




Improving Learners' Academic Performance through Parent-teacher Collaboration in the Foundation Phase

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated strategies that can be used to improve the collaboration between parents and teachers to improve the learners' academic performance. The study followed the theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler which shows that the involvement of parents is multidimensional, both at home and at school. This study followed a qualitative approach with a case study research design. Purposive sampling was used to select five parents and five teachers of three primary schools in Gauteng and Mpumalanga Provinces. Data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were analysed using a thematic approach. The findings revealed that parental involvement influences learners because it contributes to holistic development, motivation and support for learning struggles. Moreover, it was found that teachers do not have the essential knowledge on how to involve parents. The study, therefore, recommends that there should be regular training to support teachers in effective collaboration with parents.

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INTRODUCTION

Rahman states that students with passive parents have a greater possibility of repeating grades or being classified as the lowest achievers in their class, compared to learners whose parents are involved.¹ Even though parents would like to be involved, there are a few barriers that hinder parental involvement such as economic status, emotional well-being, and lack of educational knowledge.² Hamunyela stated that parents from low-economic backgrounds have barriers that prevent them from providing the necessary guidance to their children.³ Parents from more rural areas understand the importance of education, however, feel less equipped with the right or necessary resources to support

¹ Jane L Rahman, "The Effects of Parent Involvement on Student Success," *University of Wisconsin-Stout: The Graduate College University of Wisconsin-Stout*, 2001.

² Melissa J. Marschall and Paru R. Shah, "Linking the Process and Outcomes of Parent Involvement Policy to the Parent Involvement Gap," *Urban Education* 55, no. 5 (June 8, 2020): 699–729, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916661386>; Rahman, "The Effects of Parent Involvement on Student Success"; Makwalete Johanna Malatji, "Implications of Parent-Teacher Collaboration for Learners' Academic Performance in the Foundation Phase," *Journal of Educational Studies* 20, no. 1 (2021): 22–37.

³ Miriam Ndalilashiwa Hamunyela, "A Critical Analysis of Parental Involvement in the Education of Learners in Rural Namibia" (University of Pretoria, 2008), <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/28168>.

their children academically.⁴ Marschall and Shah supported this by stating that parents that do not have enough resources or work long hours have a much lower participation and involvement rate in their children's education.⁵ According to Howie et al., 78% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa could not read for meaning.⁶ This was confirmed by Roodt who stated that parental involvement could be one of the reasons for poor academic performance in South African schools.⁷ Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education argues that poor parental involvement in schools is caused by single parents, lack of knowledge of the importance of their role, poor parenting skills, work, and time pressure.⁸

Dearing, Krieder, Weiss and Simpkins stated that parental involvement has a direct influence on the improvement of learners' literacy, as found in a low-income longitudinal study.⁹ Parental involvement has positive outcomes in learners' academic achievements, whereas uninvolved parents can cause negative outcomes in learners' academic achievement. According to Malatji (2021), the lack of parent-educator collaboration in South Africa is due to a lack of knowledge by both teachers and parents on how to collaborate and work as a team.¹⁰ Therefore, in this study, the researchers found appropriate guidelines to assist parents and teachers on how to collaboratively work together to improve the academic performance of learners in the Foundation Phase. In South Africa, the involvement of parents is seen as a difficult process because training institutions, the curriculum, and schools do not prepare teachers on how they should deal with parent-teacher issues.¹¹ Munje and Mncube further stated that very few teachers know how to implement programmes to form a cooperative relationship with parents.¹² The present study investigated parent-teacher working relations and proposed an improved strategy on how collaboration will improve learners' performance. The study also sought to investigate parents' involvement in their children's academic work

Parent-teacher Relationships

Epstein and Munje and Mncube stated that teachers do not have the necessary knowledge of the context of parents and therefore cannot assume that all parents define parental involvement the same way, or know how to be involved.¹³ When teachers do not have this understanding, the relationship between parents and them will be negatively affected. Parents may feel that teachers do not understand their way of parenting, and this may cause distrust and create an uncomfortable relationship with the teacher. This may lead to parents withdrawing from the schooling process and their children's academic performance, which will have a negative influence on the learner. Munje and Mncube, therefore, suggest that teachers need to be empowered in the area of parental involvement and parental context.¹⁴ Thus, the present study aims to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge of parental contexts. When teachers understand parental concerns and methods of raising their children, teachers can bridge

⁴ Hamunyela, "A Critical Analysis of Parental Involvement in the Education of Learners in Rural Namibia."

⁵ Marschall and Shah, "Linking the Process and Outcomes of Parent Involvement Policy to the Parent Involvement Gap."

⁶ Sarah J Howie et al., "PIRLS 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2016 Grade 5 Benchmark Participation: South African Children's Reading Literacy Achievement" (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), 2018).

⁷ Marius Roodt, "The South African Education Crisis: Giving Power Back to Parents," *South African Institute of Race Relations*, 2018.

⁸ Department of Basic Education, *National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996: The Policy on Learner Attendance* (Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2010).

⁹ Eric Dearing et al., "Family Involvement in School and Low-Income Children's Literacy: Longitudinal Associations between and within Families.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98, no. 4 (2006): 653.

¹⁰ Malatji, "Implications of Parent-Teacher Collaboration for Learners' Academic Performance in the Foundation Phase."

¹¹ Paul Nwati Munje and Vusi Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators," 2018.

¹² Munje and Mncube "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators."

¹³ Joyce L Epstein, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools* (Routledge, 2018); Munje and Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators."

¹⁴ Munje and Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators."

the gap between the two microenvironments (the parent and the teacher) to improve learners' academic performance.

Policies on parental involvement

The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 and the Policy in Learner Attendance of 2010 focused specifically on the regular attendance of learners and stated that parents have a responsibility to ensure that learners attend school.¹⁵ The policy on learner attendance further states that parents have the responsibility to inform the teacher of the reason for the absence of the child from school. It is then the responsibility of the school and the parent to find ways in which they can resolve the problem of learner absenteeism. Campbell elaborates on the role parents play to ensure that their children are at school, by emphasising the relationship that needs to be formed between parents and teachers.¹⁶ It is for this reason that parents should be involved with their children's school work at home and even participate in school activities.

The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (SASA) pointed out that parents must form the majority of the School Governing Body (SGB) committee so that the decision that is being made at school is not one-sided but is influenced by the opinions and views of the parents.¹⁷ By involving parents in school-based matters, they are encouraging other parents to take responsibility for their involvement in school activities. SASA emphasizes the importance of parents' right to participate in making decisions at the school. The act stipulated that parents have an obligation toward their children by supporting and showing interest in their children's schoolwork.¹⁸ By forming part of the SGB, parents will have a say in the school fees of children, the language and religion policies as well as the code of conduct for learners. In the next section, we will discuss the theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler on 2 ways of parental involvement.¹⁹

Theoretical Framework

The study will follow Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler adjusted model that pointed out that the involvement of parents is multidimensional, both at home and at school. In Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, home involvement consists of the parent-learner relationship outside school and how parents support learners in learning-related activities such as homework.²⁰ On the other hand school involvement can be seen when parents attend parent-teacher conferences and are involved in activities that happen at school.

Home Involvement

Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) characterised involvement into categories of home and school involvement.²¹ Parents' motivational beliefs, invitations from the school, teachers and child, as well as the parents' life context, will influence the involvement practices at home and school. Green et al. defined home-based involvement as the interactions that take place outside of school between the parents and the learner.²² These interactions are seen as the child's behaviour. The model by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler further articulated that when learning occurs, the strategies to support the learner with homework or tests lie between parents and teachers either at home or at

¹⁵ Department of Basic Education, *National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996: The Policy on Learner Attendance*.

¹⁶ Clare Campbell, "How to Involve Hard-to-Reach Parents: Encouraging Meaningful Parental Involvement with Schools," 2011.

¹⁷ Republic of South Africa (RSA), *The South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

¹⁸ Republic of South Africa (RSA), *The South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996*.

¹⁹ Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey and Howard M. Sandler, "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?," *Review of Educational Research* 67, no. 1 (1997): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1170618>.

²⁰ Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?"

²¹ Christa L Green et al., "Parents' Motivations for Involvement in Children's Education: An Empirical Test of a Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 99, no. 3 (2007): 532.

²² Green et al., "Parents' Motivations for Involvement in Children's Education: An Empirical Test of a Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement."

school.²³ In this study, home involvement was influenced by the knowledge parents have about their children's school work. When parents and teachers communicate about the child's learning and behaviour, parents will know how to support and monitor the child's progress at home. Invitations such as feedback from the school and teachers were found as a strategy to support parents in helping children. Moreover, as illustrated by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler parents in this study were encouraged to participate in their children's school work by assisting with homework, reading with learners at home, and monitoring learners' attitudes towards school work.

School Involvement

School involvement is defined by Green et al. as activities that parents undertake at school that specifically focus on the individual child.²⁴ Activities at school include parent-teacher meetings to ensure parents know what is happening in the class and where parents can monitor the child's learning progress. This monitoring of a learner's progress is part of the responsibilities parents have towards their child. School-based involvement focuses on the needs and issues of a school such as assistance in class, field trips, and the sports field.²⁵ Parents in this study will be guided on how to be involved in their children's education at school despite their busy schedules. Moreover, in the current study, the collaboration between parents and teachers was investigated to find possible ways that parents and teachers could work as a team. Home and school-based involvement will be influenced by parents' initial choice to become involved. These initial choices are influenced by policies and factors that will contribute to the collaboration between parents and teachers. The theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler assisted the researchers to devise possible strategies that could be used by parents and teachers to become involved in a child's life at school.²⁶

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was followed in this study. A single case study research was used in the study to investigate the techniques that use a methodical approach to explain a crucial event or problem to gain a better understanding of these events, as defined by Riemer.²⁷ To gain a better understanding and explanation of parental involvement in schools, parents and teachers were interviewed in this study. Five teachers and five parents were purposively selected from three schools. One school is in the Bohlabela district in Mpumalanga, and the two other schools are located in the Tshwane district in Gauteng, South Africa. The reason for the selection of the three schools was that one of the schools in the North of the Tshwane district consists of lower-income children, while the other school in Tshwane central has children from the higher-income class. The school in the Bohlabela district consists of both higher and lower-income families. Hofstee, indicated that for the researchers to obtain data, they must make use of data collection instruments.²⁸ The instruments that were used in this study were semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires to effectively collect data on parents' and teachers' perspectives on parental involvement in schools. Participants were interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of the involvement of parents and strategies on how to improve the relationship between parents and teachers. Questionnaires were thoughtfully designed with open-ended questions and were distributed to teachers and parents to gain as much information on their perception of parental involvement. The thematic analysis approach was used in this study to analyse the data collected.

²³ Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?"

²⁴ Green et al., "Parents' Motivations for Involvement in Children's Education: An Empirical Test of a Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement."

²⁵ Green et al.

²⁶ Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?"

²⁷ Frances Julia Riemer, "Ethnographic Research," *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, 2012, 163-88.

²⁸ P Hofstee, "The Big Deal about Big Data," in *Proceedings of the 8th IEEE International Conference on Networking, Architecture, and Storage*, 2013.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the interviews and questionnaires that were provided by parents and teachers on their understanding of parent-teacher collaboration and its impact on a child's educational life. Parents and teachers mentioned strategies that could be used to improve the involvement of parents in the education process of the learner. These strategies included communication and training of parents and teachers, as well as parents volunteering at schools. Furthermore, some barriers prevent parents from involvement as indicated by the participants. For anonymity, the following codes will be used to name participants in the study:

Teacher 1 school A (T1A)

Teacher 2 school A (T2A)

Teacher 3 school B (T3B)

Teacher 4 school C (T4C)

Teacher 5 school C (T5C)

Parent 1 from school A (P1A)

Parent 2 school A (P2A)

Parent 3 from school B (P3B)

Parent 4 school C (P4C)

Parent 5 school C (P5C)

Themes that emanated from participant responses are discussed in detail below:

Communication

One strategy that almost all participants were persistent on is communication to get parents involved in their children's academic process. Participants indicated that communication (either face-to-face, in meetings, or online) was essential for getting parents involved in the academic process of the learner. Most participants stated that they have good working relationships with the school or with their parents due to the use of correct communication channels. This was evident when parent 1 from school A (P1A) confirms that:

"We get immediate feedback and I dare to ask you anything because you have an open-door policy. The school also has a one-on-one approach that parents can seat with the teacher to discuss learners' school work."

T1A, who is a member of the School Management Team (SMT) teacher component, also confirms the benefit of having a good relationship by stating that:

"parents in the school know that the SMT also has an open door policy to everyone who would like to enquire about their children or school improvement plan."

Contrary to the good communication strategy used between parents and teachers, there are a few participants that felt the use of incorrect or poor communication influenced the relationship between parents and teachers negatively. Few participants highlighted negative thoughts about communication channels in schools.

P1A who is a parent in school A contributes by saying that:

"I do not have access to the teacher of my child. Whenever I have to meet her I make an appointment that takes weeks without a response. I was only notified about my child's problem very late. I wish I was told about my child's learning difficulties earlier."

P3B and T5C concurred with P1A by stating:

"The fact that parents can't contact the teachers directly makes it more difficult sometimes. Some parents work late or far and cannot come to school whenever the teacher wants them to. The school does not allow us to call, send letters, WhatsApp,

or email the teacher directly. We have to send all those inquiries through the admin office.”

T5C provided some ideas on improving the relationship between parents and teachers, and this can be done through various communication channels such as face-to-face meetings, indirect meetings using for example Zoom, or by use of letters and WhatsApp messages. **T5C** suggested that:

“The school should have parent evenings and information sessions as well as parent guidance evenings, where parents are provided with guidance to help their children. Teachers should have WhatsApp groups with parents.”

T3B and **T2A** stated that there is poor communication between parents and teachers because teachers do not necessarily know how to communicate with parents. These participants feel that parents want open communication, but without the necessary guidelines, parents do not understand the boundaries of different communication channels.

T3B states that:

“I feel that there must be a set of communication rules between the teacher and the parents from the beginning of the year. The school should have a common system to avoid every teacher doing what they want.”

The participants indicated that set rules for parents are needed, as well as guidelines and training for teachers. The participants agreed that communication is very important and parents in school (**P1A**) further indicate that open communication is essential.

Parent participants stated that they do not only want to hear about the struggles or problems of their children but they also want to be part of the decision-makers at the school, and they want to know about projects that are launched at the school. Generally, parents showed that they want to be involved with school activities. **P5C** and **P1A** respectively revealed this by stating that:

“I think parents should be informed of any projects the school and how parents can get involved. Some parents are working at companies that can donate to needy learners in the school. When the line of communication and planning is clear, parents can make a difference at the schools.”

The participants also indicated that the communication platform did not matter. The most important aspect is that the school needs to communicate as regularly as possible. Although most of the participants felt that communicating with parents is a good thing, two participants, in particular, did not agree with this statement. **T3B** disagreed with the idea of WhatsApp groups and stated that online platforms with one-way communication are better than when parents can communicate back. She further pointed out that parents tend to post unnecessary adverts and communication on the platform. **T3B** believes that consistent communication with parents has a negative impact on her time and that parents communicate at any given time, without considering time constraints. She stated that:

“Electronic platforms like D6 will be better since the parents cannot bother the teachers the whole time. I think there must be a weekly circular with all the necessary information because free access to WhatsApp groups has a negative impact on the time of the teacher. Parents are too involved and there are no perks to how involved parents can be.”

Contrary to what teacher 3 in school B (**T3B**) stated, **P5C** clearly showed frustration when she spoke about the D6 application that is used by the schools to communicate with parents. She strongly said:

“You know what, I hate D6. The school will post so much information there and expect all parents to have data and open D6 anytime. My son was almost dismissed from school because the teacher was sending messages on D6 and did not inform me. Later I was told that I ignored school communication. I told the school that I

need to speak to the teacher and NOT an online application. How will it discuss possibilities for improvement?"

The above participant expressed a lot of frustration and unhappiness with the use of the D6 platform that parents cannot respond to it. It was discovered that most urban schools make use of the D6 application to send important messages to parents about school developments and the child's progress. T3B showed how some teachers lost formal communication with parents and relied solely on D6. All information including how parents can be involved in the school, and how they can support their children are posted on D6. Although it was evident that one-way communication works better for the school than for parents.

Volunteering Parents

After gathering the data, participants showed that parents become more involved when they voluntarily participate in school activities. Participants also mentioned that parents are asked on regular basis to voluntarily take action on other school activities and parental involvement strategies. Participants further stated that parents can be part of fundraising, sport, culture, coaching and extra support in class (T2A and T5C). T1A and T3B concurred by saying that some parents can be used for extra support in the class.

"We can make use of parents that are at home and not working. We can ask them voluntarily take turns to seat in the class while the teacher is presenting the lesson. That will be the best strategy for parents to support learners that need one on one intervention."

When parents volunteer to take part in school activities, it might improve their commitment and willingness. P1A stated that she does not like to be forced to participate in school activities. She strongly emphasised that:

"At my kids' school, they sometimes send out tasks for parents during school meetings and it's like we are forced to work for the school. Again, it is not my responsibility to teach the kids at home. I must willingly volunteer to help them. Well, I pay a lot of school fees and expect my kids to have a teacher and an assistant to help them when needed."

Despite some parents being negative about volunteering at school, some other parents showed that they prefer it when the school sends out a list of things to do and parents can voluntarily take part in those activities. Even though parents are willing to voluntarily participate in school activities and support their children at home, various barriers deprive parents wish.

Barriers to parental involvement

Many barriers prevent parents from being involved in their child's academic process. This can either mean that parents do not have the essential knowledge and skills while others do not have time and some learners are child-headed with no adult to help them with school work.

P2A said that circumstances at home play an important role in whether a parent can have knowledge and time to support their children.

"I have difficult circumstances at home that deprive me to assist my kids with their school work. I, therefore, enrolled my kids in the program at the community where parents assist learners with homework."

The above response shows that there are parents that are willing to take any support to assist their children with school activities. Support programs in the community can also help learners whose parents are either working until late and those families without an adult (child-headed families).

T3B and T1A respectively explained the circumstances at home that cause barriers for parents to be involved by saying that:

“The priorities of a parent are not necessarily at school, they must work and bring in the money. Even when parents know, they will not necessarily have the time or patience. It is the teachers’ responsibility.”

T2A stated that various economic pressure makes it difficult for parents to support their children at home

“It is difficult to get parents to be involved in the school due to a huge number of parents that are working and economic pressure that is placed on parents. Parents stay far away from the school.”

T1A stated that parents do not have academic knowledge of the curriculum and style that are used at the school. **T3B, T1A, P1A, and P5C** further lamented that the education level of the parents is not always enough to help their children. This can be due to the lack of understanding of the current curriculum, language barriers, or the ability to explain the work. This is supported by **T3B** when they pointed out that:

“Parents do not have the necessary resources to support their children at home. Moreover, parents do not know what the school curriculum is, how to teach the various subject and some parents cannot read.”

The above responses show that there are barriers that teachers do not always understand or are not aware that some parents might be willing to be involved but language barriers and resources could be a challenge.

T2A stated that language and cultural differences have a huge impact on parent-teacher working relations. **T2A** lamented that:

“Language plays a big role when it comes to the involvement of parents due to home language and cultural differences. Many parents can do the work, but they struggle to explain the work taking into account the level of the child’s understanding. Many parents want to know how I explain the work by recording a video while I explain the work.”

The above quotation was supported by **P5C** when she stated that she struggles to teach her child at home because the school uses the sounds of the alphabet. She further mentioned that if the teacher could record themselves teaching the alphabetical sounds and send it to us, then I will be able to help my child to pronounce the sound “C”.

Training

It was found in the study that most participants feel that teachers do know how to get parents involved in the education system due to a lack of training. Most participants indicated that teachers need experience as well as support from management to gain skills on how they should involve parents. Furthermore, when participants were asked what strategy could be used to get parents involved in the school, they indicated that educating parents will contribute to improved learners’ academic performance. Most participants noted that parents should also be trained on how to be involved in their children’s education.

P1A indicated that although teachers gained knowledge at universities or colleges, they still need to be supported after graduation. In her direct quotation, **P1A** pointed out that:

“There are only a small number of teachers with sufficient knowledge on how to work with parents. It seems as if it is difficult for newly appointed teachers to implement what was learned at the universities or colleges in schools. It is evident that newly appointed teachers do not do a follow-up on letters or requests that we send to parents.”

The above response is from a teacher who has more than twenty (20) years of teaching experience. In a further discussion with her, she lamented that newly appointed teachers came to the school with more subject knowledge than general knowledge of the holistic development of a learner.

Moreover, **T3B** explained that during their teacher training at the university, they did not get a subject that taught them how to work with parents to improve learners' academic performance. **T3B** suggested that:

“The university should include a practical module on how to work with parents. Within this subject, teachers will also be given skills on how to involve parents as per some policy requires.”

From the quotes above it is evident that teachers need guidance when it comes to involving parents in the education system. Although universities give the knowledge necessary to teach a class, new teachers do not have sufficient knowledge or experience to work with parents. The school management team must follow up on new teachers to equip them with the necessary knowledge on how to involve parents in learners' academics.

T1A showed that due to a lack of training and guidance on parent-teacher working relations, it would be a great idea when schools in the same circuit pair with those that have good parental involvement. The SGBs in different schools could take a leadership role to facilitate what parents and teachers need to know about parental involvement in schools. This was evident when **P3B** pointed out that:

“The involvement of parents comes more from the School Management Team than from the teacher. A parent component teacher could be the first one to be trained so that they can be able to train other parents.”

The above findings show that when parents (SGB) speak to parents it will be easy for them to understand.

T3B in her direct quotation stated that

“Parents need to be trained to overcome their lack of knowledge. It seems as if parents want the knowledge but due to a lack of information, they do not have access to school-based knowledge.”

T5C and **P1A** elaborated that, training for teachers and parents will not only help with learner performance but also discipline. When parents and teachers are trained on the best possible ways to work as a team, they will be able to discuss possible strategies to discipline the learner with the support of each other. **PA1** showed that:

“When parents are provided with relevant strategies on how to work as a team, so much can be achieved. As parents and teachers sometimes we do not know how to discipline learners. However, during the training session, teachers and parents will gain knowledge on collaborative strategies to discipline learners and support them academically.”

The above response shows that both teachers and parents are willing to work with one another. The main challenge that they both have is knowledge, skill, and guidance hence the suggestion of possible training opportunities.

DISCUSSION

The study explored the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler adjusted model of parental involvement that showed that the involvement of parents is multidimensional, both at home and at school.²⁹ The emphasis and the findings of the above-related model showed the challenges that parents and teachers face when trying to work as a team. Moreover, various strategies on ways to work as a team were revealed from the findings. The argument that was made above was around the context of the theory and findings. In this discussion section, the researchers reflected on themes that emerged.

²⁹ Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, “Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children’s Education?”

From the findings above, the participants believed that communication is very important. The findings around communication showed that parents are willing to have open communication with the school regarding their children's academic performance. Moreover, it was found that teachers are also willing to share information on school communication platforms. Some statements by participants are supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory, stating that parents' motivational beliefs and willingness to communicate will influence parents' involvement.³⁰ It was found in the study that parents are willing to have positive communication with teachers, however, they do not know how. This was supported by Malatji when she stated that parents and teachers are both clueless about their roles as a team. Nevertheless, some participants highlighted that it is the responsibility of the teacher to educate the learners.³¹ Therefore, communication should be kept for school updates and not what parents should do to teach their children at home. Furthermore, the theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler indicated that parents also have motivational beliefs as to why they will not be involved in their child's education.³² The school and people around parents might influence their self-efficiency. In this case, the suggestion made by some participants directly links to the findings of Malatji, Mavuso and Malatji indicating that the encouragement that parents receive will have an impact on the success of their child's academic performance.³³

Moreover, Schoeman further wrote that when there is communication between parents and teachers, there will be positive academic achievement for learners.³⁴ Other participants felt that teachers should be the initiators of communication and explain in detail what will be discussed. When a teacher first initiates the communication process, a trusting relationship between the parent and teacher is established. It was also found in the study that communication must not be for poor-performing learners only. Parents of learners that are doing well also felt a need to be involved and support their children through communication platforms at the school. It was suggested by participants that face-to-face communication must happen once in a quarter, or more when problems are noticed. This was evident when Stamatis and Chatzinikola showed that there are mismatches between parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding parental knowledge of their children's schooling, levels of parental communication and barriers to parental engagement.³⁵

Despite communication, the findings indicated that involving parents in the planning and execution of projects and schoolwork can motivate parental involvement (SASA, 1996). The study further showed that parents can volunteer to help with sports, culture, and fundraising. Moreover, Epstein points out that volunteering at school is not restricted to school hours and school buildings.³⁶ However, participants indicated that when the school has proper planning on how parents can be involved voluntarily, the line of communication will not break. The study revealed that a lot of barriers can prevent parents from being involved in school activities. More parent participants showed that a lack of time, resources, and language barrier might be a bridge to involvement.³⁷ Hamunyela posits that parents want to help their children, but because they are not equipped with the necessary or correct resources and skills, parents struggle to support learners.³⁸ Some participants highlighted that schools should pair with nearby schools or community services like churches, retired teachers, or SGB members to have a common goal of supporting the nearby schools to improve their relationship with parents with an overall view to improving the performance of the school.

³⁰ Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler.

³¹ Malatji, "Implications of Parent-Teacher Collaboration for Learners' Academic Performance in the Foundation Phase."

³² Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?"

³³ Makwalete Johanna Malatji, Percival Mzuyanda Mavuso, and Khashane Stephen Malatji, "The Role of School-Community Partnership in Promoting Inclusive and Quality Education in Schools," *Journal of Educational Studies* 17, no. 2 (2018): 72–86.

³⁴ Carli Schoeman, "Parent Experiences of Their Parental Engagement in the Early Grades" (University of Pretoria, 2018).

³⁵ Panagiotis J Stamatis and Maria Chatzinikola, "Advantages and Reasons Hindering the Communication between Teachers and Parents: An Empirical Study," *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy* 2, no. 2 (2021): 43–48.

³⁶ Epstein, *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*.

³⁷ Rahman, "The Effects of Parent Involvement on Student Success."

³⁸ Hamunyela, "A Critical Analysis of Parental Involvement in the Education of Learners in Rural Namibia."

It is evident from the responses that language barriers can have an impact on the involvement of parents because parents cannot explain or understand the learner's work and some communication. It was also found that in some schools Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is different from the language that parents speak at home; therefore, parents cannot or are struggling to support their children with homework. The findings further showed that parents want to be involved but some barriers prevent them from being fully involved such as language, time, and understanding of the curriculum. Munje and Mncube wrote that teachers do not know the context, culture, and struggles of the parent; therefore, teachers feel that it is the choice of the parent not to be involved.³⁹ Munje and Mncube and Mtshali wrote that informal working opportunities are time and energy-consuming, and poverty is one of the biggest factors why parents are not involved in their child's education.⁴⁰ If a teacher can keep in mind the circumstances of the parent, the relationship between parents and teachers will improve and contribute to the academic success of the learner.

The research from Munje and Mncube already suggested that educational institutions do not provide teachers with the necessary knowledge on practices to get parents involved.⁴¹ Consequently, the findings indicate that this gap in following-up, as well as lack of practical experience, is contributing to the failure to get parents involved. Training of teachers is therefore essential in getting parents more involved in their children's education process. Although the findings suggested that teachers need training, the participants indicated that parents also need to be trained to be successfully involved to improve their child's academic performance. Malatji (2021) stressed that parents and teachers should receive regular training on how to collaboratively work as a team to improve learners' academic performance.⁴²

Although some participants stated that training parents will only work in an ideal world, Azaiza, Schaedel and Hertz-Lazarowitz established the School Family Partnership (SFP) program that empowered mothers to educate their children in the literacy program.⁴³ Moreover, it was indicated that parents want to be educated on how they can help their children. In South Africa, there is a huge gap that can be filled by developing training programmes with a focus on educating parents on how they can support their children. Training programmes for parents can be used as a successful strategy to get parents involved in the learners' academic process.

CONCLUSION

The researchers first identified that there are barriers that prevent parents from being involved in their children's education process. From the responses of the participants, the researchers concluded that parents do not necessarily have the educational knowledge to support their child, and the reason for it could be curriculum changes, language differences, and the difficulty parents face explaining work to their children taking into account their children's level of comprehension. The researchers, therefore, concluded that parents must be educated regularly about the work that learners are doing. Segoe and Bisschoff suggested that training programmes need to be established with direct invitations to

³⁹ Munje and Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators."

⁴⁰ Munje and Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators"; Mduzuzi Nkosinathi Gladwin Mtshali, "The Relationship between Grandparents and Their Grandchildren in the Black Families in South Africa," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 46, no. 1 (2015): 75–83.

⁴¹ Munje and Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators."

⁴² Malatji, "Implications of Parent-Teacher Collaboration for Learners' Academic Performance in the Foundation Phase."

⁴³ Bruria Schaedel, Rachel Hertz-Lazarowitz, and Faisal Azaiza, "Mothers as Educators: The Empowerment of Rural Muslim Women in Israel and Their Role in Advancing the Literacy Development of Their Children," *International Journal about Parents in Education* 1, no. 0 (2007): 272–82.

parents.⁴⁴ Although getting parents to these training sessions can be difficult, Segoe and Bisschoff suggested the use of incentives in the beginning.⁴⁵

The responses from the participants also indicated that teachers do not have the essential knowledge to get parents involved, because there is not enough support when new teachers begin work. Munje and Mncube stated that very few teachers know how to implement programmes to form cooperation with parents.⁴⁶ Therefore, some participants suggested that teachers must work together to equip each other.

Open communication is also a strategy to improve collaboration between parents and teachers. The participants suggested that two-way communication is the best way to get parents involved. However, some participants, especially teachers, stated that one-way communication is better because it is less time-consuming. They further stated that there must be set rules and guidelines when collaboration between these two parties takes place. The researchers identified the training of parents and teachers as one of the main strategies that can be implemented to improve the collaboration between parents and teachers. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended parents' and teachers' training by the Department of Basic Education. It is for this reason that the researchers are planning a proposal to train teachers and parents in a rural community on how they can collaboratively work as a team to improve learner performance in schools.

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⁴⁴ Bobo A Segoe and Thomas Bisschoff, "Parental Involvement as Part of Curriculum Reform in South African Schools: Does It Contribute to Quality Education?," *Africa Education Review* 16, no. 6 (2019): 165–82.

⁴⁵ Segoe and Bisschoff, "Parental Involvement as Part of Curriculum Reform in South African Schools: Does It Contribute to Quality Education?"

⁴⁶ Munje and Mncube, "The Lack of Parent Involvement as Hindrance in Selected Public Primary Schools in South Africa: The Voices of Educators."

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