of creating conflict. Parents expect the school to run smoothly, though there are no policies in place for the teachers. He sees this as an act of irresponsibility by parents.

His life view is highly influenced by his father who is a driver. His father was able to provide for Jack and his brothers’ school needs. His inability to have the “financial muscle” contradicts with how his father brought him up. As a result he has disappointed

and disgraced his father. His main worry is that the way in which he portrays himself will be replicated by his children. He is frustrated because he is setting a bad example for his children. The idea that his children would not be proud of him, hurts.

Jack comes out as a caring person who is committed to “Ubuntu”. This commitment is indicated by the fact that he is uncomfortable with the exclusion of some parents by teachers because they are illiterate; his understanding of the work commitment of some parents; and the fact that he would like to discourage the use of English so that nobody feels left out. Although he believes in democracy, he is concerned by how it is practised. The fact that they (school governing body members) are questioned when they make decisions without discussing these decisions with the parent body makes a farce of democracy as he believes that it is within their scope to do so. His salvation, as he says, is to devise means of how to swim with the tide and not sink.

5.3 Sheila

Sheila comes out as a modern parent, who believes that parents and teachers are partners in education. Her life view is characterised by democratic principles, where all stakeholders have equal responsibility. This comes out when she says, “the school needs parents, parents need the school and the children need both”. She is influenced by her mother who was a member of the different school committees which Sheila and her sisters attended. She understands that life and time have changed and these changes have a major influence on people’s lives. Previously parents, i.e. the mothers, were housewives and had ample time to combine their household activities and school activities. Nowadays most families are unable to survive on the salary/wages of one person, i.e. husband, therefore both parents are workers.

As a result she is unable to live her life world. This is evident when she says:

... I wake very early in the morning going to work and I come back late, very tired and have no time to discuss what has taken place at school that day and what is expected of me tomorrow.

She sees education as a continuum and the school as an extension of the home. Therefore what happens at home should be continued at the school, and vice versa, to enable the child to fit into the larger society. Parents discipline the learners at home, but they do not want to involve themselves when that is to continue at school. This situation frustrates her because the disciplinary measures taken by the teachers against the learners backfire on teachers. Another source of discomfort for her is failure of the parents to prioritise (budgeting), which she believes results in the diminishing value of education. Parents do not “bother themselves” to attend the school meetings when convened. Because teachers have nobody to share with, the problems they encounter at school are also reflected in the pass rate.

She firmly believes in “Ubuntu”. She believes “Ubuntu” is not practised at the school. This is evident when she says:

... teachers are to blame because when we as parents come to school, we don't receive a warm reception like “molo mzali, molo mama unjani, tyhini siphilile nathi apha esikolweni” (Hello, mother, how are you? We are fine at school).

She is uncomfortable with the exclusion of illiterate parents, whichever way this exclusion is done. She feels that previously the schools used to accommodate such parents by providing activities that they would be able to participate in, like physical exercises and dramatic plays (B28). To make a person feel that she/he does not belong in a particular sector is not “Ubuntu”.

5.4 Thoko

Thoko's life view contradicts the way she was brought up. Thoko's parents sent her to school to enable her to write her own name. The culture that was prevailing then was to prepare the girls for marriage so that the parents can get cows as “lobola”. The herds of cows the household had reflected the wealth of the family.

A wealthy man was a respected person in the community. Her parents therefore disregarded her education and were, as a result, not involved in it.

The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the uprisings of 1985 changed her life view. Her participation in local structures of the ANC made her see the importance of her participation in the school governance of her children's school. As a result of this influence she was an active member of their school governing body when her younger children were at primary school. At this time she was self-employed.

The situation in which she finds herself currently seems to contrast with her noble ideas of participation. She is not able to participate like before as she is now employed. She is worried about this as she sees herself replicating her parents. This is however beyond her control as she has to work so that she and her children are able to survive. She is uncomfortable with this situation as she feels that she has let down those people who had elected her to the body. This situation is made worse by parents who consistently ask the same question of what happened to her as she is behaving contrary to what they know of her.

She is not happy with how parents tend to be biased against teachers, especially in a conflict situation. She sees this as a result of their non-attendance of school meetings. Parents rely on the information given to them by their children and on the basis of that they conclude and agree with what is said by their children. This can be detected in the manner the parents present themselves in conflict resolution meetings. She has a feeling that the parents are afraid of their own children, which is detrimental to the growth and development of their children.

She believes in democracy which she regards as the peace maker at the schools. She sees democracy as having a stabilising effect which will calm down the turmoil she sees at the school. She believes that it is a waste of energy to think that it is only parents and teachers - who can decide on the policies of the school without the children.

Therefore she asks honestly that those whom she refers to as “basadla ngendeb’ endala” (conservatives) accept the changes as there is no going back now.

5.5 Mziyanda

Mziyanda belongs to the old school of thought (conservative) where parents have an absolute authority over the child, which is embedded in Xhosa culture. It follows that when the teachers took away the responsibility of educating the children from the parents, they also assumed that authority. His life view is characterised by authoritarianism and conservatism. He refers to teachers as “abantwana” (children) who cannot say no to him. He says “... you are told by your children how to do things”. His views were re-inforced by the previous principal who shared his ideas. He was comfortable with him and was then as a result an active member.

He has a problem with democracy as he believes that it has brought disrespect by students and teachers for older people. He is also frustrated by other parents who seem not to be bothered by the fact that they have to discuss the serious and important school matters with assistant teachers and learners. He is not happy about the relationship that teachers (SADTU) seem to have with learners (Cosas). He believes in God. He believes that what is seen by the old people as wrong is seen likewise by God. Eventually that is why teachers’ relationship with learners is riddled with conflict.

He comes out as a caring person who does not want to miss the community activities, like burials, initiations, weddings, etc. The underlying idea is to share the good and the bad of these activities with the people who hold them. This is one of the basic elements of “Ubuntu” which he strongly advocates. He is conscious of how the teachers disregard the culture of “Ubuntu” when parents visit the school. Parents are coldly welcomed by them, which is contrary to how Black children are brought up.

CHAPTER SIX

Explication of dominant themes

6.1 Introduction

In this Chapter the dominant themes explicated from the natural meaning units are presented. This is in line with Stones' (1988) rigorous reflection and transformation phase. Stones explains this phase as follows:

The researcher ... reflect(s) on the natural meaning units and central themes, which are still expressed essentially in the concrete every-day language of the subject, and transforms their language ... (Stones, 1988: 153).

To transform the every-day language of my participants I applied Stones' phase. I used the tool he recommended, namely the "imaginative variation" (Stones, 1988: 154). The central themes of the natural meaning units were studied and I thought of all implicit possible situations in which the phenomenon could have occurred. Giorgi in Van der Mescht has this to say about the situation:

When a phenomenon appears, it always appears within a certain horizon or context, and the horizon that implicitly is given with the phenomenon is not irrelevant for the understanding of the phenomenon. On the contrary the horizon is essential for the understanding of the phenomenon because the role that the phenomenon plays within the context, even if it is only implicitly recognized, is one of the determiners of the meaning of the phenomenon (Van der Mescht, 1996: 61).

Below are the dominant themes which express my participants' intended meanings of parental non-involvement. The themes represent the commonality amongst my participants as well as their uniqueness.

6.2 Dominant Themes - Parental non-involvement

6.2.1 Lack of finance

Jack says his inability to have “financial muscle” (**A3**) makes him uncomfortable to attend the school governing body meetings. This problem is not just peculiar to him and other members of the governing body, but applicable to all parents. As a result parents do not come to the meetings called by the school governing body (**A2**).

Sheila acknowledges that she does not have sufficient money because of the low salary she gets because of the state of the economy. As a result she cannot contribute to all the necessary payments due to the school. Though that is the case she maintains that if she and parents were prioritising (budgeting) like her parents did, then they will be able to provide for their children (**B4**).

Thoko cannot afford to pay all the moneys needed at school, especially when it is to buy sporting equipment (**C10**). Because of that she does not contribute the money needed although she pays school fees for her children. At meetings she feels embarrassed when the issue of money is discussed as she knows she is amongst those who do not pay contributions. In order to avoid this situation she is absent in subsequent meetings that have finance as an item on the agenda.

Mziyanda feels that teachers call on parents when they want money (**D20**) to run the school. So when the agenda has finance as an item to be discussed he does not attend that meeting. He does not want to discuss the issues he does not agree with.

6.2.2 Work commitments

Jack moves from the premise that parents and guardians are working. He is a traveller who is unavailable during the week for school governing matters as well as his household matters (**A1**). He says some parents are working shifts, or working strenuous extra hours

therefore they cannot participate in school governing activities, let alone bother to ask about requests and complaints from the school (A5), (A6). The work commitment overrides any commitment that parents have as it is a means of survival. For him to be able to provide the money for his children's bare necessities for school he has to work.

Sheila sees the changes in the economy as causing a general change in the family life (B21). In the old days one parent used to work and the other, usually the mother, was at home taking care of the children. In those days it was the mother who was able to attend the school activities because of the time at her disposal. Nowadays both parents are workers who work awkward hours, therefore it is highly impossible for them to be available for the school (B2).

Thoko says her work at a kids' day care centre and her household chores make it impossible for her to play her role successfully in the school governing body. She leaves home early in the morning and returns very late in the afternoon (C8). When she returns she has to prepare supper for her family. By the time she finishes she is tired and she retires in preparation of the new day.

Mziyanda states that he does not have time to attend to school activities as he is working at a factory from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m., alternating between day and night shifts. By the time he returns from work he is too tired to do anything (D1).

6.2.3 Illiteracy of parents

Jack says parents are divorced by the teachers from school because some parents are illiterate. He puts it in this manner:

... some parents and guardians have not gone beyond grades 4 or 5 (A8) ... not all parents are prepared to participate because of some problems like the level of education ... (A19).

Because the parents and guardians are illiterate some teachers have a tendency to think that they cannot come up with valid suggestions or solve the problems. The teachers themselves exacerbate the matter by speaking English in meetings. This alienates parents even more (A9), because some parents and guardians cannot express themselves in English, which results in a breakdown in communication (A10). He therefore feels that in such gatherings matters must be addressed at the level of everybody present (A19).

Sheila says some parents are illiterate and cannot express themselves in English (B25). These parents do not participate in the discussions at governing body and parent body meetings because of this deficiency. Eventually they feel alienated, develop an attitude of mistrust towards their colleagues and do not involve themselves. She feels that illiterates have a role to play as in the old days those who had skills in dramatic plays or gymnasium used to help teachers (B28).

Thoko sees herself as an illiterate because she did not go far at school. She feels that teachers undermine illiterate parents (C16). She says some teachers treat the illiterate parents as if they know nothing. She cites that the principal presides at the governing body meetings, although he is not supposed to in terms of the new legislation. She thinks that the principal does this, because he thinks the parents will not know that is wrong. The teachers seem to think they know the pupils better than the parents (C13). Because of this attitude shown by the teachers she does not feel comfortable to work with them.

Mziyanda expresses his illiteracy by saying he does not know what is taking place at school. His child does not give a precise answer when he asks him about school work. His son talks about Maths which is difficult for him (son) whilst he (Mziyanda) knows about Arithmetic (D5).

6.2.4 Broken family structure

Jack believes parental non-involvement is for some parents the result of the broken family structure. He says that the children are not staying with their biological parents

but with the extended family members (A4) because their parents are working elsewhere in the country. The guardians are reluctant to involve themselves, preferring to defer the school matters until the parents return (A7). The result is that the pupils become their own parents.

Sheila says that some of the parents are not staying with their children. The parents are living in the “Bhundus” (B19). It is difficult to get hold of and communicate with these parents, even if they become members of the governing body.

Mziyanda says the parents are staying at their houses in rural areas looking after their animals. He cannot see these parents travelling all the way to be told by these children and teachers what must be done (D3).

6.2.5 Lack of Ubuntu

Sheila feels that some teachers lack “Ubuntu”. The cold welcome parents experience at school proves this. She says the foundation of Ubuntu as taught at home is to warmly welcome the visitors at home. The school is the home of teachers, therefore they are supposed to practise this idea. This is evident when she says “... when parents come to school they do not feel the warm reception like “molo mzali or mama, unjani? Tyhini siphilile apha esikolweni (Hello, mother. How are you? We are well here at school) (B24). This absence of warmth drives parents away from the school.

Thoko feels that parents’ failure to do follow-up when they leave their children at school with teachers is an act of irresponsibility on the part of parents (C1). This irresponsibility results in the postponement of major decisions which is unfair to the management of the school. For her this contradicts “Ubuntu” as parents expect teachers to do more than they can without the support of the parents.

Mziyanda feels that parents are not warmly welcomed at school (D14). This shows clearly that “Ubuntu” as a culture is dead.

6.2.6 Politics

Jack feels democracy, which is the result of the change in politics, is misinterpreted by the parents. Parents do not attend school governing meetings but they question the decisions taken when they are absent (**A21**). He says the position of the governing body is similar to that of the government. They can therefore make and implement the decisions without consulting the parent body.

Sheila feels that freedom brought by Mandela seems to have brought bad things at school (**B22**). Parents as well as teachers cannot differentiate the good from the bad.

Mziyanda feels uncomfortable to discuss serious school matters with learners and teachers (assistants) (**D4**). He blames this state of affairs on politics which were changed by Mandela. He feels teachers as well as learners misuse democracy to serve their own purposes.

6.2.7 Diminishing value of education

Sheila feels the high value which was accorded to education has diminished with changing times. The eagerness to have educated children that was displayed by parents in the old days has evaporated (**B21**). She gives the example of a picture of a woman with the following words “ndingafundanga nje ndiyakubafundisa roqo abam abantwana” (illiterate as I am, I will educate my children) that used to be in a Xhosa reader for sub-standards but she says it has lost its meaning for most parents.

Thoko feels that some parents do not take the education of their children seriously (**C10**). They do not attach any value to it. The fact that they regard attendance at school governing body meetings and other activities as a waste of time is an indication of this (**C10**).

6.2.8 Social commitment

Mziyanda cannot attend school governing body meetings called during the weekends. He reserves this time for attendance to domestic matters, church guilds and traditional rituals in his community (**D2**). He sees the attendance of these as obligatory as he feels that tomorrow it might be him who needs the support of the members of his community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

General statement

7.1 Introduction

This is the final phase of the research process which, according to Stones (1988: 154), has two steps . In Chapter four the descriptions of parental non-involvement as perceived by each participant were presented; in Chapter five the descriptions were confined to a particular context of the individual participant. The descriptions therefore reflected on the fundamental basis of what constitutes parental non-involvement for each participant. They also show the uniqueness of parental non-involvement as experienced by the individual participant. Giorgi (1975: 88) in Van der Mescht explains these descriptions:

One is a description of what we call the situated level, which means one includes the concreteness and specifics of the actual research situation employed ...
(Van der Mescht, 1996: 98).

In this Chapter I attempt to communicate the meaning structure of parental non-involvement in general without the limitations imposed by the context or, in other words, not according to each of my participants. Giorgi (1975: 88) in Van der Mescht explains the general description:

... The general statement leaves out the particulars of a specific situation and centers on those aspects ... that have emerged which, while not necessarily universal are at least transsituational or more than specific (Van der Mescht, 1996: 98).

From the above quotation what comes out firstly is that a general statement is an overview of my participants' understanding of parental non-involvement. The general statement is useful for comparing the new and old findings on the phenomenon and identifying the flaws in existing theories (Van der Mescht, 1996: 100).

Secondly, to be able to give a general statement I have to synthesise the important themes emerging from the natural meaning units and communicate the synthesis to the world of critical opinion.

This is in line with the two steps mentioned by Stones (1988). The obvious question at this point was what criterion should be used in the determination of the general description. At this point commonality came to the fore and suggested itself as the likely criterion. But Van der Mescht cautions against commonality as a criterion when he says:

The researcher who homes in on commonality only has perhaps adopted too analytical an approach, in an attempt to get to the heart of the phenomena under investigation. But a researcher who remains open to the "greater variability" in a multiple case study - and therefore includes unique responses - is more interested in constructing a picture that reveals the multi-faceted richness of the phenomenon (Van der Mescht, 1996: 102-103).

7.2 General statement

At this stage I feel it is proper to caution that the general statement provided below does not necessarily profess universal validity for all traditionally Black schools. The extent of its universality is a question that needs to be pondered by the readers (Van der Mescht, 1996: 121).

7.2.1 How parents perceived parental non-involvement.

Lack of finance comes out strongly in my participants as a reason for their non-involvement. The limited contributions they make towards school activities make them uncomfortable to address other parents about the same issue. What makes matters worse for them is the fact that they are instrumental in formulating the financial policies which they cannot adhere to. To avoid embarrassment they see it as better not to be in the governing body, therefore they do not attend its activities.

For them to be able to contribute the least they can afford they have to work. Their work commitment seems largely to clash with their ability to be involved. Their work is important as it is a means of survival. The hours they work make it impossible for them to be fully involved. If they have to choose between the governing body and work it is obvious that they will choose work.

Unfortunately the shifts and hours they work leave them with weekends as the only time available to attend their social commitments. Attendance of the community traditional rituals is very important to them. The force behind this attendance is the cultural saying “umntu ngumntu ngabantu” (a person is a person through others) and “Ubuntu”. Therefore the fear that they might need someone tomorrow leads them to prepare in advance by attending community rituals and to the detriment of the education of their children.

The treatment the parents receive at school emphasises their illiteracy. Teachers make them feel their illiteracy by the manner they communicate with them. Some parents cannot express themselves in English, which is sometimes used by teachers. The only salvation for them is to be absent from meetings and to therefore not participate in the school governing body’s decisions.

The parents regard the treatment they get from teachers because they are illiterates as lack of “ubuntu”. The fact that they are coldly welcomed by teachers and taken to be unable to provide a solution to a problem drives them away from school.

For some parents, as much as they would like to be involved, the broken family structure of their families does not allow them to become involved. One parent, who is in the urban area, working awkward hours and shifts, finds it impossible to attend to the school matters of his/her children. He/she is overloaded with responsibilities.

Lastly the way politics, especially democracy, is intertwined with education makes parents feel uncomfortable. The stalling of decisions because of the absence of some

stakeholders results in them being accused of failing to deliver by teachers, parents and learners. Eventually they become unpopular with teachers as well as other parents.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion of findings

8.1 Introduction

The objective of this research was to describe and understand the parents' perceptions of their non-involvement at School X from their own view point as presented in Chapters four and five; and to address the shortcoming identified by Atkin, Bastiani & Goode (see 2.2). The research was grounded in the philosophical assumption that "the social reality is merely a product of the individual's mind" (Hoy & Miskel, 1987: 24). The methodology, phenomenology, was suitable for this type of research. The opportunity that I afforded the parents is best described by Griffiths in Van der Mescht when he said:

The freedom of the self to tell its own autobiography at any stage is an important part of its feeling of self-worth and authenticity (Van der Mescht, 1996: 130).

Parents wrote their autobiographies about their interaction with education and provided me with authentic feelings. According to the responses given in the interviews, parents' involvement varied from being partially involved to being non-involved. They described their reasons for their non-involvement. However, the reasons they gave cannot be looked at in isolation from other historical factors which they form a part of (mentioned in Chapter two).

In Chapter two I showed how the researchers adopted a one-sided approach when they investigated parents' interaction in education, which resulted in parental non-involvement not being fully explored. Parental non-involvement emerges in some studies (Perumal, 1995; Van Wyk, 1996). However, the voice of the parents, the people who experience parental non-involvement in their daily interaction with education, is unheard or unknown. I argued also that an investigation of parental non-involvement should be contextualised in the culture of non-participation which was encouraged by the

successive White governments in S.A. This culture of non-participation shows how Black people were discriminated against politically, socially, and economically (p. 21-25), and how the discrimination was broadened to education (p. 25-27). As parental non-involvement is not acceptable I touched on the benefits the school can enjoy when parents are involved in the governance of the school (p. 33-36) and the model of management that can be adopted by the school in order to accommodate parents (p. 37-39).

The research therefore is the result of a need to bring to the fore the unknown voice of parents, i.e. their perception of parental non-involvement as they experience it. The purpose is to fill the gap in the knowledge of parental non-involvement to a certain extent.

It is a known and undisputable fact that no two people experience the same event exactly the same way. Therefore the people bring their uniqueness and subjectivity when they re-live the experience. I chose phenomenology as the method to conduct this study because of its ability to accommodate uniqueness and subjectivity of the parents as well as other factors which are regarded as unquantifiable, however, still contributing to the knowledge the parents have about the phenomenon.

8.2 The findings – Parents talk

Generally the finding demonstrated the significant role played by the historical background of political, economic, social and educational non-participation in parental non-involvement. Parents described the reasons for parental non-involvement as follows:

- Lack of finance
- Work commitments
- Illiteracy of parents
- Broken family structure
- Lack of Ubuntu

- Politics – democracy
- Diminishing value of education
- Social commitment

8.2.1 Lack of finance

The lack of finance came out strongly from the parents as the major reason that inhibits their participation. What is surprising, though, is that all the parents are employed and either earn a salary or wages. From how they emphasised their lack of finance one would have thought that they were unemployed. Questioned on their lack of finance with regard to their employment status, in one way or another they referred to the low wages or salary they earn. Some of them have obtained Grade 12, which gives the impression that to a certain extent they have some education. The education they have would serve as the criterion for a good salary or wages. The question arises though; what is it that is common among these parents who have different levels of education?

The common factor among the parents is the low wage/salary they get. Low wages can be traced to the exploitation of Blacks by capitalists because of their level of education. Historically the education they received prepared them to be a source of cheap labour. Jabavu in Molteno explains the education received by Black people as “the education Blacks received ... consists of sweeping yards, repairing roads, cracking stones and so on” (Molteno, 1984: 67). This was planned by the government officials to be as explained by Jabavu. This is evident in the statement made by Le Roux, a government official, when he said “... we should conduct our schools so that the native who attends those schools will know that to a great extent he must be the labourer in the country” (Molteno, 1984: 6).

The kind of thinking permeated throughout the successive White governments' reign. Dr. Verwoerd, the then Minister of Bantu Affairs, articulated similar thinking when he made his famous speech on the 1953 Bantu Education Act. Black people were to be given this type of education without educative value so that they could serve the capitalist

economy which was emerging. Natrass explains the emergence of S.A. capitalist economy as follows:

In a free enterprise economy for a given level of labour productivity measured in terms of the average output per worker, the lower the share of that output that is paid to labour, the higher is the share remaining for profits after the other costs of production have been deducted. Any increases in wages rate, therefore have a very significant impact on profit earnings...(Natrass, 1981:67).

The government encouraged this exploitation by passing Acts like the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 & 1956, the Mine & Works Act of 1911, and the Bantu Labour Amendment Act of 1970, which extended job reservation (Lipton, 1985:24). The Acts reserved certain types of jobs for Whites at a higher wage rate, thereby creating a semi-skilled and unskilled labour force that could be employed at a lower wage rate. What is said by the parents depicts this history. Currently there is talk of narrowing the wage gap between Black and White workers which started when the industrialists saw how apartheid was stifling the growth of the S.A. economy.

8.2.2 Work commitments

Work commitment also came out strongly from parents. It prevents parental involvement in the school governance. The parents believed that the minimum they contributed towards school activities is the result of their work commitment. Work for them is a means of survival unlike the olden days when they depended on the land. As industries were developing means had to be created to bring people to work in the industries.

Natrass explains what happens in such situations:

The transition from a primitive economy ... to the capitalist economy, essentially involves the separation of the major portion of the population from their dependence on the land,...
(Natrass, 1981: 59).

What is said by Natrass depicts the situation in S.A. The government passed the 1913 & 1936 Land Acts which confined the Black people who contributed 70% of the population to 14% of the land. The land could not accommodate the influx of people and their animals which resulted in men leaving wives in rural areas and seeking work in the cities where development was taking place (Lipton, 1985). On arrival in the cities they met a host of laws like the Bantu Administration of 1925, which stipulated amongst others that Black people must not be in White areas after sunset and before sunrise, the Promotion of Self-Governing Act of 1959, the Border Industries Policy, the Planning & Physical Act of 1967, etc. The end result of these Acts was that Black people were to commute from their homelands to their places of employment which were and still are at a distance. For them to be early at work and to avoid the penalty of being late they have to leave their homes very early in the morning and return late in the evening. This is exactly what is still happening in S.A. today.

8.2.3 Broken family structure

The broken family structure which is experienced by the parents has its origins in and can be traced to the migrant labour system which came as a result of the discovery of precious metals and stones, i.e. gold and diamonds, and the Land Acts of 1913 & 1936. With the discovery of these metals and stones there was a rapid increase⁴ in the need for labour. Black men left their wives in the rural areas and went to the mines to work. The mine owners employed and housed them in the compounds that were not suitable to accommodate the workers and their families. According to Davenport (1987: 527) when the mine owners suggested the creation of Native villages to accommodate the workers and their families, the National Party government opposed the suggestion fearing the establishment of irremovable 'blackspots'.

The successive White governments encouraged the men to leave their wives behind through the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 which forced men to leave their rural areas and seek work in urban areas. They also could not bring their wives and children to urban areas as they were prevented by the Section Ten rights. The rights stated clearly the

conditions under which one could be in the urban areas. If you failed to meet those conditions and you were caught, you were sent to jail and thereafter repatriated to the homelands.

Eventually the families were content to be left in the rural areas rather than to be harassed in urban areas. The wives established themselves in rural areas by building their own homes and breeding their animals. The end result was a broken family structure with the father working in urban areas and only coming home during the holidays and on retirement. This culture of the broken family structure is still maintained and prevalent in Black communities nowadays. You will mostly find a man staying in the urban areas with the children, while the wife is left at home in rural areas. The children are staying with the father because sometimes the rural schools are Junior Secondary which do not offer grades eleven and twelve.

This situation forces the children to come and study in the urban areas. Sometimes both parents are in the rural areas because that is where they have established themselves and the children are staying alone in a shanty town. If a man is staying in the urban area it is either on weekends, or at the end of the month he travels to his home in the rural areas. The episode of Yizo-yizo, shown on Wednesday, 3 March 1999, on SABC at 20:30 depicted clearly the broken family structure and its effects on the community. Davenport summarises the effect of Section Ten rights as follows: “it managed to split the families apart” (Davenport, 1987: 527)

8.2.4 Lack of ubuntu

The apparent lack of “Ubuntu” shown by the teachers through the undermining of parents, the cold welcome given to parents and the buffer between teachers and parents show how education affected the Black people. Kallaway explains:

Within the colonial context schools became key institutions of control, whereby a new indigenous elite was created to replace the traditional groupings who represented a different cultural and political outlook

that was often hostile to culture and social practices ... (Kallaway, 1984: 9).

The education took away some elements of Black culture like “ubuntu” which were perceived by missionaries as pagan. This is evident in the report given by the Interdepartmental Committee of Native Education that says, “the problem is ... to devise a type of education which will tide the Black man over the period during which his tribal sanctions are weakening, and before he feels the force of the sanctions of European civilisation” (Molteno, 1984: 61). The lack of “ubuntu” seem to supports well the suspicion portrayed by chiefs when education was introduced. Dale, the Superintendent-General of Education in the Cape reported in 1891 the suspicion of the chiefs as follows:

Kaffirs see in the school the agency that weakens and then effaces all tribal bonds and customs. The levelling tendency of popular instruction is not consistent with their traditions, and the Chiefs specially watch the growth of schools with suspicion (Dale in Molteno, 1984: 50).

As mentioned by Thoko, the teachers tend to undermine the parents because they are more educated than some parents. Therefore the teachers sees themselves as having better knowledge of school matters. This situation is explained by Kallaway in the following manner:

... school negated the common sense of knowledge of the colonised by reinforcing the self-image of incompetence and ignorance for those who did not go to school or those who failed ... (Kallaway, 1984: 6).

This attitude violates what is seen as important in Black culture, namely Ubuntu. Ubuntu requires that as people we treat each other as equals in terms of humanness, irrespective of education, age, etc. If one is educated but does not have “ubuntu” one is regarded as a non-person in the Xhosa culture. This type of behaviour re-inforces the belief that the introduction of education swept away some elements of the Black culture as these elements were perceived by the missionaries as pagan ways.

8.2.5 Illiteracy of parents

The illiteracy of parents can be traced back to how Western education was introduced to the Blacks. Molteno (1984: 53) describes the situation best as, "Schooling in the 19th Century helped to undermine the unconquered, while incorporating the already conquered into the structure of settler society". How things were done in Black societies was declared pagan. This created a rift between the educators and the learners, as well as the parents. The parents and the chiefs were suspicious of this type of education. As a result they held their children at home. Because of this the growth of black schooling was slow. As Molteno stated, a missionary wrote a letter to the High Commissioner at the Cape, saying, "it is not as difficult to get the church filled with people, as it is to get children to school," (Molteno, 1984: 52).

This situation continued with successive White governments until the National Party government declared openly their views and intentions with Black education. This is evident in the famous speech of Dr Verwoerd on the 1953 Bantu Education Act. Bantu Education managed to instill amongst Blacks the idea of inferiority, which made them unable to perform certain jobs. As a result this mentality is still prevalent amongst Blacks. Some illiterate Black people see the educated as people who hold the monopoly of knowledge and truth. Whatever the educated person does is therefore perceived to be correct. A typical example is one of Thoko who knows that the principal is not supposed to chair the governing body meetings but she cannot correct that. Therefore it is no wonder that the parents feel inferior to the teachers. How the teachers treat parents seems to reinforce the traditional view that education is the exclusive domain of teachers (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994: 91). Gabela & Berger in Perumal attack this when they say :

Educators must realise that parents are involved in the education of their children from birth. The fact that educators in preschools receive pupils who have acquired a host of acceptable behaviour patterns from parents is indicative of the major role parents have played ensuring that children conform to the social norms (Perumal, 1995: 1).

8.2.6 Politics - Democracy

Democracy advocated in traditionally Black schools is not a concept that started in the seventies. It has been there from “the flight of the first slaves from their colonial masters in the early 17th century to the intense bitter student protests of the 1980’s” (Sayed & Carrim, 1997: 91). Democracy in traditionally Black schools has its roots in the political struggles waged by Black people. Black people demanded democratic participation in the governance of the country. This was broadened to the school arena when parents demanded democratic participation in the governance of their children’s schools. One is right to assume that Black parents and their community structures demanded democratic participation in the schools to legitimise their resistance to unjust educational policies. It is through this demand that the progressive movements claimed the right to make decisions about their children’s education (Van Wyk, 1996: 110).

During the successive White governments’ reigns, this demand by parents was granted whereby the parents were members of the school committees with limited powers. Parents, teachers and students, as well as the community structures, rejected these committees during the 1976 uprisings. The response of the government then was the passing of the Education and Training Act of 1979 which resulted in the establishment of the SMCs at schools, which were later rejected and replaced by the PTSA’s. It seems that the parents who participated in the SMCs did not fully understand what democratic participation meant. This is evident in what was said by Jack when he explained their democratic participation in Duncan Village in a study I conducted in 1997. He explained their participation as follows:

Our role was to see to it that teachers and students come on time to school. If a teacher was absent, we would ask what is happening with his/her class ... we used to tell teachers that the standards should be improved, grass be cut for the school to look nice (Ndlazi, 1997: 9).

Perumal makes a similar point, though differently:

... some parents involve themselves to the extent where internal

sovereignty of the school as an institution is threatened, while on the other hand, parents contribute very little towards positive involvement in education (Perumal, 1995: 8).

This problem is also acknowledged by the ANC education desk when it says:

Democratic participation in school governance must be distinguished from the responsibilities for the management and administration of the school which are vested in school principals (National Education Policy Framework, 1994: 24).

The ANC government provided the parents with a legislative framework in which to exercise their democratic participation. However, the problem as shown above seems to be consistent. It seems some parents are not fully vested with what democratic participation and principles entail. It came out from the study that some parents have a problem with how others exercise their democratic participation. It is obvious that everybody, i.e. parents, is entitled to democratic participation at school. However, it is not possible for all of them to actually participate because of their large numbers. Consequently parent representatives who know parents' views and are able to articulate these views from a more informed position than they can, are elected.

The representatives are accountable to parents. Therefore the representatives have the right to make decisions on behalf of the parents and report to them later. The problem that frustrates Jack is that some parents think that for a decision to be democratic it has to be made in the parents' meeting only. If they as the school governing body have made a decision that decision is questioned and regarded as undemocratic by the parents, because it was made by a few.

According to Calebrese (1994: 9) true democracy promotes discourse and debate in a civil environment. Unfortunately this view of democracy is not reflected in S.A. society, where there is an intolerance shown for people whose opinions are different. The apparent lack of tolerance, as shown by Mziyanda, is a cause for concern. Mziyanda does not like teachers, whom he regards as "abantwana" (children), to have opposing views from him. He quickly labels them as disrespectful. This lack of tolerance is generally common in the South African democracy. During my student days one was

easily labelled “a re-actionary” if one had opposing views. Recently, in 1997, General Bantu Holomisa and Mr Roelf Meyer were supposed to give speeches at different tertiary institutions about their party, the United Democratic Movement (UDM).

Unfortunately they could not deliver the speeches as some Black students at those institutions were intolerant of their presence on the campuses. They disrupted the meetings in which the speeches were to be delivered. (The fact that I mention the UDM does not necessarily mean that I am a member or support what it stands for, but I am trying to illustrate the lack of tolerance prevailing in Black communities).

All this reflects that, although Black people fought for democracy, how it is practised is apparently an area which is not fully known by its participants. My feeling is that this intolerance might have its roots in the freedom struggle. During the struggle there was one common enemy, and if you did not agree you were perceived as probably working for the enemy. Though I have said this I appreciate the role Black parents have played and the effort they took to create a future better learning in S.A.

8.2.7 Social commitment

It is clear from my participants that the leisure time they have is limited during the week and this makes it impossible to attend social activities as well as the school activities. As a result this necessitates them to attend to community rituals, like church guilds, weddings, burials, circumcision, etc., during the weekend. They attend these activities because they have been socialised in a culture of “Ubuntu”. “Ubuntu” is underlined by the idea that ‘umntu ngumntu ngabantu’ (you are a person because of others) and tomorrow you may need people to support you when you have an activity. This idea is so embedded that when one does not attend these rituals one feels guilty, because it is almost an obligation. Because this culture is still practised today, parents do not attend parents’ or governing body meetings when held during the weekends.

CHAPTER NINE

Implications of parental non-involvement and conclusion

9.1 Introduction

Chapters four and five dealt with parents' autobiographies regarding their interaction in education. I will examine the implications of their autobiographies in this Chapter; i.e. what is likely to happen when the parents do not participate in the governance of the school or do not help with its activities. The purpose, therefore, is to determine what needs to be done by the school and class managers about the problems experienced by parents that result from their non-involvement. Should the school's management leave parents as they are? The answer to the question is no. Atkin, Bastiani & Goode worked with parents and they said:

... working with parents at different tasks and in different settings, confirmed our belief that there were many things that parents knew and were good at, that were of critical importance in the education of their children (Atkin, Bastiani & Goode, 1988: 15).

The above quotation re-inforces my belief that real partnership can be established at school level. Therefore it is a challenge for us as professionals to change from thinking that we know best and impose ourselves on parents. How we deal with parents has been institutionalised in most schools adhering to the traditional view that education is the domain of teachers only. This kind of attitude by teachers inhibits parental involvement in the governance of the school. This therefore requires the teachers to devise means and strategies suitable to their school environment to encourage parents to be involved within the policy framework provided by the government. Let us not forget that education is a three-way process which is explained as follows by an article in *Pace* magazine (1996: 05/124):

Education is a three-way process that consists of the child, the school and the parent. The more you take part in your child's

education the better his or her chances are of doing well.

The above quotation states categorically what happens to the child when his/her parents become involved in his/her education. The child is not the only one who benefits from parental involvement, but the teachers benefit, too. According to Van Schalkwyk, cited in Kruger (1996: 34), parental involvement has the following advantages:

- it can engender a more positive spirit between parent and teacher
- it can work to restore trust between the parental home and the teacher
- it means that teachers can rely on parents' support
- knowledge of the pupils' home circumstances can help the teacher in his/her instructional task
- it can work to improve the conduct of pupils
- it can lighten teachers' workload

The quotation implies also that the parents and teachers must be in partnership for the success of the study. From the study, it is clear that at the school there is a limited partnership between parents and teachers. The situation cannot be left as it is because that will constitute a violation of the SASA and democratic participation advocated in it.

9.2 Implications of parental non-involvement

Van Schalkwyk clearly shows the implications of parental involvement for school and class managers. To this list I add the implications of parental non-involvement for the management of the school. From the study, the parents identified the implications of their non-involvement in the governance of the school. Firstly the parents identified the communication breakdown (A10, A20, B9, B18, C9) between the school and the home. As a result the parents and the teachers tend not to know what the other thinks, expects

and wants to achieve with the education of the child and the parents become biased or prejudiced to teachers when there is a problem (C6).

Consequently a conflict of interest may occur which may lead to conflict between the two parties which has a potential of destroying the partnership. Postma (1990:165) in Kruger justifies the importance of communication between parents and educators as follows:

It is very important to have effective communication between the school and the parental home if there is to be any real partnership between parents and teachers. Successful communication is an important part of any parent involvement (Kruger, 1996: 44).

When the communication breakdown occurs the school ceases to be an extension of the home (B23), which in turn makes it difficult for the school to cater for the community which it serves. Without the input of the community that comes through parents' involvement and other community members co-opted, the school cannot successfully achieve its task of perpetuating the values of its larger community and thus ensuring ongoing interaction between the school and the community as envisaged by Gorton (1980). In such situations the community does not regard the school as its property which needs to be protected from burglary and vandalism. Msweli (1989: 4), attacks this position when he says "we need the kind of education desired by the community". Badenhorst & Scheepers (1995: 113) say "the school should prepare children for meaningful careers as economically productive, politically and culturally aware adults, enabling them to support themselves and be of value to the community". However, without the input of parents and the community the learners will not be sufficiently equipped to contribute to the development of these communities. Maxwell & Thomas (1991) believes that to obtain the community's input parents must be involved as their involvement has the potential to improve communication between the school and the external community.

Secondly the parents identified the lack of discipline at the school (B13, C3, C12, D9, D16). At the school the management's authority will be undermined by the educators

and the learners. It is a known fact that in some traditional Black schools discipline in the form of regular attendance to classrooms, punctual arrival at school, and respect for teachers by learners, deteriorated during the struggle years. This was due to the resistance to the structures of educational authority perceived to be oppressive (Morrow, 1989: 56). Unfortunately in some schools this lack of discipline is still prevalent. The lack of discipline is encouraged also by the absence of disciplinary measures that are supposed to be implemented when such behaviour occurs. Both the teachers and the learners know that the management cannot decide and implement the disciplinary measures when they have not been discussed and agreed upon by all stakeholders at school. The parents and the teachers are able to revive the structures of authority which are acceptable to all stakeholder through having a partnership.

At the school the relationship between the parents and the teachers is not healthy - parents are undermined; there is a buffer between parents and teachers in meetings - reflects a relationship of hostility which is not good for democracy. The hostile relationship that exists between the teachers and the parents ushers in the third point identified by the parents, namely that of commitment to the school, (**A23, B10**). The relationship destroys parents' commitment to the school. Calebrese (1994: 8), citing J.F. Kennedy, says the commitment forces each member of the school community to ask what they can do for the school instead of what the school can do for them. The parents and the teachers working together in a partnership are supposed to trust each other. This view is shared also by Van Schalkwyk (see par. 2.8.1)

Fourthly, the parents identified that when they are called to meetings they are not provided with the agenda about the issues that are to be discussed and the notice of a meeting within a short time (**C22**). Because the parents do not know what is to be discussed they do not see the importance of attending the meetings. This is a reflection of poor administrative skills on the part of management as they are the people who normally send out notices of the meetings on behalf on the school governing body. Management must strive to send out the agenda together with the notice of the meetings well in advance. This will obviously curtail the meeting time that is normally taken.

This process also allows the parents to put in their items for the meeting and the members to re-schedule their plans so they are able to attend.

Fifthly, one parent identified that the decisions are not taken timeously because the governing body sometimes fails to meet the quorum. The failure to meet the quorum makes them to be unable to discuss and take decisions. As a result the management of the school has to wait for quite sometime before he is able to implement decisions; consequently the management becomes ineffective.

The SASA states that all stakeholders inclusive of parents must be involved in the governance of the school. In other words it advocates a partnership between parents and teachers and joint decision-making about the school policies, mission statement, rules and regulations of the school, programmes, etc. According to Morrow (1989: 118) “the general principle which lies at the root of democracy, is that those affected by decisions have a right to participate in making those decisions”. However, at the school the parents who are members of the school governing body have limited participation in the governance of the school. This is a violation of the SASA. Eventually the limited participation of the parents results in parents not owning the decision made hence they see the decisions as undemocratic.

Parents, teachers and students have to work together and form a partnership. The model which accommodates and is suitable for this situation is the democratic model of management advocated by Bush (see par. 2.9). The idea of involving parents is shared also by Dekker & Lemmer (1993) (see par. 2.9). Some of the features of the democratic model advocated by Bush can be found in the school governing body. The body is normally small, and all the members or the majority of the group have a common set of values, for example, they value democracy. However, not all of them have authority or expertise when it comes to dealing with matters concerning the school. It has come out from parents that some of them are illiterates (A18, A19, B25, B28, C13, C16, D5). Unfortunately the teachers seem to have used the illiteracy of the parents negatively which resulted in parents not availing themselves for meetings.

The results of their absence is that policy decisions and other matters mentioned in the preceding paragraph are postponed and discussed later. As a result the management experiences problems in their daily running of the school. The school governing body is also accused of failure to deliver by their constituency.

The role of management, therefore, is to attract parents back to the school by going out of their way and being available to parents. They can only achieve this if they go to the parents' level, i.e. they conduct their meetings in Xhosa so that all stakeholders can have an input in the decisions that are made. To have the input of all stakeholders in decision-making will result in collective owning of the decisions. The use of Xhosa will also encourage the parents to engage in discussions before the decisions can be made. This will be in line with democratic participation as explained by Morrow (1985: 346) where democratic participation is about trying to reach an agreement by discussion. According to Wringe (1984: 76) the parents may not be experts in educational matters, but the experience of participating itself may be educative and discussion with those who are experts is likely to enhance rather than diminish such understanding they have. Management also has to encourage parents by empowering them with the necessary skills so that their participation is made meaningful. What I have in mind is workshops where the Schools' Act can be thoroughly workshopped.

Management also needs to engage in the process of changing the mind set of their various stakeholders in order to accept parents. The teachers must acknowledge "the knowledge, experience and skills which not only compliment that of professionals, but is valuable in its own right" (Bastiani, 1987: 187).

To conclude this section I present what the management of the school can possibly do concerning parental non-involvement. The management has:

- To step back into the role of educators – educate both parents and learners
- To support the parents so that they can gain confidence in democratic participation.
- To work to establish a partnership between all stakeholders

- To encourage parents to become involved by various means

9.3 Conclusion

It is clear that parental non-involvement does exist in School X at Duncan Village in whatever form it takes. It is unacceptable and needs to be discouraged. What is of concern though is the presence of specific factors that contribute to the status quo. In as much as the government has provided the legislative framework for parental involvement, which is commendable, it has done little so far to eradicate those factors that contribute highly to the non-involvement. For example, in Duncan Village the government has embarked on housing, but the houses are still those one-bedroomed houses which cannot accommodate a family and which the community did not want. Parents leave and return home at awkward hours and get low wages although there is talk of narrowing the gap. As long as these factors are not addressed parental non-involvement is going to stay with us. In as much as the points raised above are out of the jurisdiction of the school, the school can facilitate the return of parents to school. The first step will be to move towards the democratic model of management. The reason for this is best described by Bastiani in the following manner:

When professionals and parents share some of the same goals and work together in an active partnership, things can really begin to happen! (Bastiani, 1987: 187).

The advantage of this model is that every stakeholder is represented and has a say in the manner the school is governed.

9.4 Limitations of this study

I cannot claim to have identified all issues associated with parental non-involvement at traditionally Black schools as parents' viewpoints are diverse and wide-ranging. On the contrary, I became aware of the complexity of parental non-involvement as seen through the eyes and minds of my participants. To a certain extent I think a gap in the knowledge about parental non-involvement has been filled. The study is not generalisable as the

sample comprised a small number of participants who were the key informants; and the method, i.e. phenomenology, that I applied does not encourage generalisation. With the few participants I was able to get a holistic view of the phenomenon through in-depth interviews. Like Van der Mescht (1996: 188) I was able to gain access to the mental, emotional and psychic operations of each participant. Phenomenology challenges the assumptions about the definition of reality. It concedes that reality is only construed by the individual who experiences it. Eventually that reality will be subjective and unique to the individual. Like Van der Mescht (1996: 190) I acknowledge this fact as a limitation not a weakness. However, because the individual experiences are diverse and relevant, uniqueness and subjectiveness can also be a strength (Guerero, 1995:8).

I have been involved in education as a teacher, holding different designations, for more than a decade. Throughout this time I gained some knowledge about the phenomenon I investigated. However, the technique of bracketing constantly reminded me to put aside what I know and experience it afresh directly from the horse's mouth. Although this was a strenuous situation it helped me to contain my biases about parental non-involvement to a certain extent.

9.5 Recommendations

In this study it came out that parents need to be taught democracy. This is evident when the democratically made decision by the school governing body is declared undemocratic because it was not discussed with the parent body. Oyugi cited in Nguru makes a similar point:

Democratic behaviour is not a genetically conditioned, inborn or inherited faculty – it is acquired. The practice of democracy must therefore be taught to its practitioners (Nguru, 1995: 59-62)

- To conform with Oyugi I would advise the school to engage the members of the governing body in a series of workshops which will focus on democracy and democratic

principles. I know there will be problems associated with time constraints and parents' commitments but for the sake of democracy and the smooth running of the school a way must be found. As the lack of finance came out strongly I would advise them to get in touch with non-governmental organisations that will teach them fund-raising skills so that they are able to pay for, for example, electricity, books, or maintenance of the school in general.

I am not mistaken when I advise the school to embark on this. It is not the sole responsibility of the government to train parents. The government, in the SASA, had thought that it would be able to finance the training sessions for the members of the governing body (The Schools' Act made easy, April-May 1997: 5). The current financial situation of our province, i.e. the Eastern Cape, is such that it is clear that they will not be able to afford this training.

In preparation for the future the schools as agents of socialization (Haralambos & Meade, 1985: 4) have a responsibility and obligation to ensure that democracy, its values and principles, as well as how it is practised, are passed on from generation to generation. Schools by their very nature have the capability to reach and influence a greater part of the community, the capacity to practise democracy because they have different groups of students and teachers with different abilities, interests and ideas. The schools can therefore make an effort to bring the different stakeholders together in discussing/debating matters pertaining to schools.

In such a situation it will be proper for teachers to role model some democratic values. For example, the teachers can role model respect of human dignity and a tolerance of differing view points. They can do this by stopping labeling and calling the learners by incorrect names, e.g. trouble makers, attention seekers; and those who have opposing views as seekers of fame. The teachers must rather use their correct names and listen to opposing views politely. The effect has the potential of being reciprocal. The situations portrayed by Mziyanda, who labels the teachers and the learners as disrespectful because of their opposing view points, will be curtailed to a certain extent.

9.6 Implications for further research

From the study it is clear that the parents need to be educated about democracy, democratic participation and its values and principles. Further research should try to address the “how” and “what” of this education process. It should also seek ways in which educationalists and policy-makers can increase parental involvement in school governance by advocating democratic principles. A starting point may be to research parents’ knowledge of democracy and democratic participation in school governance.

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APPENDIX -NATURAL MEANING UNITS

A: JACK - Meaning units

A1: *It is the financial problem, socio-economic problem and in some instances its because the parents have been divorced by the teachers because of their level of illiteracy.*

He says parental non-involvement exists because of financial, socio-economic problems also as divorce of parents from education because of illiteracy

A2: *Some parents know that they don't contribute too much to their children's education, so they feel that they are not the right people to go and attend the meetings when they are summoned to go, nor to take part either in the running of the programs for the school's basic needs of the schools things like fundraising projects.*

Parents know they do not contribute and therefore do not regard themselves as the right people to attend meetings.

A3: *They don't have the financial muscle, so they feel they will be embarrassed, because other parents can see for themselves that these are the people who can't cope. Therefore they decide not to attend any school activities.*

Parents do not have financial muscle and they are embarrassed when other parents get to know it.

A4: *The parents may not attend because the parents who are in Duncan Village are not the so-called biological parents.*

The biological parents do not stay at Duncan Village

The biological parents are not there.

A5: The people who are left behind are either grandmothers or grandfathers or aunts or uncles. Those people have their own responsibilities or they are working and working extra hours. They are working very hard. Some are working shifts, so there is no opportunity to get involved fully and participate in the school's activities.

A:6 They are working shifts and are tired coming from work, or they are working extra strenuous hours so by the time they come home they don't have the opportunity to even look at the books nor to listen to complaints, or to the request which are being made by the schools.

A7: Because they are not biological parents they would rather say "your parents are not here. You must study until she/he comes home to attend to these matters".

A:8 Another aspect may be the level of literacy. Grandmothers, uncles and the brothers may have left the school after they have just completed standard two or

The children are staying with extended family members.

These people are working long hours or shifts and have no opportunity to get involved in school activities

These people come home from work tired and have no opportunity to look at the books or listen to complaints or requests by the school

They would rather put matters concerning the children on hold until the parents come, than involve themselves

The extended family members are not concerned about educational things because of their level of illiteracy.

three, have no concern for the educational things.

A9: Because they are illiterate, they won't be able to express themselves in those meetings. The teachers or the people who are participating in these meetings will maybe express themselves in English

A:10 There might be an element of communication breakdown and because of that the learners when they go back home they've got nobody to report

A11: The result is cheating, low morale of learning and a low morale in attending the school.

A12: Teachers are expecting the feedback to come from home. When the learners come back and report they would either make an excuse or those who are honest enough will explain what is happening at home

A13: The teachers say in this instance they can't help it if learners have no parents or if your parents can't look after your books at home or they can't

Illiteracy results in the inability of parents to express themselves in English which is used in meetings. They therefore do not attend meetings.

Communication breaks down because of the non-attendance to school matters.

The results of the communication breakdown are cheating, low moral of learning and low school attendance.

Teachers expect feedback from home, which they do not get.

Teachers say that they cannot help it if you have no parents.

help you at school. They don't have time for that

A14: I don't think the blame can be put upon the head of that school because this boils down to many various problems which may lead to failure.

A15: Some reasons can be, for example, that the learners didn't attend their classes or there was not enough material at school or because of the disturbance at school which they do not hesitate to take as long it takes them out of class.

A16: The department fails to deliver the stationery in good time. It is not clear whether the stationery will be for a certain standard or for the whole school so there was a problem As a result the learners went toyi-toying to Bisho.

A17: There are many problems at this time that may cause the high failure rate, not only that the teachers have their own personal problems too.

A18: The morale of teachers is down. Unless the department tries to address the personal part of the problems, as

He does not think the low failure rate can be blamed on principals as there are other contributing problems

He cites the examples that can contribute to failure rate in relation to learners as learners do not attend to their tuition, not enough material or disturbances

He cites the failure of the Department of Education to deliver books in good time, or to be explicit about the classes that will not be provided with books and stationery

He cites problems related to failure rate as relating to the teachers' personal problems

He says teachers have low morale

well as the professional the morale will stay low.

A19: Not all the parents are prepared to participate because of some problems like the level of illiteracy. When meetings of that nature are held, issues must be addressed at everybody's level.

A20: It does affect the management of the school because it results in communication breakdown. If there is communication breakdown problem it means there would be a management problem. The school won't run smoothly.

A21: Decisions that are to be taken and implemented are not. Parents themselves question those decision taken without their knowledge, although they know they do not attend the school when asked to attend.

A22: There a lot of mechanism in which the Model C schools are trying by all means to involve the parents of the learners by writting and keeping them informed in all times about whats happening in schools of which in black.

Parents are not all prepared to participate, because of illiteracy

The effect of parental non involvement on the management of the school is communication breakdown

Decisions are taken. Parents question decisions taken without their knowledge although they did not attend the meetings.

Model C schools use many mechanisms to involve parents like writing and keeping parents informed.

schools there are no communication channels

A23: If there is going to be a meeting, that meeting will be convened by telling the learners that they must tell their parents. There is nothing committing the parents to come by either signing or something else.

A24: There are many mechanisms which can be applied, but if these mechanisms are applied when the morale of the teachers is very low, it will all be in vain. It starts with the teachers. If at school the teachers are all pulling together, they must know when there is going to be a meeting and know the real issues that are going to be addressed.

A25: They also acknowledge the presence of the parents so that the parents don't feel scared. They feel they are cared for by the teachers when they attend the meetings. The teachers isolate themselves by sitting somewhere in the corner.

Nothing is committing parents to come to school meetings at this school

Many mechanisms can be applied. But if the teachers morale is low, the mechanisms will not work.

He says that teachers should pull together, like being aware of meetings and agendas.

Teachers in meetings acknowledge parents to relax them so that they do not feel scared, but cared for.

Teachers isolate themselves in meetings and sit away from parents

A26: There must be that caring or that time which is devoted to parents so that the teachers are able to call in the parents to come to school whenever there's a problem concerning his or her child

Teachers must be caring and devote time to parents so that they can come to school whenever there is a problem

A27: The teachers in black schools seldom notice the underlying problem. They always think they can solve it on their own. After a while they start to see it is getting out of hand and contact the parents.

Teachers seldom notice the real problem.

They think they can solve it on their own and contact parents when it is out of hand.

A28: As far as I'm concerned the only way which can prevent the problem from spilling over to the rest of the school is to try and diagnose the source where it is coming from and to try by all means not to look for its symptoms, but to look for the problem. Thereafter they must try to keep the two parties together to solve the problem and to negotiate in a spirit of reconciliation

Diagnosis of the source of the problem is important. Do not look for the symptoms of the problem.

A:29 There is no quick fix solution in improving the situation as these things result from the culture of non-learning, the culture of pass one pass all, the

There is no quick fix solution as the problem stems from the culture of non-learning.

culture where there is a lack of materials and the culture where there are inexperienced or underqualified teachers. There are long-term and short-term programs which can be implemented in order to try to improve the situation.

Long and short term programmes can be implemented to improve the situation.

B: SHIELA - Meaning Units

B1: It is very difficult problem. It creates big problems because the parents are really not involved. If you call the parents to school in connection with his or her child, the parent will never come, unless you've told the child that you are expelled from school. Only then the parent will come.

It is a problem. Parents are not involved. Parents only come to school when their child is expelled.

B2: We know very well that education begins at home that is the informal part of the education - for the child to know what is wrong and what is right. For the formal part the child will be sent to school to teachers. Then the mother or whoever is responsible for the child, is expected to work with that teachers but, in our schools, there is no such thing because the parents wake up very early Morning to go to work and they come back late.

I know that education starts at home and the child is then send to school. Teachers and parents are expected to work together but that does not happen because parents wake up early in the morning and go to work. They come back late.

B3: These things back-fire because the child won't show any progress at school. Even the way they wear a uniform shows that the parent is not there when the child is preparing to going to school.

Things back-fire because the child won't show progress at school. The absence of parents is shown by the way children dress for school.

B4: There would be an excuse of saying my parents are not working they don't have money to buy a uniform, or I come from a poor family. It not a new story. We come from these families, we do not come from wealthy families

It is an excuse to say parents are not working.
working.

B5: The parents don't talk to their children. Ever since it was said that we were oppressed by white people. We were then, but now we are oppressing ourselves. For that matter, the children who are coming after us will go back to the oppression

Parents do not talk with their children.

B6: The parents today are not involved. As a result they can't even advise their children that it is not a good thing to not be punished at school.

Parents are not involved. As a result they do not advise their children about the good things.

B7: You know these things are very funny, like they always compare themselves to the white schools in town. They are not beaten, there are harsh measures which are taken when the child has done something wrong - that child won't be beaten, but harsh measures will be taken which in our community will never be accepted. So now we don't know

Our children like to compare themselves to white schools. But in those schools harsh actions are taken when a child has done something wrong.

whether we are going to have leaders in the future.

B8: There won't be any progress because, today's parents in our schools don't bother asking a child about his/her school work, saying, "What were you doing at school? Can you please show me what you were doing at school? Have you done your homework? What happened today at school?"

B9: There is no communication between the parent and the teachers. There is nothing. The link is the child only, the child who doesn't bring any messages from the parent to the teacher.

B10: The parents don't even bother themselves about whether there is a principal or not. They are not asking, even if you call a meeting to convince them to cry to the government so that we can make a more noise asking the government to at least help us to have a principal. The parents they don't respond, so we don't know what is going on.

Today's parents do not ask their children about school work.

There is no link between the parent and teachers. The link, which is the child, does not bring messages from the parent to the teacher.

Parents do not bother about whether the school has a principal or not. They do not respond when you ask them to help teachers to make ask the government for a principal

B11: The failure rate, for instance, it is becoming high, especially with the standard tens, because they don't attend classes properly. At times they are absent from school. If parents were involved that find out the parent will come saying teachers I've brought this child to you can you please punish him or her would not happen. Parents don't involve themselves in the school governing so that the only problems that the results will be bad.

B12: I'm still blaming the parents, because as a parent you've got to mould your child. Even with my children I don't depend on teachers at school. In our schools you'll find out the parents will come saying "teachers, I've brought this child to you. Can you please punish him/her"?

B13: If the parents were involved the children would know what to do and not to do, especially the dagga part at school, because they come into the classroom under the influence of dagga and they also smoke in the school toilets.

The failure rate is high because std 10's do not come to school regularly. If parents were involved, that would not happen.

Parents do not want to involve themselves in the governance of the school.

* She blames parents because parents mould children. She does not depend on the teacher to mould her child.

Parents bring their children to be punished by teachers.

If parents were involved children would know what to do or not do.

Children come into classroom under the influence of dagga.

B14: They don't read at home and the parents don't encourage them to read. If your parent is encouraging you to read you would definitely read.

Children do not read at home and parents do not encourage them to.

B15: They've got to be taught a sense of responsibility. It should be put in their minds that they must be responsible for themselves. They can't wait for a teacher or a parent to tell them what to do in standard ten. You can try to force them but if they don't want learn, they won't.

Children must be taught responsibility and not wait for the teacher to tell them what to do.

B16: The way our schools are governed is different from the town schools. There's nothing interesting in our schools. For example, the environment at the school is not interesting. If you come to my school you will see that this environment is not conducive to learning, the classrooms are leaking, and cold in some classes you cannot open the windows when its hot. They are fixed you can't open them and if it's cold there is no ceiling and there is cement on the floor. It is a horrible place for learning.

* Local schools are governed differently from town schools (model C school).

The environment is not interesting.

The environment is not conducive to learning.

17

It is unfair to blame the Principal for the failure of students.

The government is also responsible because it does not send enough books.

1

Some parents do not receive messages from school.

1

Some parents are staying in the "Bhundus" and not with their children.

Some children are looking after themselves in shacks.

Children attend school meetings themselves.

B20: Some of the parents are not educated, but our parents were not educated and they used to go to the meetings. There is a difference between the parents of today and the parents of the old days

Some parent are not educated.

Parents of today are different from the ones of the old days.

B21: The times are changing, because long ago the parents, especially the mothers, used to be at home and the father used to go to work. They were keen to produce educated children or professional children.

Times are changing. Mothers used to be at home.

Parents were keen to produce educated or professional children.

B22: In the old days our parents really worked but our parents were feeling the pain of not being educated unlike the parents of today. You see we have freedom which is good. We are free, but it seems as if this freedom hasn't come alone, it has come with everything which is wrong and the people cannot differentiate one from one another.

Parents used to feel the pain of being uneducated.

Freedom has come with wrong things.

B23: There is no relationship between the school and the home because the parent and the teacher, are standing far apart. They don't come together or talk together about the child at school – the

There is no relationship between the home and the school because parent and teacher are apart. There is no communication between them.

learner- so there is no communication at all.

B24: When parents come to school they don't receive a warm reception like "molo mzali, molo mama, unjani?, tyhini siphilile nathi apha esikolweni". They don't say that in a human way, so that is a contributing factor, because you'll find the parents are scared to come to school because teachers think they are better than other people

B25: It drives the parents away. Even in the meetings we always speak English, because we have foreigners. At times I wish there weren't any foreigners in our school so that we can express ourselves properly because some of the teachers cannot express themselves

B26: A child is not complete child without a parent because you always confirm to the parent whatever you are saying to the child because you are always waiting for the response of the parent

Parents are not warmly welcomed at school.

Parents are scared to come to school because teachers think they are better than parents.

In meeting teachers speak English because there are foreigners at school.

I wish we did not have foreigners so that we can express ourselves properly.

A child is not complete without a parent.

B27: Teachers should be taken to school again for in-service training to be taught how to talk to parents, how to attract the parents' attention to come to the school, because teachers have got to attract the parents' attention to the school so that they can be interested.

Teachers need in-service training to be taught how to speak with parents

B28: Our parents used to attend school activities but now there is no drilling and no sketches. We call it physical training but now there is nothing interesting for us by our children.

Parents used to attend certain school activities.

B29: Parents used to be good supporters of schools. When you are practising at your school people in the neighbourhood will always be interested to come and see what you are doing. They'll always come and cheer you on. There are those parents who used to play sport in their days. They will come and give you advice on how to do it.

Parents used to be good supporters of schools.

B30: There's no co-operation between teachers there won't be any co-operation from children and then its a chain going straight to us, so we need to sit down and talk to teachers to enable them to understand.

There is no co-operation between teachers and there won't be any from children.

C: THOKO - Meaning Units

C1: We as parents do not follow up when we have sent our children to school. We just leave them with teachers as if we have dumped them like dirt.

Parents do not follow up when they send their children to school.

C2: We as parents we send our children one by one to school and you think you have sent your child to be taught and disciplined.

Parents send children to school individually to be taught and disciplined

C3: But that is a mistake. When you have sent a child to school, follow in the foot steps of your child. Watch, talk with teachers. Discipline starts at home and is transferred to the school. As parents we have to make sure that discipline takes place. It should not stop at school. It is my duty to go and meet teachers and see what they are not satisfied with in my child.

It is a mistake to send a child to school and not make a follow up.

C4: There must be a relationship between me and teachers. I must be able to visit teachers in connection with my child. If that is not done it causes a problem.

Discipline begins at home and is transferred to the school. Parents must make sure that it happens.

She must have a relationship with teachers. If that is not done it causes problems.

C5: How can I go to meetings and discuss school matters when I do not even know the teachers of my child and teachers do not know me that I am a parent of that school.

She cannot go to meetings without getting to know teachers first.

C6: It causes a problem because what I am told by my child is correct for me, although I do not know the teacher's side. For example, if my child says teacher X does not teach, therefore she must go, I will agree with my child, though that is wrong

Non-attendance causes the problem of bias to teachers

C7: When my children were still in primary school I used to visit the schools and sit with teachers and enquire about my children. I have not done that now that they are in high school.

She used to visit her children's teachers. But now that they are in High School she has not as yet visited.

C8: I am working. I leave home at 7 a.m. to go to work, and return at about 6 p.m. I have to wait for all the children to be fetched before I can leave the pre-school.

She says it is because of work that she has not visited

C9: I am not informed sometimes when meetings are to take place. I do not know whether the fault is with my child or the school.

Sometimes she does not know about school meetings. She is not sure who to blame for this.

C10: I think as parents at times we do not take the education of our children seriously. My child will tell me about a meeting and I will tell him that he is the one who is learning not I. Therefore I cannot attend that particular meeting and not prepare his father's supper. Some parents see attendance of the school meetings as a waste my time sitting in those chairs, listening to the teachers who only demand money from us

C11: Teachers need money from us to buy yearly kits for netball, rugby etc. What did they do with the ones bought last year? I have never heard of them making a sale of those that they do not need.

C12: Yes I am aware that this non-attendance of meetings causes a rift between teachers and my child, because my child will do as he pleases, because he knows that as his mother I will not go to the school to know what he has done to the teacher, because I am not a student.

She thinks parents do not take the education of their children seriously.

Sometimes she would tell her children that she is not going to attend the meetings because she is not studying.

Some parents see meetings as waste of time. Teachers only want money from parents.

Teachers annually buy the same things with their money.

She is aware of the results of her non-attendance of the activities of the school.

Her child will be unruly and she will not know about it.

C13: The link between the home and the school is important, because it is I who sent my child to the teacher because I know that the teachers has a big role to play in widening my child's perception of the world. At all times therefore it is important for me and the teacher to have strong ties and know each other. The teacher must respect me even though I did not go to school

The link between the home and school is important.

C14: It is not good to elect people who when there is a problem tell us that they are busy, because that will end up in a battle. It will cause disruption at the school, which in turn will lead to our children not getting an education.

It is important for the parent and the teacher to have strong ties

C15: Yes we must care as parents and meet teachers to be able to rectify any wrongs in the school. Also teachers must respect us even if we are illiterate.

It is wrong for those parents who are in the governing structure not to avail themselves at times of crisis

C16: These teachers "ziasiklasa" (undermines) because we are illiterates. Even if the teachers has a BA degree it is his/hers but I am a parent

Meetings with teachers are crucial and parents must be respected by teachers.

Teachers undermines them as parents because we are illiterate.

C17: I am explaining that, as some of us are illiterate, people undermine us. One teacher once said to me what do I know about my child. He knows more about him more than I do. I gave birth to the child myself where was he?

She feels that illiterates are undermined. She cites an example where she was undermined by a teacher.

C18: We tend to be shy when people look down on illiterate people. Sometimes I think that we as illiterates imagine that this is the case. Because we know that we are illiterates, have lower level of education than teachers ,makes us to interpret events sometimes incorrectly.

We tend to be shy because we are illiterate.

C19: One of the obstacles for us to be involved is that the people we elect to represent us do not give any report back. At times we get report back through our children. Therefore they end up not representing us.

Parent representatives take a long time to give feed.

C20: Secondly after we have elected them they feel superior to us and associate with teachers. As result they do not do their jobs. We have therefore to watch out for these types of people because they end being causes of

Parent representatives become superior to us. She feels that sometimes they are the cause of problem

conflicts between the community and the schools.

C21: We can encourage elected parents by responding when there is a call for us to attend a meeting because if we do not do that they will be discouraged and lose interest. They must send letters to us to make sure we get the message of the meeting.

C22: What I am saying is that when there is going to be a meeting letters must be written well in time, at least five to ten days notice. We must not be told that at ten today there will be a meeting in the evening. The letter must be accompanied by an agenda so that we know what is to be discussed.

We can encourage parents in governing structure by attending meetings.

A notice of a meeting and an agenda must be sent to parents in advance.

D: MZIYANDA– Meaning Units

D1: I do not attend school meetings as they are called during the week in the evening. I am tired sometimes. I start at the factory at 6 a.m.. By the time I come home I am dog tired.

He does not attend school meetings because of his work.

D2: During the week-ends I am busy with funerals, church associations or guilds because they are the people who will bury me when I am dead.

During the weekends he goes to funerals or church guilds.

D3: Parents are not available to go to school. They are busy like me. Look next door. The children there stay alone. Parents are staying at their houses in rural areas. Do you think that parents will travel all the way to be told by these children and teachers what they must do?

Some parents are staying in the rural areas where they have houses. He cites the example of his neighbour

Parents do not want to travel in order to be told by teachers and children what to do.

D4: I do not know what is taking place at schools. You hear your child telling you this and that. It does not make sense to me.

He does not know what is happening at school.

D5: I mean when I ask my child how are you doing at school? He tells me about the difficulty of Maths. When I ask what

He does not know Mathematics. In his time it was Arithmetic.

that is, he tells me it is something that counts. At school I used to do Arithmetic.

D6: I went to see his teacher about this problem. The teacher told me I had to get him another teacher.

D7: I told the teacher that I know my child. He used to get good marks for sums in other classes.

D8: Where do I get the money to pay another teacher? Why is the teacher at the school? It is his duty to teach my child, he gets paid for that. Mine is to send the child to them, that's all. It was a waste of time for me to go there.

D9: That teacher told me my child is not good. These teachers do not think when they talk. They are disrespectful of older people. They tell us what to do our my own children.

D10: I liked the old principal. He was a real man and he understood us. You could go to that school and talk to him.

The teacher asked him to get a tutor for his child

He told the teacher his son is good.

His role is to send his child to school.

The teacher is paid to teach his child and it is his duty. It is waste of time to go to school.

Teachers do not think before they talk.

Teachers are disrespectful of old people.

He liked the former principal.

D11: When you attend the school governing body meetings you are told by our own children, i.e. learners and teachers, even amongst teachers the assistants, how to do things. Where have you ever heard of a child telling a parent what to do? This democracy of Mandela has killed our schools.

D12: Because of this democracy I can tolerate their presence in the meetings. It is appalling for me to discuss important school matters with children and assistant teachers. What do they know? At home I discuss with my wife, my children have to obey. Even my wife knows that sometimes I discuss matters and decide about them with my brothers and she has to obey.

D13: This democracy they are talking about makes us feel uneasy. I gave birth to a child and all of a sudden he tells me what to do. The school is not what it used to be. It makes our children disrespectful

D14: We are not welcomed by teachers. Children are roaming the streets. Go to town, you will find school children in

In school meetings the children tell you how to do things.

Democracy of Mandela has killed Black schools.

He can tolerate the children's presence in a meeting. He finds it appalling to discuss important school matters with them.

At home he discusses with his wife and the children obeys. Sometimes he bypasses his wife and discuss his matters with his brothers.

Democracy makes him uncomfortable and makes children disrespectful. The school has changed.

Parents are not welcomed at schools.

school uniform stealing from O.K .and Checkers etc..

Students roam in the streets and steal in the shops in the city.

D15: Today, there is no difference between a teacher and a school child. In the old days the teacher was a big and We would run away when you see your teacher approaching your way, though you have done nothing wrong. These days these teachers and school children drink together. How can I associate myself with that?

The behaviour of students and teachers is the same.

Teachers drink together with school children.

D16: These young teaches fight among themselves. Look at that school Y which always has poor results.

Teachers are fighting among themselves.

D17: I went to a meeting in that school. There was no progress there. Teachers were fighting there. What is the point of sacrificing my time?

He went to a meeting and teachers were fighting.

D18: The old system must be brought back for me to be involved. Children must know that when they go to school they have gone there to be taught, not to be teachers themselves. You hear children saying teacher so and so is not teaching us. What do they know about teaching?

He favours the old system of schooling

Children go to school to be taught not to be teachers.

Children must be bring their problems to the parents not to act themselves.

D19: Teachers must also show respect for each other when we re there as parents. We are not interested in the fights

Teachers must respect each other

D20: These teachers call us when they want money from us to do their things, or when they are being beaten by boys. In such situations they become tame.

Teachers call us in conflict situations and when they need our money

D21: When they want our money they club together. You find teachers and these children talking the same language against us parents. I am not worried when they are locking each other up.

Teachers and students are in harmony when
They want money from parents

D22: You see, these teachers do not care. When they are toyi-toying they toyi-toyi together. We go to work as parents thinking that our children are at school, only to learn later that there was no school. What about us parents who pay the school fees for these children? It is not enough for them to inform Cosas at their schools. We as parents have to know that.

Teachers do not care. They are toyi-toying with the students.

Parents must also be informed when there is to be a toyi-toyi.

D23: How can they get good results when most of their time they are at Oxford Street or King William's Town toyi-toying to Bisho.

They spend most of the time at Oxford Street or King William's Town toyi-toying.

D24: Schools are going to be the battlefields as long as we are selectively informed about what is happening in these schools.

Schools are going to be battlefields if parents are not informed