

Art. #2201, 10 pages, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v43n3a2201>

Experiences of parental involvement in privileged and underprivileged schools

R Manilal  and V Jairam 

Department of Educational Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
rubainamanilal@gmail.com

In the study reported on here we looked at experiences of parental involvement in schools in Phoenix, KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives of the study were to determine how parents were involved in schools and what their experiences were. The study was guided by Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres. A qualitative research approach within an interpretivist paradigm was followed. A multiple case design was used and the schools were drawn from privileged and underprivileged contexts in Phoenix. The methodology employed to generate data was the semi-structured interview, followed by an open-ended questionnaire completed by the participants. The sample of participants comprised 3 parents and 3 teachers from each of the 2 schools. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings show that parents from both privileged and underprivileged communities were concerned about and employed a variety of strategies to get involved in their children's education, both academically and socially. Although parents from both schools participated in school events, the level of their participation differed, with the parents from the privileged schools being more involved than parents from the underprivileged school.

Keywords: Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres; experiences; KwaZulu-Natal; parental involvement; privileged; underprivileged

Introduction

The impact that parents have on children's development and learning process is documented in education and psychology (Fan & Williams, 2010). Parents are learners' first educators who facilitate the child's development of values and identity (Dancy, 2011). Parental involvement shows children that their parents are interested in their development (Hango, 2007). Mestry and Grobler (2007:176) define parental involvement as:

parents' commitment to the education of their children, and their role in school management... participation in parent-teacher conferences and/or interactions, participation in school activities or functions, engagement in activities at home, including but not limited to homework, engagement in learners' extra-curricular activities, assisting in the selection of learners' courses, keeping abreast of learners' academic progress, reaction to academic grades, imparting parental values, and the level of parental control and autonomy of support in the home environment.

For the purpose of this study, parental involvement is defined as the participation of the parent in the education of the child. This does not simply mean sending the child to school, but also entails parental involvement in every facet related to the child's education to ensure academic success. This involvement can be school based or home based and can range from helping with homework to volunteering at school or being part of parent organisations and the governing body.

The role of the parent is emphasised by the South African government. Previously, parents were not expected to get involved in their children's education (Mbokodi, 2008). After the elections in 1994, South African parents were mandated to take part in the education process through the provisions made in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. The South African Schools Act (SASA) promotes the role of parents in education, by providing them with a democratic right to serve on the School Governing Body (SGB) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) (hereafter RSA). According to this regulation the SGB must consist of one more parent member than the total number of other members on the SGB who have voting rights (RSA, 1996). Parents constitute 60% of the SGB, of which the chairperson is also a parent (Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). The role of the SGB includes the formulation of school policies, drawing up a code of conduct, developing a language and admission policy, maintaining infrastructure, making decisions on appointment of school staff, handling discipline issues, administering the school's funds and budget and the levy of school fees (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). These rights place parents in an advantageous position at school and emphasise their collaboration with the school management team (SMT).

In South African schools, the SMT holds a formal position of leadership within the school's organisational structure (Ntuzela, 2008). The SMT is made up of the principal, deputy principal and departmental heads (Molefe, 2013). The SMT is responsible for the daily professional management of the school which incorporates all activities that enhance teaching and learning (Heystek, 2004).

From the time children are born up until the age of 16, approximately 85% of their waking life is spent at home (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009) and is strongly influenced by the family, making the parent the child's primary educator (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Thus, a foundation is laid by the parents in the child's early age and continues to be constructed as the child grows older. Teachers can only build upon this foundation, thus both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of the child (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). When parents become involved, there are positive effects on the learner's education (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005). Studies that have been done in many countries highlight the benefits of parental involvement in education, such as an increase in

- learners' academic achievement and performance (Graves & Wright, 2011; Park, Byun & Kim, 2011; Van Wyk, 2010)
- learners' aspirations (Nichols, Kotchick, McNamara Barry & Haskins, 2010)
- motivation (Fan & Williams, 2010)
- self-discipline and behaviour (Van Wyk, 2010).

The Government of the United State of America (USA) recognises the role of parents as children's first and most important teachers and their necessary involvement in education (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007). Thus, in as early as 1994 it was declared under The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, that by the year 2000 every school will encourage partnerships to increase parental involvement in the holistic development of the child (Olatoye & Agbatogun, 2009). The level of involvement, however, differs amongst the various types of people in the USA. Some parents are more involved at school while others are more involved at home (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Parents of European descent in America (European Americans) are more involved in volunteering activities as compared to other groups, such as the Chinese Americans who display interest in their children's education at home (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Chinese parents help with homework, monitor home activities and orientate their children's lives towards academic tasks (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Whether they are privileged or underprivileged, education is important to Chinese Americans and they view the child's performance as a reflection on the family (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). European Americans, particularly the privileged, are more frequently involved in school when compared to Hispanic and African American parents (Lee & Bowen, 2006). These results are consistent with the findings of Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo and Pituch (2010) where non-poor European American parents were more involved at school compared to poor European American, Hispanic and African American parents. In contrast, Graves and Wright (2011) found that European Americans were more involved with home activities such as reading with their children, while African American parents were more involved in school tasks like volunteering and attending meetings. These studies point out that the differing levels of parental involvement are not only linked to different ethnic groups but sometimes also to economic backgrounds. Park et al. (2011) found that the privileged were more involved in their children's education, while the underprivileged showed minimal participation.

Parental involvement in some African countries is increasing. In a Namibian school which caters for children from different socio-economic backgrounds, both privileged and underprivileged parents are highly involved in their children's education at school and at home (Erlendsdóttir, 2010). The parents monitor their children's time

outside of school, they have a good relationship with the teachers, they assist their children with homework, discuss schoolwork with their children and follow the child's progress closely (Erlendsdóttir, 2010). The parents also expect their children to attend university after school and they express their high expectations to their children (Erlendsdóttir, 2010). Thus, despite economic backgrounds, parents do have high hopes and expectations for their children.

Some Ghanaian parents are involved in education at home such as ensuring that their children complete their homework (Nyarko, 2011). However, some parents who belong to a community with a high illiteracy rate and low income, give little support to their children's education (Donkor, Issaka & Asante, 2013). Parents are supposed to provide educational materials like exercise books, textbooks and school supplies, but do not, and then blame the teachers when the child performs poorly in school (Donkor et al., 2013). These parents do not supervise the learners at home and are unwilling to visit the school (Donkor et al., 2013). These parents work long hours and claim that they are unable to afford school supplies; however, they often dress up in elegant clothing on special occasions like parties and funerals (Donkor et al., 2013).

Parental involvement in South Africa is still a problem (Okeke, 2014). This can be seen from parents' lack of interest in learners' schoolwork (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019) and homework and poor attendance of meetings (Sibanda, 2021). Teachers also want parents to be involved in home activities but are giving up hope on this happening. Sibanda (2021:4) found that there was minimal parental involvement in underprivileged contexts and that educators felt that parents treated the school as a "dumping ground." Similarly, Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) found that parental involvement was minimal and attributed this to parents' weak understanding of their role in their children's education and that most parents were not educated themselves. With this study we aimed to understand what parents' experiences in education were and what strategies they used to involve themselves? This study should contribute to professional development, policy and practice in South Africa. Internationally, the study should allow scholars to compare parental involvement in privileged and underprivileged South African contexts to their own similar contexts. They can see the level of involvement and how parents are involved and employ those same strategies if not already being done.

Theoretical Framework: Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

We used Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence as the theoretical framework (Epstein, 1996) for the study. The framework was developed by Joyce Epstein using data generated from parents,

teachers and learners (Epstein, 1996). Three perspectives were used to guide our thoughts about school and family relations: the family, school and community. The child learns and grows in these three contexts. Schools do not function in isolation and thus families, schools and communities must collaborate in educating the learner (Kgaffe, 2001).

Epstein's framework recognises the need for families, the school and community to establish a common goal for learners (Epstein & Sheldon, 2005). Epstein (2002) used a model to explain this theory. The three perspectives form the three spheres of the model which overlap. At the centre of the model is the learner (Epstein, 2002).

Epstein (1997) has identified six types of involvement that schools can use as strategies to involve parents: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. Each of the six types of involvement has its challenges for its implementation and leads to different results for parents, learners and teaching practices (Shezi, 2012). Schools need to choose the factors that will be most helpful to them very carefully (Erlendsdóttir, 2010). Epstein's framework reflects that it is necessary for the activities of the school, parents and community to be interlinked to achieve success with the learner's development (Kgaffe, 2001) because learner development is a shared and overlapping responsibility of these three contexts (Nojaja, 2009). This framework was chosen because it provides a suitable explanation for the influences of interactions between parents and the school.

Researchers agree that Epstein's theory is the most extensively referenced framework for parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). It acknowledges the role of parents in the home which include providing an environment in which educational efforts and activities are supported (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Van Voorhis, 2009). In addition, Epstein's theory moves some of the responsibilities to the school by recognising communication as a two-way process and also using the shared decision-making process at school as a platform for parent ownership (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

The limitations of Epstein's theory, however, need to be considered. Bower and Griffin (2011) mention that one of the limitations of Epstein's theory is that the school is still required to inform parents of strategies that they can use at home. This implies that in schools where parental involvement is not prevalent, teachers cannot rely on parents assisting the learners unless the teacher gives them a strategy on how to do so. Bower and Griffin (2011) also highlight that another limitation is that the parent's role in the decision-making process is defined by the schools' existing framework, warranting that parental involvement is defined by the school's rather than the family's conditions.

Furthermore, South Africa is a multiracial country. The Epstein framework provides a general approach to parental involvement and does not consider differences in race and ethnicity (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Schools need to reflect on the variety of cultural norms by race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status when employing parental involvement strategies.

Studies have looked at how Epstein's framework have been applied at schools. Newman, Northcutt, Farmer and Black (2019) investigated how parents perceived the implementation of Epstein's framework at schools. Parents from all races perceived that the schools' communication was good, permitted volunteering, helped with parenting, aided with learning at home, created a platform for parents in the decision-making process, and formed collaboration with the community. Newman et al. (2019) found that parents with a higher socio-economic status perceived that schools incorporated Epstein's framework more frequently. Newman et al. (2019) also found that parents with more children and higher degrees had lower perceptions on the effectiveness of the implementation of Epstein's framework in schools.

A study by Caño, Cape, Cardosa, Miot, Pitogo, Quinio and Merin (2016) also looked at the use of Epstein's framework in a school between high performing learners (HP) and low performing learners (LP). The results of the study by Caño et al. (2016) show the following:

- Parenting: Parents of both HP and LP learners provide an environment conducive to learning and encourage their learners. The parents of LP learners do not have homework strategies compared to parents of HP learners.
- Communicating: Both parents of HP and LP learners approach the educator when they need assistance. The school also informs them of parent meetings. The parents of HP learners attend meetings while some parents of LP learners do not because of work.
- Volunteering: Parents are informed of the various activities that require volunteers through parent meetings. The parents of HP learners participate more actively in community activities.
- Learning at home: Both groups are mindful of how they can assist their children at home and are involved at home in some form.
- Decision-making: Parents from both groups are not active members of parent organisations at school.
- Collaborating with the community: the parents of LP learners help when needed whereas the parents of HP learners continually give support to the community.

Methodology

Our study was conducted using a qualitative approach and followed an interpretivist paradigm. A multiple case study design was used which involves more than one case study that is connected in some way (Day Ashley, 2012). Purposive sampling was employed to select the schools.

Brief Description of the Sampled Schools

Of the 32 schools in Phoenix, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, Silver Oak and Riverside Primary Schools (pseudonyms used), were selected to take part in the study. These schools were chosen based on the economic background of the parents.

Silver Oak Primary School

Silver Oak Primary is a public school with an enrolment of 1,045 learners. Decisions on school governance are made through the SGB and the SMT. The physical structure of the school is well maintained and conducive to learning. Each classroom is furnished to cater for every learner. A privileged school can be seen as a school that is attended by children of middle-class or wealthy parents (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003). Silver Oak Primary School caters mostly for learners who are socio-economically better off. This does not necessarily mean that these learners are wealthy, but in comparison to Riverside, they have more. This can be seen from the suburban area that the learners live in, their dressing, homes and ability to pay school fees.

Riverside Primary School

Riverside Primary is a public school with an enrolment of 2,186 learners. Decisions on school governance are made through the SGB and SMT. The physical structure of the school is well maintained. Each classroom is furnished to cater for every learner. The school climate is conducive to learning. An underprivileged school can be seen as a school whose conditions are unfavourable and have factors such as income, unemployment, health

and housing issues that are detrimental and indicators of poverty (Nojaja, 2009). The majority of the learners come from poor backgrounds because most of their parents are unemployed or do not have a stable job. Their poverty is also evident in the learners' dress and dwellings. A majority of the learners come from informal settlements and shacks that neighbours Phoenix. Furthermore, in underprivileged schools, learners are exempt from paying school fees and also have access to the National School Nutrition Programme (Education and Training Unit, n.d.). The learners at Riverside primary are exempt from paying school fees and rely on the National School Nutrition Programme for their daily lunch.

Convenience sampling was used to select the participants from each school. The participants were chosen based on their willingness to participate and their availability. The sample consisted of three teachers and three parents from each school ($n = 12$). Parents formed part of the sample as the study was centred on their involvement and thus they provided pertinent information. One parent from the SGB of each school was interviewed. In Silver Oak, one parent was also a teacher at another school. Teachers were chosen because they worked with parents in schools. They were in a good position to explain parental involvement in their respective schools.

Brief Description of Silver Oak Primary School Participants

Teachers and parents were recruited for the study by convenience sampling. The profile of interviewees is presented in Table 1 and Table 2. F represents females and M represents males.

Table 1 Profile of interviewees (Silver Oak teachers)

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Length of service
Teacher 1	F	41	Bachelor of Education	23 years
Teacher 2	F	46	Bachelor of Pedagogics	20 years
Teacher 3	F	43	Bachelor of Education	10 years

Table 2 Profile of interviewees (Silver Oak parents)

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Nature of work
Parent 1	F	33	Matric exemption	Employed at a call centre
Parent 2	F	40	Honours Bachelor of Education	Teacher
Parent 3	F	44	Matric exemption	Unemployed

Brief Description of Riverside Primary School Participants

Teachers and parents were recruited for this study by convenience sampling. The profile of interviewees

is presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3 Profile of interviewees (Riverside teachers)

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Length of service
Teacher 4	M	36	Bachelor of Pedagogics	13 years
Teacher 5	F	26	Honours Bachelor of Education	4 years
Teacher 6	F	39	Bachelor of Pedagogics	10 years

Table 4 Profile of interviewees (Riverside parents)

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Nature of work
Parent 4	F	33	Certificate in Education	Nurse aid at baby home
Parent 5	F	46	Degree in Nursing	Nurse
Parent 6	F	44	Matric exemption	Unemployed

The data were generated from the participants using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Parents and teachers from both schools were interviewed individually. The interviews were recorded and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, varying with each participant. Most of the interviews took place at the respective schools after school hours to prevent disruption to school lessons. The participants that were unavailable at school asked for the interviews to be done at their home. All interviews were done in English, and all participants had stated that they understood English. Each participant was asked a set of questions from an interview guide. These questions were guiding questions which were further elaborated on during each interview. The questions centred on parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. An example of the questions asked was whether the parent helped their child with homework. The interviews were recorded and thereafter transcribed.

In addition to the semi-structured interview, an open-ended questionnaire was given to the participants after the interview. Both the parent and teacher questionnaires consisted of three questions each to give the parents and teachers an opportunity to write down anything that they may have omitted in the interview. An open-ended questionnaire was used to obtain the views and experiences that the participants may not necessarily have provided during the interview. A questionnaire can be used as a tool when participants may not want to share their experiences in an interview (Curtis, Murphy & Shields, 2014) and may provide the participant with confidence and honesty when answering the questions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). In addition, participants may find it easier to write than to talk (Walliman, 2006) and thus a questionnaire would be suitable in that context. All the questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher on the following day to allow the participants enough time to answer the questions.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. We familiarised ourselves with the data by transcription, followed by a careful reading and re-reading of the data and noting ideas, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Transcription of the recorded material into text was done before starting with the analysis. This was followed by coding of the transcripts as well as the questionnaires from which patterns were extracted and codes were produced. Once the data had been coded and collated there was a long list of different codes which needed to be re-focused (Flick, 2018).

Themes were developed by collating the different codes. Themes were then reviewed by checking whether the themes worked relative to the coded extract and data set. Some were collapsed while others may not be actual themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This resulted in one predominant theme which was named and defined by identifying the main idea of what the theme was about and then refined by determining what aspect the theme captured (Flick, 2018). The main themes resulting from the data were about *the care and support that parents offered children*.

Ethical clearance was sought from the ethical clearance committee from the University where the research was conducted. Permission to collect data was sought from the schools involved and the Department of Education before and permission was also obtained from the study participants. All participants signed consent forms and they were informed of the purpose of the study and of their right to withdraw without penalty at any time. The real names of the schools and participants involved are not disclosed; pseudonyms are used. No participants were harmed in this study and no identifying information about participants was revealed.

One manner through which credibility can be enhanced is triangulation (Sensing, 2011) which is the use of multiple sources (Heck, 2005) and research methods to assess the same research phenomenon (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011). In this study we used two methods (interviews and questionnaires); as well as different sources (the teachers and parents), to obtain information. Credibility was also enhanced by giving participants the chance to refuse participation leaving only those that were willing to offer data (Shenton, 2004). We also made it clear that we did the research in our own capacity and not that of the schools and that no information from the individual interviews would be shared with the schools.

Results

The experiences of participants in relation to parental involvement in both privileged and underprivileged schools were grouped under the theme “care and support of children by parents” that emerged from the data.

Care and Support of Children by Parents

All the participants in this study indicated that parents in both privileged and underprivileged schools showed interest in their children’s education and provided care and support in various ways,

which are discussed in the following categories/sub-themes:

- Involvement in children's school work
- Supporting children socially.

Involvement in children's school work

Evidence from the data indicates that generally parents from both privileged and underprivileged communities are involved in their children's education. According to the parents' responses in both schools, parents understood and spoke to their children about the importance of education. Parents in both schools also checked their children's homework daily to ensure that it was completed and ensured that their children had completed their projects and studied when it is exam time.

Some participants indicated that another way of being involved in children's education was by encouraging children to do independent study at home. In some instances, the participants from both schools related efforts that parents made to ensure that their children completed their studies by providing extra learning material and also visiting the local library, which is shown from the following responses:

I got like educational DVDs [Digital Video Discs] and books (Parent 1, Silver Oak).

I just bought the book for Mandla to assist him with the English (Parent 6, Riverside).

... we visit the local library once a week (Parent 2, Silver Oak).

... they got a card for the library. They used to go borrow some books or go to library (Parent 5, Riverside).

The participants' responses thus indicate that participants from both the privileged and underprivileged communities were involved in their children's school work. Parents were involved in academic activities such as checking homework and ensuring that their children were engaged in extra learning activities. The responses provided by teachers were in line with what the parent participants said. In both schools, teachers mentioned that some parents enquired about homework, as indicated in the following:

There's lots of parents that will ask what's the homework. If there's nothing given in writing, they will ask, if they here to fetch their child, they will ask is there any homework [sic]. And there's some parents who will actually, you'll see in their homework books, they give them work. (Teacher 2, Silver Oak)

Yes, all the time they [parents] enquiring ... they get homework on a daily basis (Teacher 4, Riverside).

Supporting children socially

The participants spoke much about how the social activities that they were involved in contributed to their children's well-being, such as the annual school sports. The parents also wanted to be involved in their children's behaviour while the children were at school by keeping in contact with

the educators. They sought information about their children's behaviour at school, with the intention to assist teachers. The participating teachers stated that when children displayed unacceptable behaviour they contacted the responsible parents. Often parents responded positively towards the school when they were contacted regarding their children's behaviour.

They [parents] do respond in a good way because they come to school (Teacher 3, Silver Oak).

... they [parents] do come through and they are very positive and they always want to make a change [regarding behaviour] (Teacher 4, Riverside).

Although parents from both schools participated in school events, the levels of participation differed. The responses by the participants from Silver Oak Primary indicate that parents have created a variety of social activities to be involved in and assisting at school. Some of the participants indicated that parents were involved in educational tours and children's sports. According to the participants in this study, parental involvement encompasses supporting their children in different sports, training and supervising their children. Some participants indicated that parents offered training session and prepared children for sports competitions. The parents also formed feeding committees to ensure that the children had lunch at school events. In addition, the parents were involved in classroom activities such as art-based activities, development of domestic skills such as baking, and reading. The parents also voluntarily assisted in learner discipline before the start of assembly. Parental involvement in schools was thus not only concerned with the cognitive development of children but also focused on a holistic approach to children's development (Khanare, 2012).

In my class I got a few parents who help with the reading programme that we have there ... during our sports period we have, the parents will have training, sports training, sports time. Reading programme we have in school and in our class. At school level we have the group of parents who help on sports day with refreshments, feeding the children at our awards day, our deb's ball. Then also we have a group of parents who help with our sport activities on a Saturday if they [children] going out to play [sic]. (Teacher 1, Silver Oak)

The above response indicates that parents' involvement in schools goes beyond academic activities of their children and encompasses being involved in social activities of the school as well. Erlendsdóttir (2010) found that parental involvement in education was more than checking children's homework. It is something they are passionate about.

The involvement of parents from Riverside Primary however, differed greatly from the involvement displayed by the parents of Silver Oak Primary. At Riverside Primary, some parents participated in school activities such as deb's ball and sports day. However, parents' responses

indicated that not all parents could participate or assist with activities. Parent 5 at Riverside Primary indicated that she did not participate in any school activity with a simple, "No." At Riverside Primary According to teachers only a few parents assisted with the sports day at Riverside primary. Parents at Riverside Primary also stated that they were unable to take their children to visit places of educational interest or get them involved in any extramural activities.

Discussion

With the study we found that parents from both the privileged and underprivileged communities involved themselves in their children's schoolwork. They checked their children's homework daily and encouraged their children to do independent study at home. The parents provided extra learning materials and also took their children to the library. Literature shows that parents want to participate in school activities and show an immense interest in their children's learning (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Park et al., 2011). Whereas Sottie (2011) found that single parents did not check their children's progress, we found that all the participants from the underprivileged school were single parents who checked on their children's progress. We also found that parents enquired about both the learners' behaviour and children's progress in contrast to a study by Crozier and Davies (2007).

The data show that parents from privileged or underprivileged communities were concerned and employed a variety of strategies to get involved in their children's education. These findings are consistent with some previous studies which found that parents helped with homework, monitored home activities and orientated their children's lives towards academic tasks (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Not only did parents assist their children with homework, they also discussed schoolwork with their children and followed the child's progress closely (Erlendsdóttir, 2010) – including parents with low economic status (Bojuwoye & Narain, 2008).

Secondly, we found that parents were interested in their children's behaviour while at school. They sought information about their children's behaviour while at school with the intention to assist the teachers. They assisted the school with activities, educational tours, children's sports and classroom activities, development of domestic skills such as baking, and reading. Some parents offered training sessions and prepared the children for sports competitions. The parents also formed feeding committees to ensure that the children had lunch at school events.

These responses suggest that parents at Silver Oak Primary volunteered their time and services whereas the majority of the parents at Riverside

Primary were unable to. Parents at Silver Oak Primary also took their children to places of educational interest and ensured that their children were engaged in extramural activities whereas the parents at Riverside Primary were unable to do so. Similarly, Bojuwoye and Narain (2008) found that parents of low socio-economic status were not involved in school-based activities. Some parents were more involved in home activities such as reading with their children while others were more involved in school tasks like volunteering and attending meetings, irrespective of economic background (Graves & Wright, 2011). This is consistent with the results of our study. We found that parents from Silver Oak Primary were involved in both home and school activities while parents from Riverside Primary showed more involvement at home than at school. Other studies have found that while poor parents may be involved in home-learning activities, they were less likely to be involved in school activities (Cooper et al., 2010).

There was a general consensus from participants that parental involvement in school was fundamental for children's academic development as well as for the holistic development of the children beyond school. This implies that parents knew that they had to be involved in school matters and in their children's education as mentioned in the SASA (RSA, 1996).

Recommendations for Improved Practice

Based on Epstein's six typologies for parental involvement, recommendations for improved practice are:

- 1) Parenting: schools can provide parents with strategies on how to be more involved with their children's education through a guide such as a user-friendly booklet.
- 2) Communicating: open lines of communication through notices, communication books, quarterly meetings and through digital platforms such as emails and a WhatsApp group. The use of a D6 communicator can enhance the communication process.
- 3) Volunteering: enquire from parents what they had to offer the school thus allowing parents to volunteer on their own capacity instead of restricting participation to the schools' needs only. For example, if a parent is good at chess, they can offer their assistance in training learners when they are available, thus creating a chess club at the school.
- 4) Learning at home: the school can help provide resources or a list of resources that parents can acquire to assist their children at home. If a learner performs at a high academic level, enrichment resources can be looked at. If a learner performs at a lower academic level, resources to help that learner can be given.
- 5) Decision-making: allow parents to be part of the decision-making process by observing their stance on educational matters. This can be done through meetings and surveys sent by the school.

- 6) Collaborating with the community: parents can help with school-initiated community projects by offering their expertise.

Conclusion

Parental involvement is important in education. In this study we investigated parental involvement in two contexts, privileged and underprivileged schools. We found that the parents were interested and tried to become involved in their children's education. Parents in both contexts were involved in their children's education, albeit at varying degrees, with some participating more than others. Teachers also establish ways to involve parents in education. There seems to be some hope of increased parental involvement in children's education in some form or another.

Authors' Contributions

RM collected the data and did the initial write-up. VJ supervised and reviewed the final write-up.

Notes

- i. This article is based on the master's thesis of Rubaina Manilal.
- ii. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.
- iii. DATES: Received: 15 May 2019; Revised: 26 October 2022; Accepted: 10 June 2023; Published: 31 August 2023.

References

- Anderson KJ & Minke KM 2007. Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5):311–323. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JOER.100.5.311-323>
- Bojuwoye O & Narain M 2008. Parental involvement and children's academic achievement in a South Africa setting. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 18(2):275–278.
- Bower HA & Griffin D 2011. Can the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement work in a high-minority, high-poverty elementary school? A case study. *Professional School Counselling*, 15(2):77–88.
- Braun V & Clarke V 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2):77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Caño KJ, Cape MG, Cardosa JM, Miot C, Pitogo GR, Quinio CM & Merin J 2016. Parental involvement on pupils' performance: Epstein's framework. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 6(4):143–150. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jewish-Merin/publication/368528234_PARENTAL_INVOLVEMENT_ON_PUPILS'_PERFORMANCE_EPSTEIN'S_FRAMEWORK/links/63ece4fc19130a1a4a7f6af1/PARENTAL-INVOLVEMENT-ON-PUPILS-PERFORMANCE-EPSTEIN'S-FRAMEWORK.pdf. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Cooper CE, Crosnoe R, Suizzo MA & Pituch KA 2010. Poverty, race, and parental involvement during the transition to elementary school. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(7):859–883. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X09351515>
- Crozier G & Davies J 2007. Hard to reach parents or hard to reach schools? A discussion of home—school relations, with particular reference to Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(3):295–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701243578>
- Curtis W, Murphy M & Shields S 2014. *Research and education*. Oxford, England: Routledge.
- Dancy RB 2011. *You are your child's first teacher: What parents can do with and for their children from birth to age six*. New York, NY: Celestial Arts.
- Day Ashley L 2012. Case study research. In J Arthur, M Waring, R Coe & LV Hedges (eds). *Research methods and methodologies in education*. London, England: Sage.
- DePlanty J, Coulter-Kern R & Duchane KA 2007. Perceptions of parent involvement in academic achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(6):361–368. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JOER.100.6.361-368>
- Donkor AK, Issaka CA & Asante J 2013. Cultural practices and education in Ghana: The effects of traditional culture on parental involvement in education. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(7):110–120. Available at <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=7b6bfdd703ddaa30b040422ba893411783d9ac0a>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Education and Training Unit n.d. *Education policy: school fees*. Available at <http://www.etu.org.za/toolbox/docs/government/schoolfees.html>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Education Labour Relations Council 2003. *Policy handbook for educators*. Centurion, South Africa: Author.
- Epstein JL 1996. Perspectives and previews on research and policy for school, family, and community partnerships. In A Booth & JF Dunn (eds). *Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Epstein JL 1997. A comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnerships. In JL Epstein, L Coates, KC Salinas & BS Simon (eds). *School, family, and partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Epstein JL 2002. School, family, and community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. In JL Epstein, MG Sanders, BS Simon, KC Salinas, NR Jansorn & FL Van Voorhis (eds). *School, family, and partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Epstein JL, Sanders MG, Simon BS, Salinas KC, Jansorn NR & Van Voorhis FL 2009. *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Epstein JL & Sheldon SB 2005. Moving forward: Ideas for research on school, family, and community partnerships. In CF Conrad & RC Serlin (eds). *The Sage handbook for research in education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Erlendsdóttir G 2010. Effects of parental involvement in education: A case study in Namibia. MEd thesis. Reykjavík, Iceland: University of Iceland. Available at <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&>

- type=pdf&doi=3967fa94510f13eb3309e0c9bc6983db7493489a. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Fan W & Williams CM 2010. The effects of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation. *Educational Psychology*, 30(1):53–74.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410903353302>
- Flick U 2018. *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gonzalez-DeHass AR, Willems PP & Holbein MFD 2005. Examining the relationship between parental involvement and student motivation. *Educational Psychology Review*, 17(2):99–123.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-005-3949-7>
- Graves SL & Wright LB 2011. Parent involvement at school entry: A national examination of group differences and achievement. *School Psychology International*, 32(1):35–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034310396611>
- Hango D 2007. Parental investment in childhood and educational qualifications: Can greater parental involvement mediate the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage? *Social Science Research*, 36(4):1371–1390.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.01.005>
- Heck RH 2005. Conceptualizing and conducting meaningful research studies in education. In CF Conrad & RC Serlin (eds). *The Sage handbook for research in education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Heystek J 2004. School governing bodies — the principal's burden or the light of his/her life? *South African Journal of Education*, 24(4):308–312. Available at
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/25006>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Huntsinger CS & Jose PE 2009. Parental involvement in children's schooling: Different meanings in different cultures. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 24(4):398–410.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.07.006>
- Kgaffe MM 2001. Barriers to parent involvement in rural communities in North West Province. MEd dissertation. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa. Available at
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=0ed47009846a37db8194ae57a87ed56b4b17cecf>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Khanare F 2012. Schoolchildren affected by HIV in rural South Africa: Schools as environments that enable or limit coping. *African Journal of AIDS Research*, 11(3):251–259.
<https://doi.org/10.2989/16085906.2012.734985>
- Lankshear C & Knobel M 2004. *A handbook for teacher research: From design to implementation*. New York, NY: Open University Press.
- Lee JS & Bowen NK 2006. Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(2):193–218.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312043002193>
- Lemmer E & Van Wyk N 2004. Schools reaching out: Comprehensive parent involvement in South African primary schools. *Africa Education Review*, 1(2):259–278.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/18146620408566284>
- Matthews TD & Kostelis KT 2011. *Designing and conducting research in health and human performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mbokodi SM 2008. Black parental involvement in education. PhD thesis. Port Elizabeth, South Africa: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Available at
https://vital.seals.ac.za/vital/access/manager/Repository/vital:9518?site_name=GlobalView&view=null&f0=sm_creator%3A%22Mbokodi%2C+Sindiswa+Madgie%22&sort=sort_ss_title+asc. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Mbokodi SM & Singh P 2011. Parental partnerships in the governance of schools in the Black townships of Port Elizabeth. *Perspectives in Education*, 29(4):38–48. Available at
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/pie/article/view/76991>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Mestry R & Grobler B 2007. Collaboration and communication as effective strategies for parent involvement in public schools. *Educational Research and Review*, 2(7):176–185. Available at
<https://academicjournals.org/journal/ERR/article-full-text-pdf/39952153535.pdf>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Molefe CK 2013. The role of School Management Teams (SMTs) in School-Based Management in the Moses Kotane East Area Office (AO). MEd dissertation. Mafikeng, South Africa: North-West University. Available at
<https://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/14471>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Newman N, Northcutt A, Farmer A & Black B 2019. Epstein's model of parental involvement: Parent perceptions in urban schools. *Language Teaching and Educational Research*, 2(2):81–100.
<https://doi.org/10.35207/late.559732>
- Nichols TM, Kotchick BA, McNamara Barry C & Haskins DG 2010. Understanding the educational aspirations of African American adolescents: Child, family, and community factors. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 36(1):25–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409344084>
- Nojaja JM 2009. A model for parent involvement in disadvantaged South African schools. PhD thesis. Vanderbijlpark, South Africa: North-West University. Available at
<https://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/3104>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Ntuzela MA 2008. The role of the School Management Team in developing teacher leadership: The case of two public primary schools on the lower South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. MEd dissertation. Durban, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal. Available at
<https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/81>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Nyarko K 2011. Parental school involvement: The case of Ghana. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 2(5):378–381.
- Okeke CI 2014. Effective home-school partnership: Some strategies to help strengthen parental involvement. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(3):Art. # 864, 9 pages.
<https://doi.org/10.15700/201409161044>

- Olatoye RA & Agbatogun AO 2009. Parental involvement as a correlate of pupils' achievement in mathematics and science in Ogun State, Nigeria. *Educational Research and Review*, 4(10):457–464. Available at <https://academicjournals.org/journal/ERR/article-full-text-pdf/B50D1C64153>. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Park H, Byun SY & Kim KK 2011. Parental involvement and students' cognitive outcomes in Korea: Focusing on private tutoring. *Sociology of Education*, 84(1):3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040710392719>
- Republic of South Africa 1996. Act No. 84, 1996: South African Schools Act, 1996. *Government Gazette*, 377(17579), November 15.
- Segoe BA & Bisschoff T 2019. Parental involvement as part of curriculum reform in South African schools: Does it contribute to quality education? *Africa Education Review*, 16(6):165–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2018.1464692>
- Sensing T 2011. *Qualitative research: A multi-methods approach to projects for Doctor of Ministry theses*. Eugene, OR: WIPF and Stock.
- Shenton AK 2004. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2):63–75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Shezi NJ 2012. Exploring how principals promote parental involvement in secondary schools: A case study of three secondary schools in the Umbumbulu Circuit. MEd dissertation. Durban, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal. Available at https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/9406/Shezi_Noah_Jonathan_2012.pdf?sequence=1&isAlloved=y. Accessed 31 August 2023.
- Sibanda R 2021. "I'm not a teacher": A case of (dys)functional parent-teacher partnerships in a South African township. *South African Journal of Education*, 41(3):Art. #1812, 13 pages. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v41n3a1812>
- Sottie CA 2011. *Stemming the tide: School dropout in Ghana: A resource for school social workers, educationists and policy makers*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Van Wyk N 2010. The South African education system. In E Lemmer & N Van Wyk (eds). *Themes in South African education: For the comparative educationist*. Cape Town, South Africa: Pearson Education.
- Van Wyk N & Lemmer E 2009. *Organising parent involvement in SA schools*. Cape Town, South Africa: Juta.
- Walliman N 2006. *Social research methods*. London, England: Sage.