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**THE LEVEL OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT IN NKULUMANE B CLUSTER IN MZILIKAZI DISTRICT**

BY

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APPROVAL FORM

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The level of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education in Nkulumane B cluster in Mzilikazi District.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children Muzomhle, Ntuthuko, Nokubonga and Nobubelo for having to look after themselves most of the time.

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ABSTRACT

Parental involvement in children's education remains low, despite evidence that parents have a huge influence on children's achievement. Major researchers in the field have identified many factors that may create barriers to parental involvement and also suggested the solutions. Through interviews and questionnaires this study examined aspects of parental involvement in the education of Early Childhood Education (ECE) learners in Nkulumane Cluster in Bulawayo. The study will provide schools with objective data that will allow stakeholders to identify specific and effective strategies to increase parental involvement. The researcher explored the levels of parental involvement in the education of ECE learners. Using generally a qualitative approach, the researcher investigated the impact of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education, the views of school teachers on parental involvement in Early Childhood Education and how much the parents were involved in Early Childhood Education.

Findings indicated that parental involvement in their children' education was minimal; the school environments were not conducive to active parental involvement in school activities, there was little collaboration between the school and the parents towards the education of the learners and the element of trust was lacking between the parents and the schools. The recommendations suggested for improving parental involvement included schools having multiple communication strategies to ensure effective communication between the home and school, schools having partnership programs in place, making the parents feel welcomed at schools and staff developing school administrators on parental involvement in the education of their children.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

Parental involvement is critical in the development of children as parents are the first teachers of any child. Parents who are involved in their child's education create a connection between the home and school. Therefore the researcher made a study on the level of parental involvement in the education of early childhood learners in Nkulumane B Cluster in Bulawayo. The statement of the problem was outlined and the significance of the research was highlighted to those who would benefit from the study as well as how they would benefit. The assumptions, limitations, delimitations of the study were outlined as well as the terms to be defined which are of importance in the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Involving parents in early childhood education dates back to the late 1700`s and early 1800`s where theorists like Pestalozzi and Froebel were of the view that parents participation in kindergartens were of paramount importance. Wolfendale (2002) these were later supported by Montessori and Regio Emilia who saw value in participation in the early and late 1900's. Research by Myers (2004) also exposes programmes like the Head start in which showed that high parental involvement in education yielded the best results. All this points out that involving parents in early childhood education is not a new phenomena but has always been

there even before the implementation of ECD B classes in 2005 and ECD A classes in 2006 as of the Ndziramasanga Commission in Zimbabwe (1999).

OECD (2005) says that the involvement of parents in young children`s education is a fundamental right and obligation. This is highly true and necessary since parents are first educators of the child. In light of this view, Lunerberg and Lrby (2002) stipulate that parents are the first teachers of the child hence should be the one to help the child develop.. Therefore, this clearly spells the need to have parents` participation in early childhood education. Parents are the ones who have the knowledge of what kind of education their children need. KuyayamaTumbare et-al (2015) says that the parents also hold absolute rights on whether to enroll their children in your ECD centre or not. Whilst Epstein`s framework (2009) highlights that when families are involved they learn more about the school`s programme and therefore become more active supporters and continue to influence their children`s education. This states that it is important for parents to be enlightened on the goings on of the school. They need to know the school`s curriculum so as to support it. This has been proven true in Zimbabwe as parents were involved in the curriculum review process in 2014 before the implementation of the new curriculum which stemmed from the Nziramasanga commission recommendations. Parents were given questionnaires on which to respond to pertaining the kind of education they saw fit for their children. All this was done to remove any kind of resistance from the parents as they are paramount importance to the retention of learners at an ECD setting.

On the other hand, the Director`s circular 48 of 2007 stipulates that the local communities can be mobilized to help in providing food and feeding the children. Also, the Director`s circular number 41 of 2006 stipulates that teachers and parents to feel they are a system. Kuyayama-Tumbare et-al (2015) this shows that for an early childhood education centre to be viable and

cater for the holistically development of learners, teachers and parents should work hand in glove.

The Director`s circular 12 of 2005 specifies that the school Development Committees. (SDC`s) are expected to contribute towards the construction and furnishing of ECD centers and classrooms and should also decide on the fees to be levied. (Gunhu, Mungweni and Dhlomo; 2011). To further explain this, Myers (2004) says that parents are the key participants in the management and running of Early Childhood Development curriculum. Therefore, there is need for parents, teachers and the administrators to work together to facilitate a conducive learning environment whilst there is no doubt that parents have a crucial role in their children`s education. The nature of the required commitment and consistency in parent`s involvement needs to be explored further as viewed by Kernan (2012). Therefore, since the government`s call for ECD A and ECD B classes to be implemented in schools, researches have had an interest in the area. However, no research on parental involvement has been carried out making this a reason enough for this study to be done to close the gap.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The combination of both teacher and parental involvement in the education of early childhood learners is vital in the promotion of the education of the child. Minimum involvement of parents in the development of the education has led to poor educational performance of the learners even at early stages in their educational lives.

1.3 Research questions

Guiding question

What are the levels of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education in Nkulumane B Cluster?

1.4 Sub questions

1.4.1 What is the impact of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education?

1.4.2 What are the views of school teachers on parental involvement in early childhood education?

1.4.3 How much are parents involved in Early Childhood Education in Nkulumane B Cluster?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study may help various stakeholders in the education sector on challenges of parental involvement. These include the ECD learners, teachers, parents and school administrators.

1.5.1 To the learners

This study may help the learners to be holistically developed if parents are fully involved in their education.

1.5.2 To the teachers

Teachers are the major source who can ensure a maximum participation of parents in the education of children. Therefore, the study may equip the teachers with techniques on how to effectively involve parents in their teaching.

1.5.3 To the parents

Since parents are the major and first educators of the learners, this study may equip them on ways to be actively involved in their children`s learning.

1.5.4. To the school administrators

This study may enlighten school administrators like the head, TIC and the SDCs on the importance of parental involvement. This may make them to be able to mobilise parents in full participation in their children`s education.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The researcher faced some challenges carrying out the study, due to the fact that the study was done during working hours. To curb this, the researcher used lunch time hour and also made appointments to avoid inconveniencing the participant. Another challenge was of reaching the participants in other schools as they are notable distances away from each other. The researcher resolved this challenge by taking advantage of inter-school sporting competitions in order to reach all the targeted area of the study.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This study was carried out in the Nkulumane B cluster schools of Mzilikazi District. The study focused on the finding the level of parental involvement in Early Childhood

Development. The participants of the study were parents and teachers of Early childhood development learners.

1.8 Definition of terms

Parental involvement

Litjens and Taguma (2010) say parental involvement refers to the formal relations that parents have with early childhood education. This can take various forms and meanings depending on the level of education of the child concerned and the idea taken on the issue. Harns and Goodall (2007) say parental involvement indicates what parents can do in order for the school to achieve its goals. From the two definitions it can be deduced that parental involvement is the way in which parents and early childhood centres relate so as to come up with better results for learners in the setting. It involves parents being engaged at the setting by means of enrolling learners, paying fees and supplying necessary materials which will make learning to be conducive.

Early Childhood Development

World Health Organisation (2012) defines early childhood education as a programme that caters for children from prenatal stage to eight years with different people playing different roles in the child's life. This suggests that early childhood education is a programme for young children from birth to eight years in an educational setting with the goals to help the child develop holistically with the help of different stakeholders working hand in glove.

1.9 Summary

The chapter presented the background of the study which stated the background of the study on the level of parental involvement in the education of early childhood learners in Nkulumane B Cluster in Bulawayo. The problem statement presented the aspect that motivated the researcher to conduct this research. Research questions, assumptions of the study, delimitations, limitation and the significance of the study were presented. Finally definitions of terms were presented. The next chapter will present the review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the introduction to the problem. This chapter shall present views by other authors on the pertinent issues that were studied in the research. Literature

will discuss on the impact of parental involvement, factors leading to a lack of parental involvement and parenting styles in the early childhood learning.

2.1 Impact of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Learning

2.1.1 Child's Cognitive development

The research made use of the Child's Cognitive development concept. The reason for using this concept is that it focuses on the aspect of development that is important in the growth of any child and it is vital to study how parents have an impact on their children cognitive development.

Many studies point out that parental involvement in early childhood learning helps in promoting the child's cognitive development. Fitzgerald, (2004) and Flouri, Buchannan, & Bream, (2002) Most effective interventions involve parents in (pre-school) children's cognitive development. Play way method and scope for physical activity seem to produce most effective outcomes. Parents' self-esteem is very vital in producing long term outcomes for both themselves and their children. This study sought to determine whether parental involvement in the early childhood learning helped in promoting child's cognitive development. The child-parent relationship has a great influence on most aspects of child development. Parenting skills and behaviours have a positive impact on children's self-esteem, school performance, intellectual development and behaviour.

Therefore, the researcher focused on the parents to child development of both learners and parents at the Nkulumane cluster so as to ascertain how parents influenced the development of their children.

2.1.2. Impact of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Learning

The study also focused on the extent to which parents were involved in the education of their children in ECD. Parental involvement in children's education from an early age has a

notable effect on educational achievements, teachers as well as learners including improvement in learner's performance, huge parental self-esteem in helping their children at home as well as effective communication between parents and teachers have been experience.

2.1.3 Impact on learners

The researcher was guided by the following aspects in studying the influence of parental involvement on learners. Keyser (2006) says that according to a group of researchers' active parental involvement promotes children's interest in and responsibility for learning. That is, the learners become motivated and responsible as parents make a follow up on their school work and assist where there is need. This can also assist in moulding child's behaviour Kuyayama-Tumbare et al (2015) are of view that if parents, caregivers and teachers are to work together, their combined effort can produce excellent results with regard to the discipline of the children. This helps eradicate any unwanted behaviours in the child as they will be fully aware that their parents and teachers are working together.

Jeynes (2005) in Coleman (2012) says a parent who is involved in a child's education has clues about the learning strategies of his child. This in turn fosters the child's high performance as the parent will have knowledge and skills to tackle some concepts learnt by the child. This highly brings confidence in the learner to participate more during lessons.

2.1.4 Impact on parents

As the researcher studied the parental involvement at the Nkulumane cluster, the researcher looked at how parents themselves tend to be influenced by their parental involvement. Coleman (2013) says parents get more information concerning child development as they interact with practitioners. That is, parents will be equipped with ways on how to assist their

children at home. Kernan (2012) concurs that creativity increases as parents are invited to share their expertise and ideas on activities done at home. This has been seen as such parents will take their time to research and improve on their skills they have to share with the school. For example some are gifted in sports and hence come and coach learners and make them ready to participate in infant`s sports. This helps develop a positive attitude among parents and teachers.

2.1.5 Impact on teachers

Parental involvement has an impact on teachers at the Nkulumane cluster. Keyser (2006) postulates that practitioners who involve a great deal of parents understands how a child`s classroom and school activities are rooted in family and community life. Therefore, this helps bridge the gap between home and school. Newcombe (1990) in Kuyayama- Tumbare et al (2015) concurs that conflicts arises when home culture is not in the line with culture at the center. All this curbed when teachers depict the child`s culture. This can be done through proper language used and displaying items from the children`s culture. The teacher can ask parents to be resource persons in language and cultural activities. Jeynes (2005) as cited in Coleman (2012) says research shows that there is untapped resource from all ethnic groups an involvement for children. Therefore, as suggested by the new curriculum that learners should learn their cultural values and all instruction in Early childhood development be in the learners` local language, parental involvement comes in handy during this time.

2.1.6 Sharing Responsibility

Graue (2000) states that families send children to school, where they hope their children will become learners with the tools they need to succeed in life. Schools take children from and

send them back to their families, where they assume the families will provide the needed support for growth and learning needed by children. This circle, in which home and school share the resource of children, is one that has been the focus of child development, Corsaro (2003) states that most educational institutions have some formal home-school group, whether it is a parent board, a PTO, a School Advisory Council, Room Parents--all working to bridge the space between families and education. Both parents and educators have a large stake in the success of the child and the linkages promoted to facilitate it. No one would go against that. However, conceptualizing and operating the connections between home and school has been done in various ways by teachers, policymakers, and researchers who have specific ideas about the rights, roles, and responsibilities of people in education.

Graue (2000) states that parents are more likely to support a school program in which they are partners in decision-making and welcome at times other than when their children are in trouble. Parent interest and support for the school and its staff makes it easier for children to relate to and identify themselves with the objectives, values, and personnel of the school, a great motivation to tune in and turn on to education. At the same time, parental involvement makes sure that their cultural values and interests are respected.

Caspe (2003) states that parents, teachers, community leaders, and school administration will achieve more if the goals are met with a team approach. Children learn at both home and school. Learning takes place during every waking hour of the daily life at both home and school.

When parents are involved in the early childhood learning is a way of sharing responsibility between the school and the parents and this in turn gives positive results in the performance of the child (Flouri, et al, 2002). This study determines whether the involvement of parents in early childhood learning at Nkulumane B Cluster is viewed as sharing responsibility.

2.1.7 Parenting style and child development

The researcher studied the various parenting styles of parents at the Nkulumane cluster. Landry (2014) states that children's development of the cognitive and social skills needed for later success in school may be best supported by a parenting style known as responsive parenting. Responsiveness is an aspect of supportive parenting described across different theories and research frameworks for example, attachment, social interactions, as playing an important role in providing a strong foundation for children to develop holistically. Parenting that provides positive affection and great levels of warmth and is responsive in ways that are well linked to a young child's signals are the affective-emotional aspects of a responsive style. Landry (2014) states that these aspects, in combination with behaviors that are cognitively responsive to the child's needs, including the provision of rich verbal input and maintaining and expanding on the child's interests, provide the range of support necessary for multiple aspects of a child's learning.

In some cases, Natalie (2010) states that teachers communicate directly with parents all the time. Soon after the beginning of the year, each teacher sends home a letter to parents saying what's going to be taught for the upcoming quarter, making some observations about what the children will need to know, reminds parents about what they should be emphasizing in the next few weeks, which projects, etc. will be needed, and some materials parents can use (e.g. websites, math games, and so on).

Landry (2014) state that acceptance of the child's interests with responses that are prompt and contingent to what the child signals supports learning, in part, by facilitating the child's development of mechanisms for coping with stress and novelty in his or her environment. With repeated positive experiences, a trust and bond develop between the child and parent that in turn allow the child to greatly internalise this trust and then generalise their learning to

new experiences. This sensitive support promotes the child's continued participation in learning activities with his or her parent.

2.2 Views of School teachers on Parental involvement in Early Childhood Learning

The success of parental involvement at the Nkulumane cluster is also dependent on the attitude of teachers towards parents. Therefore it was necessary to study how teachers viewed parental involvement.

Increasing focus has been paid to the early childhood years as the foundation of children's academic success. The importance of high quality learning environments, qualified staff and family involvement with early care and education programs have all been identified as critical factors in improving young children's early learning experiences and their subsequent educational outcomes (Naptime Academy. com (2016). This report focuses on one critical aspect in supporting high quality learning experiences for young children – that of family involvement in early care and education settings. Family is the primary influence of young children and sets the stage for how they grow and develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The more parents are involved with their children, the more positive learning and general life outcomes occur (Baker, Goesling & Letendre, 2002)

Hornby (2000) states that teachers from both sectors often report barriers to building ongoing relationships with each other, particularly in larger urban areas. Children from early childhood settings do not necessarily feed into a local school and therefore teachers from both sectors require time to manage a large number of contacts and relationships.

Furthermore, children of involved parents typically show greater levels of achievement, more acceptable behaviour and greater motivation in school (Keith and Cool (1992) cited in Nye,

Turner and Schwartz (2006). Students who excel academically often have parents who are interested in their children's learning from an early age and who engage in supportive learning activities, such as rhyming and shared book reading Wade and Moore, (1998) as cited in Vanobbergen, Daens and Tilburg (2005). It is important that the key role families play in supporting their child's learning at home and in early care and education programs be understood, facilitated and nurtured across the array of services and programs available to young children and their families.

There should be good relationship between teachers and parents if their early childhood learning is to bear meaningful fruits. Parents are supposed to be involved in various committees, fundraising activities and participation in many social activities that are beneficial for promoting education of early childhood learners. This study sought to solicit the views of teachers on parental involvement in early childhood learning in Nkulumane B Cluster.

Natalie (2010) states that teachers want parents to co-teach from home. Although that would be an ideal it is not a perfect world and in reality it is an unexpected demand considering the challenges many families face such as unemployment, multiple low paying jobs to meet their family's basic needs. A reasonable expectation is that there is open communication between parent and teacher. Natalie (2010) states that when teachers make a sincere effort to know the family and make a genuine connection, the rest falls into place. Families will see the importance of making sure their children are ready to learn where learning should be taking place (in the classroom). Homework is not an extension of classroom learning but to reinforce what was taught. Parents want to feel valued and respected by teachers. They want teachers that genuinely care about teaching. They want teachers that raise the standards and have great expectation for all children.

2.3 The extent of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Learning

Naptime academy.com (2016) states that when parents and teachers work together to help a child achieve his or her childhood milestones, it creates a safe environment in which to grow and learn. Learning how to engage parents with a hands-on approach is the best way to ensure the children achieve their full potential in social and cognitive development. Partnering with parents in early childhood education allows children to see important people in their lives working together. When children see positive interactions between parents and educators, they begin to understand the importance of building healthy relationships. Children feel safer with teachers and staff who are visibly respected and trusted by their parents, and this allows them to feel comfortable and focus on learning. Parents know their children and understand their specific needs better than the teacher. Encouraging parents to share their knowledge can help create a more rewarding environment for a child by giving you a 'bigger picture' of their needs.

There are many extents which parents can be involved in early childhood education that include telephone and written home-school communications, attending school functions, parents serving as classroom volunteers, parent teacher conferences, reading, homework assistance/ tutoring, home educational enrichment, and parent involvement in decision making and other aspects of school governance (Edwards, David, & Allared, 1999 and Williams & Ullman, 2002). Research indicates that pupils and parents consider homework and home learning to be an important part of school life and the evidence shows a positive relationship between time spent on homework and achievement at secondary school level. On the whole, learners have positive attitudes towards homework and feel that it is vital to help them do well at school. Positive attitudes to homework are linked with positive attitudes to school. The researcher shall further explore each of the kinds of parental involvement in

details. This study sought to ascertain the kind of parental involvement in early childhood learning practised by parents in Nkulumane B Cluster.

Wade and Moore (1998) in Vanobbergen, Daens and Tilburg (2005) states that parents can be bear too much, and working with them can cause the most dedicated teacher to be frustrated. But from the parent's perspective, dealing with teachers can be a ridden with anxiety ordeal. The biggest problem stemming from the disconnect between parents and teachers is that students are caught in the middle, their potential to advance drawn back. Teachers are experts in the field of education, but parents often have crucial information about their child's learning style, habits of studying and attitude that could be important. The teacher's goal is to foster each student's academic progress, and taking the parent's input into considerations will often advance the main goal.

2.3.1 Communication between parent and teachers

American Federation of Teachers (2007). states that personal contact, including conferences, home visits, telephone calls, and curriculum nights or open houses, seems to be the most effective form of communication and may be among the most familiar. However, the establishment of effective school-home communication has grown more diverse as society has changed. Good two-way communication between families and schools is a necessity for a learner's success. Positive partnerships also benefit parents and teachers.

Parent benefits

Baker and Petitt (2004) states that positive parent-school communications benefit parents. The manner in which schools communicate and interact with parents affects the extent and quality of parents' home involvement with their children's learning. For example, schools that communicate bad news about student performance more often than acknowledging students'

excellence will discourage parent involvement by making parents feel they cannot effectively help their children.

Baker and Petitt (2004) states that parents also benefit from being involved in their children's education by getting ideas from school on how to help and support their children, and by learning more about the school's academic program and how it works. Perhaps most important, parents benefit by becoming more confident about the value of their school involvement. Parents develop a greater appreciation for the pivotal role they play in their children's education.

Student Benefits

Baker and Petitt (2004) states that substantial evidence exists showing that parent involvement benefits students, including raising their academic achievement. There are other advantages for children when parents become involved — namely, increased motivation for learning, improved behaviour, more regular attendance, and a more positive attitude about homework and school in general.

Teacher Benefits

American Federation of Teachers (2007). states that research shows that parental involvement can free teachers to focus more on the task of teaching children. Also, by having more contact with parents, teachers learn more about students' needs and home environment, which is information they can apply towards being able to meet those needs. Parents who are involved tend to have a more positive view of teachers, which results in enhanced morale of the teacher.

Baker and Petitt (2004) states that building partnerships with parents takes time and constant communication. One of the most important things one can do to build trust is to provide resources for parents. Allowing parents to borrow books and other learning tools helps them to encourage good learning behavior at home. Handouts, videos, and parenting books are all helpful materials for families.

Young children flourish when the adults looking after them work well together. Teachers and parents can share discussions about how children are performing and how best to meet their needs. Baker and Petitt (2004) states that families know their child's strengths, personality, moods and behaviours very well. Teachers can also get to know a child well through their day to day experiences and can share their understanding of how children develop. When families and teachers work together they can exchange information and can focus on meeting each child's needs and supporting their development.

2.3.2 Partnerships between parents and teachers

Baker and Petitt (2004) states that partnerships allow children to see important people in their lives working well together. When children see positive communication between their parents or carers and staff, they begin to learn it is important to build healthy relationships. For example, children who see their parents communicating well and being friendly with teachers can learn this is how to relate well to others. Children can trust and feel safe with teachers who are respected and supported by their family and who respect and support their family as well. Children can then feel comfortable at their early childhood centre and enjoy positive experiences. Children feel valued and important when families and teachers support and respect each other equally and take an interest in their lives. Parents who are positively involved with their children can help minimise mental health problems.

American Federation of Teachers (2007) states that in a partnership, families and staff can share their experiences with each other and their understanding of how their bond is important to a child. Children are still developing and find it hard to separate their experiences from one environment to another, like being comfortable in the care of those at home as well as teachers. When families and staff work together children are more able to negotiate differences between environments, such as home and the early childhood centre , as they see the adults who care for them working together. For example, children are able to manage different rules and routines in different environments when they have an understanding of what the rules and routines are and when they are given support. The higher the chance of being predictable in care, the easier it is for children to develop a sense of who they are and what they can expect from those around them.

2.4 Summary

The chapter presented literature on the pertinent issues of the research. Literature discussed on the various types of parental involvement, benefits of parental involvement and factors leading to a lack of parental involvement in the early childhood learning. The next chapter will present the methodology of the research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the review of related literature. This section of the study will present the research methods used in the study of the level of involvement of parents in the learning of early childhood learning in Nkulumane B Cluster in Bulawayo metropolitan province. The chapter will present the research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedures plan, data presentation and analysis plan, validity and reliability of the research instruments and ethical considerations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey design in the study of the level of parental involvement in the education of early childhood learners. The reason for adopting a descriptive design was that it offers a more precise analysis of aspects of the research. Hafeez (2013) states that research design is a roadmap for researchers. It is step by step approach. Research design is prepared keeping in view some basic aspects like the scope of my study, nature of data to be collected , methods that are to be used to collect the data and how the data will be justified. McMillan and Schumader (2006) cited in Kim(2012) states that descriptive research is a

study designed to depict the participants in an accurate way. It is a way of how a study is being done. More simply put, descriptive research is all about describing people who take part in the study.

The descriptive design fitted well in the study because it allowed the researcher to gather information from a selected study population on factors surrounding a problem or a phenomenon and describes systematically a situation to suggest possible explanations for particular relationships between variables and to produce model of these relationships. Furthermore, it encouraged use of survey data which are the two main data collection methods for this study. The descriptive survey design also assisted the researcher to study the opinions, attitudes and experiences of the initial respondents of the study on the level of parental involvement in the education of early childhood learning.

3.2 Population

The study population consisted of teachers and parents of children doing early childhood learning at Nkulumane B Cluster that constitute of Mgombane, Sigombe, Mgogo and Queen Elizabeth Primary Schools. Best and Kahn (1993) and Sax (1989) cited in Berg (2006)note that a study population consists of the total persons where information of the study is desired.

Each school in Nkulumane B in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province had 1 **ECD A and 2 ECD B** classes except for Mgoqo with 2 ECD A and B. There are 20 learners in each of the ECD A classes and 25 learners each in ECD B classes of Sigombe, Mgombane and Queen Elizabeth. Whereas Mgoqo' ECD B classes have 30 learners each. All these ECD classes were manned by a teacher each. Therefore, the overall population of the study was 310 learners and 13 teachers. Thus, making 300 parents or caregivers of children doing early childhood learning.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The participants for the current study were purposively sampled based on their involvement with the Early Childhood Development learners' education. Since the overall study intended to determine the level of parental involvement in the learning of ECD learners and the population was not very large, all the primary schools in Nkulumane B cluster participated in the study.

Two teachers were purposively selected from each of the four schools under study, one ECD A teacher and one ECD B teacher respectively. Gray (2014) notes that purposive sampling assumes that people or entities chosen as the respondents are rich in information required for the study to be a success. Therefore, the researcher chose to balance the ECD A and ECD B teachers who participated in the study because they both provided valid information. The total number of teachers who participated in the study was therefore, eight (8).

Convenience sampling was used to extract eight parents with children attending ECD classes at the four schools under study. Abawaki (2013) indicates that convenience sampling is a non-probability technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Therefore, the researcher conveniently selected two parents from each school to be interviewed, one with an ECD A child and the other with an ECD B child to make a total of eight parents who took part in the study.

Furthermore, the researcher dealt with the politics of access and trust that arised when dealing with unknown personnel given the sensitivity of the matter under study through clearly explaining to the primary participants of the study the purpose of the study and seeking their consent for participation as well as stopping the exercise if they felt so.

3. 4. Data Collection Instruments

The data collection methods and instruments were interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were used on parents, whereas, questionnaires were administered on teachers of early childhood learners. The questionnaires were administered on 8 teachers and interviews were conducted on 8 parents in the 4 schools in Nkulumane B Cluster in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. The researcher used open-ended questionnaires. Farrokhi and Mahoudi-Hamudabad (2012) say an open ended questionnaire calls for the free response in the respondent's own words. The reason for using open ended questionnaires was that this type of questions helped the participants to clarify raised issues. The closed questions were also used for obtaining facts for the study.

The interviews were made face-to-face, where interaction between the researcher and the interviewees was conducted and use of verbal and non-verbal communication was used to obtain more information from the participants of the study. Farrokhi and Mahoudi-Hamudabad(2013) describes a semi-structured interview as a guide with several planned questions but gives room to the interviewer to modify wording and order of questions. This type of an interview was the one used as it gives freedom to the interviewer to probe more or let the interviewee elaborate more on the question.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures Plan

Primary and secondary data was used for collection of data and it was used after the researcher got approval from the Faculty of Education at Midlands State University with an endorsement letter for field research. Thereafter, consent from the relevant ministries and other local authorities was sought from the teachers and parents of early childhood learning to determine the level of parental involvement in the education of early childhood learning at Nkulumane B cluster in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province before any data are to be collected. Prior arrangements were arranged with the parents and teachers on their own venues and

convenient times for the administration of the research instruments. Chiromo (2006) suggests that data collection and procedures entails giving operational details such as how, when and who administers the instruments during the collection of data. When permission has been granted, the researcher distributes the questionnaires with the assistance of test assistants who shall be taught on how to administer self-administered questionnaires to the respondents of the study and how to collect them to avoid chances of losing them and also enhance confidentiality.

3.6 Data presentation and analysis plan

Data that was collected using questionnaires was coded on excel and data was computed using the statistical packages for the social sciences (SPSS) version sixteen. The descriptive statistics and factor analysis were used for the analysis of data to find the perceptions, opinions and attitudes on the level of parental involvement in the education of early childhood learners. The data was presented in tabular, pie charts and bar graphs, was discussed, analysed and interpreted whereas, data collected through the use of interviews was narrated, described, analysed and interpreted in thematic coding. This view is supported by Berg (2006) who defines data presentation as the systematic breaking down, organizing and presenting of statistics and logical techniques to describe and evaluate phenomena. This suggest that data collected was analysed according to themes in relation to problem to check whether responses answers or fails to answer the research questions. The use of both questionnaires and interviews was for the purpose of cross tabulation on the findings.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the instruments

The research instruments were developed based on the research questions and sub-problems from different related literature review of the study. The data collection methods ensured the

validity of the research as more than two methods of data collection methods were used. The researcher's supervisor verified and confirmed the instruments before data collection process. Pilot testing was conducted to check if the respondents easily understood the questionnaires and the semi-structured interview questions designed for the study. Pilot testing was conducted at Amavene Primary with the questions clearly modified for clarity. Impact (2011) support the use of pilot testing before undertaking the study on the actual sample as they described it as a way of finding out if the instruments used were going to work by first trying it out on a few people. Pilot testing helped the researcher to discover loopholes and areas that needed attention before the actual administration of the research instruments.

3.8 Ethical Considerations of the study

The ethical aspects were addressed by the researcher and these included first obtaining authority to conduct research from the parents and teachers before embarking on the research, the right for self-determination, autonomy, volunteerism, confidentiality, consent and respect for person's freedom. All respondents were politely asked to participate by the researcher prior to the study. Respondents were adequately informed about the nature of the study and the researcher explained that they were free to withdraw anytime during the period of study if they felt so without any reprimand.

3.9 Summary

The chapter presented the methodology used in this research. The research used descriptive research design as it offered more analytical approach in this research. The research had population of 4 school at Nkulumane B Cluster that constitute of Mgombane, Sigombe, Mgogo and Queen Elizabeth Primary Schools. From the 4 schools purposive sampling was used to select the teachers. Parents were selected using a convenience sampling method. The

data collection methods and instruments were interviews and questionnaires. The next chapter presented the findings of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to find out the levels of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education in Nkulumane B Cluster primary schools. This chapter deals with data presentation, analysis and discussion of the research findings. The respondents of this research study were teachers and parents of learners from the four primary schools found in Nkulumane B Cluster. The return rate of the teachers' questionnaires was 100% whilst eight parents interviews were conducted.

4.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents.

The demographic information for teachers was derived from items two to three of the teachers' questionnaires. It was comprised of qualifications and teaching experiences of the teachers. The return rate of the teachers' questionnaires was 100%. The demographic information for the parents was derived from items three to four of the parents' interview

guide. It was comprised of employment status and level of education. Eight interviews were conducted successfully.

4.1.1 Teachers' Professional Qualifications

The teachers' qualifications play a vital role in the execution of their duties. Therefore, the study sought to have an idea of the qualifications of the teachers who took part in the study. All the teachers who took part in the study were holders of Diplomas in Education. There were no teachers who were degree holders. All of them were, therefore, qualified to teach Early Childhood Education learners. Thus, this outcome was an indicator that all the teachers involved in the study were professionally trained and had the capacity to understand the influence of parental involvement in their children's education.

4.1.2 Teachers' Teaching Experiences

The study also needed to know the teachers' experiences to teaching ECE learners. Their experiences are shown in figure 1 below.

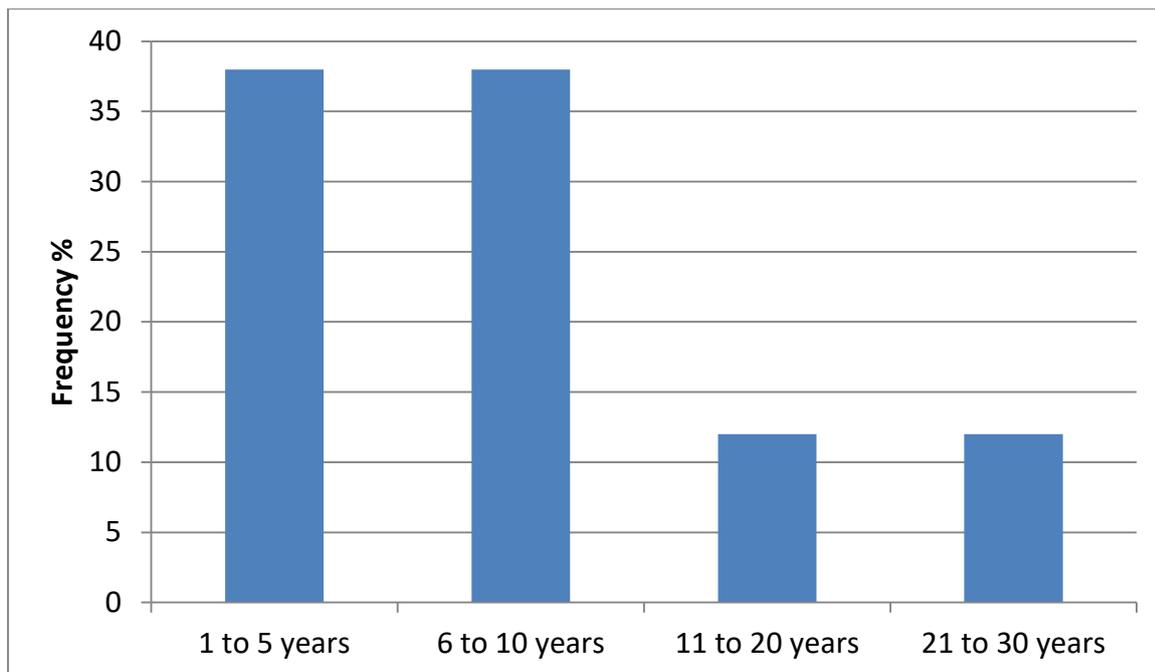


Figure 1: Teacher ' Teaching Experiences

Figure 1 shows that three teachers (38%) had an experience range of one to five years and another three (38%) who had an experience range of six to ten years. One teacher (12%) had an experience range of eleven to twenty years whilst another one (12%) had the twenty one to thirty years' experience range. This information shows that the majority of the teachers had sufficient experience of teaching ECE learners.

4.1.3 Parents' Employment Status

The study needed to understand the employment status of the parents who took part in the research study. The results of the interviews conducted are shown below;

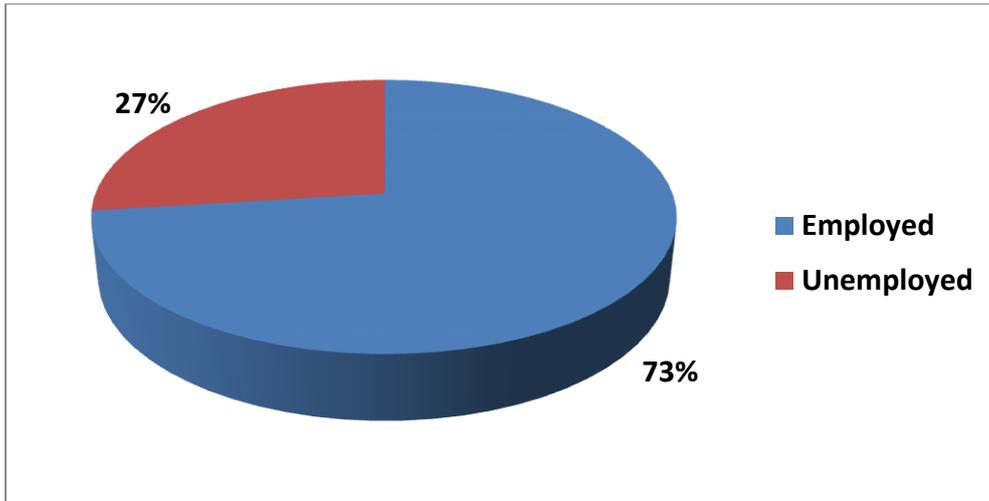


Figure 2: Parents' Employment Status

The data in Figure 2 shows that the majority of the parents (73%) who took part in the study were employed whilst twenty seven percent were unemployed. The information was important to the study because the employment status of the parents could influence their active involvement in their children's education. Their availability could be affected by their other commitments.

4.1.4 Parents' Level of Education

The researcher sought to know the parents' levels of education and relate it to the study findings. The results are shown in Figure 3 below;

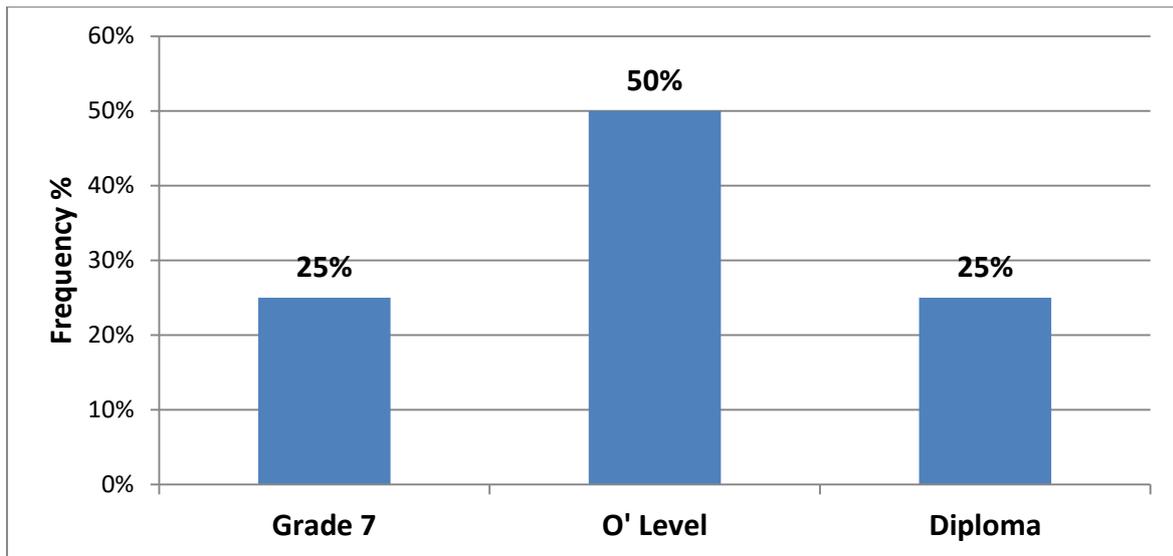


Figure 3: Parents' Level of Education

The above data shows that the majority (50%) of the parents did their education up to ‘O’ Level whilst second placed (25%) went up to Grade 7. Equally 25% had the highest qualification of a Diploma. These levels of education could influence how parents perceived the importance of their involvement in their children’s education.

4.2 The Impact of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

This section addresses the impact the low rate of parental involvement has had in Early Childhood Education as perceived by the teachers and parents who participated in the study. Six teachers (75%) had similar views. They believed that the low rate of parental involvement was causing learners not to be serious with their school work. They highlighted that learners were aware that their parents would not make any follow ups on their school work hence they do not take their school work serious. They also indicated a rampant shortage of resources due to the low rate of parental involvement. A teacher from one of the schools under study said;

The learners lack resources and they can play truancy knowing that their parents cannot find out what is happening at school.

Another teacher from the same school noted the following;

Learners play truancy and there is lack of resources as parents are not asked to help. Teaching and learning becomes expensive as the school has to buy all the required resources.

On the other hand, the responses on the impact of parental involvement or lack of it came from two groups of parents; those who said they were involved in their children's learning (39%) and those who said they were not involved (61%). All the parents who said they were not involved complained that their children were not doing well at school. The following is a list of comments that they gave;

- The child does not perform well and makes him lack confidence.
- As parents we are not aware of how we can help our children.
- There is no improvement in my child's performance. It is deteriorating.
- It is not good as my child's progress is slow.

Thus, their views concurred with the teachers' views that the non-involvement of the parents in their children's education was having a negative effect on the learners.

The other group of parents who said they were involved in their children's education was happy with the progress of their children in their learning. They gave the following comments;

- A lot of improvement has been seen as my child is eager to learn.
- Performance has improved.
- It has helped my child to like school and improve in her work.

- My involvement has made my child to improve a lot in her work

Only two teachers (25%) who were against parental involvement highlighted that they were happy with the situation where parental involvement was minimal to avoid what they perceived as disturbances caused by these parents when they visit schools. One of the teachers indicated the following;

Time allocated is not adequate to cater for both the parents and the learners at the same time. Some learners tend to be uncontrollable in front of their parents.

Additionally, another teacher from the same school further indicated the following;

Children tend to disobey their teachers knowing that if the teacher beat the child the parent will scold the teacher.

The same teacher went further to note the following;

Due to the packed timetable parents can be a disturbance if they are involved too much.

4.3 The Views of School Teachers on Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

4.3.1 School Policies on Parental Involvement in their Children's Education

In order to have an in-depth understanding of teachers' views on parental involvement in ECE learners' education at their schools, the teachers were asked to indicate their schools' policies with regard to parental involvement in their children's education at ECE level. The data collected showed that the majority of teachers (63%) out rightly indicated that they were

no clear policies on parental involvement in their children's education at their schools. The other 3 teachers (30%) were not so clear in their responses but indicated the following. One teacher said the following;

Sometimes parents go to school when they have issues of concern.

Another teacher indicated this;

They sometimes call parents if there is a great need.

The third teacher highlighted the following;

Parents are free to come and consult for the child any time.

The three responses above reflect that parental involvement in their children's education was minimal. One is made to believe that parents were only involved in their children's education when there was an issue to solve or when consulting about their children.

4.3.2 Barriers Attributing to Low Parental Involvement in their Children's Education

The researcher also sought to find out the barriers attributing to low parental involvement in their children's education. Five teachers (63%) generally blamed the school authorities for the barriers whilst the other three teachers (37%) blamed the parents. A teacher from one of the schools put the blame on the school authorities when she indicated the following;

Low parental involvement is caused by lack of transparency by the administrators. They do not inform parents what they are supposed to do to support the learner.

Additionally another teacher from another school further said the following;

The lack of transparency by school authorities on their planned activities.

Furthermore, a teacher from another school indicated the following;

Lack of transparency to parents on issues like development or funds by the administration.

The above statements show that the school authorities were to blame for the low rate of parental involvement in their children's education. This was the same response from the parents' views as shown in Figure 4 below;

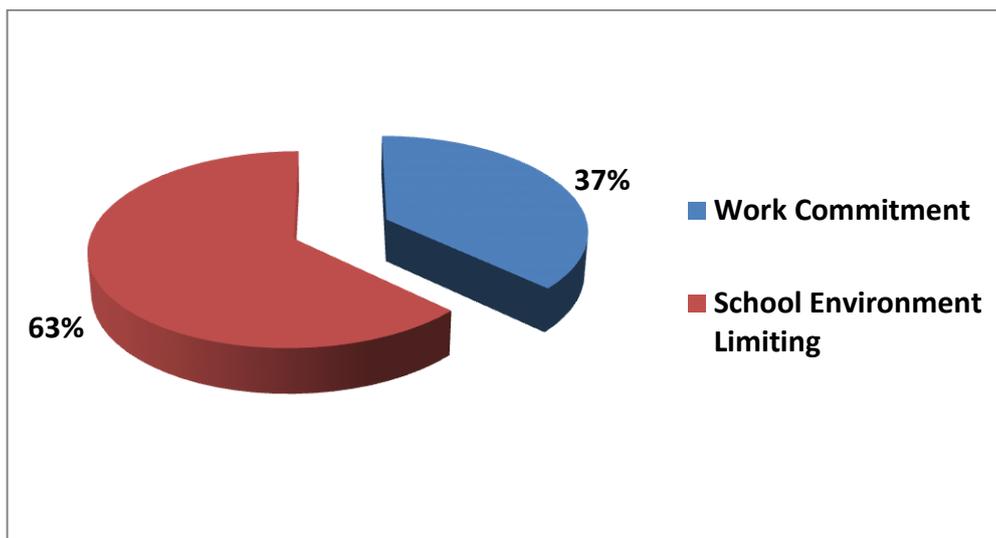


Figure 4: Parents' views on Barriers to Active Parental Involvement in their Children's Learning

Figure 4 above shows that most of the parents (63%) believe that the school environment is the major barrier to active parental involvement in their children's education. A significant number (37%) said that they were usually committed to work for them to actively participate in their children's learning. This was echoed by three teachers who put the blame on the parents by indicating that the parents were ignorant and preferred to attend to other commitments other than school commitments. One parent gave an example of her commitment elsewhere when she said the following;

As a hairdresser most of the time I am always busy. I have clients till late hours making it difficult for me to be involved in any school activities.

4.3.3 Suggestions on any activities that could increase parental involvement in their children's education.

With regard to activities that could help improve parental involvement in their children's education the researcher asked the teachers and the parents to indicate suggestions on activities that could increase parental involvement. Data collected showed a variety of activities in which parents can be involved in. All the eight teachers who responded to the questionnaires indicated a significant number of suggestions including the two teachers who previously were not in support of involving parents in their children's education. They listed the following school activities where parents could be involved in;

- Gardening
- Feeding programme as cooks
- Sporting activities
- Using parents as resource persons
- Having consultation days
- Having fund raising activities
- Involving parents in planning school activities
- Having regular meetings with parents
- Involving the parents in cleaning the ECD play centres

One teacher went to the extent of suggesting that administrators should be trained on the issue of parental involvement. Another one suggested that teachers should create Whatsapp chat groups comprising parents and be open for chats during the evenings.

The parents had their own list of solutions to the barriers which prevented them from taking an active part in their children's learning. The results are shown in Table 4 below;

Table 1: Solutions Suggested by Parents on how to Improve Parental Involvement in their children’s Education

Responses	Frequency	%
Hold frequent consultations	5	63
Hold regular parents meetings	4	50
Be involved in school activities and projects	2	25

Table 1 above shows that fifty eight percent (63%) of the parents proposed that schools should hold frequent consultation days at their schools. Some schools were having irregular consultations whilst others were not having them at all as evidenced in the study. One parent said the following;

Schools should hold constant consultations which are official so that we can easily ask for permission especially for us parents who are working. It is sometimes difficult for us to persuade our bosses when we have nothing officially written to invite us to school.

A total of four parents (50%) suggested that schools should hold regular parents’ meetings where parents would be addressed on different issues concerning learners and school development. One parents said the following;

Schools should call meetings were we can be given ideas on how to help our children, for example, homework, so that we know the level at which we must help them.

Twenty five percent of the parents indicated that schools should involve parents in school activities such as school project. Some parents with the requisite skills could be asked to provide their services to offset their debts with the schools. One parent said the following;

Schools can invite parents to take part in school projects to help them to be able to pay fees. Parents can be involved in projects like building or gardening which we as parents have knowledge in so that we raise money for paying fees instead of the school employing people from elsewhere.

Thus, having regular consultations and frequent meetings dominated the solutions given by both teachers and parents.

4.4 Parental Involvement in their Children's Education

The researcher sought to find out how much parents were involved in their children's learning at their schools. Two teachers (25%) from one school indicated that they involved parents in activities such as cleaning the ECD play centre, buying resources, organizing trips and cooking for the learners in the school feeding programme. The rest of the teachers' responses (75%) were among the list below;

- They were involved with parents only when they came during consultation days.
- Parents visited schools only when they were called for parents meetings.
- They met parents when they came bring fees receipts for recording.
- They met parents when coming to collect their children.

A closer look at the above shows that only one school had clearly planned activities for parental involvement in their children's education. Other schools' responses show that parents were involved in non-voluntary routine activities. There were not purposefully planned meetings for a particular programme.

The parents on the other hand were asked if their schools were doing enough to create conducive environments for free parental involvement in their children's education. Table 2 below shows the results;

Table 2: Parents’ Views on if the Schools were Doing Enough to Create a Conducive Environment for Active Parental Involvement in their Children’s Education

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	3	37
No	5	63
Total	33	100

The results above show that the majority of the parents (63%) said that the school environments were not conducive to active and free parental involvement in their children’s education. One parent said the following;

Our school only holds meetings once a year and no consultation so it’s not enough.

Furthermore, one of the parents said the following;

The teachers are resistant. They are always pretending to be busy. No consultation is made and the head does not entertain our views.

Thus, the above sentiments point to low parental involvement in school activities. It looks like the environments in the majority of the schools were not conducive to active and free parental involvement in their children’s education.

The minority (37%) of the parents who said yes commented that they were free to visit their school schools any time to consult about their children’s learning. One parent said the following;

We come for meetings once in a while and we are allowed to ask teachers on the progress of our children.

Another parent said the following;

Yes we go for meetings and consult with the teachers when possible.

The above statements indicate that these parents believed that their involvement was limited to meetings and consulting teachers about the progress of their children. Only parents from one school mentioned a variety of activities such as their involvement in projects like making building blocks and cleaning the school grounds in which they were involved in.

The parents were also asked to describe how they were involved in their children's learning.

Table 2 below shows the responses;

Table 2: Parents' Views on how they are Involved in their Children' Learning

Responses	Frequency
Paying fees	6
Providing their children with school requirements	5
Attending school meetings	3
Cleaning school grounds	2
Helping their children with school work	2

Table 1 above shows that out of the eight parents who participated in the study six (6) indicated that paying fees for their children was one of their main responsibility followed by five who believed that providing their children with all the school requirements was part of their responsibility. Three parents noted attending meetings as part of their involvement, two said cleaning the school grounds, and another two said helping their children with school work. One parent said the following;

Paying fees on time so that my child can perform well at school and not be sent back home to collect fees.

Furthermore, another parent said the following;

I pay fees only and leave everything else to the school and the teacher as I would have done my part. If my child fails I blame it on the teacher.

It is clear from the above sentiments that most of the parents were not actively involved in school activities except for one school where the parents indicated that they occasionally cleaned their school's ECD play centre, classrooms and communicated with teachers using phones.

The parents were asked if their schools created communication channels with them and if they informed them on critical issues about the education of their children. Table 2 below shows the results;

Table 3: Parents' Views on if Communication Channels were Available to Them

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	5	63
No	3	37
Total	8	100

Table 3 above reflects that the majority of parents (63%) agreed that there were communication channels between the school and the parents whilst a significant number (37%) said that there were no communication channels. Only parents from one school indicated a significant number of communication channels such as the use of communication books, newsletters, phones and consulting about the progress of their children. The majority of parents from other schools agreed that there were communication channels but with reservations. This is evidenced by the following comments given by the parents;

Yes, but it's minimally done because some things are just being done without the school consulting us.

Additionally, another parent indicated the following;

Yes but they tell us only on important issues where money is concerned but mostly we see things happening.

Those parents who indicated lack of communication channels had the following comments;

We are not told most things except when schools are demanding money for fees and usually we see the kids being sent back home without any notice given to us.

Another parent said the following;

We are not told anything we just see things happening.

Furthermore, one of the parents said this;

We are only called when money is required like right now they need money for the feeding programme and building the ECD block.

4.12 Discussion of Findings

4.12.1 Lack of Parental Involvement

The majority of the teachers who took part in the study were of a view that the low rate of parental involvement in their children's education was having a negative effect in the progress of the learners in their learning. They noticed that it was difficult to help the learners when their parents were not being actively involved in their children's education. They noted that their work was being made difficult by the lack of parental support in terms of resources and consultation about the learners. A close relationship with the parents would help them teach the learners effectively. Tshuma and Ncube (2016) encouraged parents to fully participate in their children's education as it was an investment. Children tend to perform better if they are involved.

The above findings were commensurate with parents' views on the impact of lack of their involvement in their children's education. They indicated that they were not pleased with the performances of their children. They could do nothing to help as they were not actively involved in the school activities. Thus, they were not aware of how they can help in the learning of their children other than paying fees for their children. Lebopa (2010) suggested that orientation and training activities should be provided for parents as this promotes the effectiveness of parental involvement. It was evident that the lack of active parental involvement in their children's education was having a negative effect on the progress of the learners in the majority of the schools.

Only one school recorded a high rate of parental involvement and had praise comments about the progress of their children. The parents from the school indicated that they were happy with progress being made by their children and attributed this positive progress to their close association with their school. Fitzgerald, (2004) and Flouri, Buchannan, & Bream, (2002) comment that many studies point out that parental involvement in early childhood learning helps in promoting the child's cognitive development. This entails that the active involvement of parents in their children's education was yielding positive results for these parents. This is further cemented by Keith (1999) who postulates that children of involved parents typically display higher levels of achievement, more acceptable behaviour and greater motivation in school.

4.12.2 Teacher and Parent relationships

The teachers' responses on the situation on the ground with regard to parental involvement in their children's education showed minimal involvement by the parents. There were no clear policies on the involvement of parents in their children's education. What came to light

was that parents only visited the schools when they had issues to solve. They were not being invited to school for other school programmes or projects except when there were issues where funds were needed from the parents. Knopf and Swick (2007) warned against this approach as it led to mistrust of parents on the activities of the administration. They felt their objective was to only suck them financially.

The main barrier to active involvement of the parents in their children's education was laid on the negative attitude by school authorities towards the parents. The teachers put the blame of low parental involvement squarely on the school authorities. They indicated that the school authorities were secretive about what was happening in their schools. The parents were not being informed about the school activities so that they can take part and help the school where they were able to. Tshuma and Ncube (2016) cemented this view when they said parents are committed in taking part in their children's learning but the problem is they do not know exactly what to do. They were not engaged in other school activities other than calling for meetings to ask for money. Thus, the school environments for most of the schools that took part in the study were not conducive enough to allow for active parental involvement in their children's education.

The parents' involvement in their children's education was generally minimal. This was being caused by the school environments which were not conducive for parental involvement. The blame was put on school authorities who were not willing to actively involve the parents in their school plans. The parents blamed the negative attitudes of school authorities at their schools for their lack of active involvement in their children's education.

With regard to the above barriers most teachers and parents suggested that schools should include parents in their school plans. They indicated that schools should have regular consultations instead of only once a year. They also suggested that schools should have regular parent meetings where they can share ideas for the development of their schools and also involve them in different school activities. This is also suggested by Edwards, David, & Allared, (1999) and Williams & Ullman, (2002) who indicate that there are many extents which parents can be involved in early childhood education that include telephone and written home-school communications, attending school functions, parents serving as classroom volunteers, parent teacher conferences, reading, homework assistance/ tutoring, home educational enrichment, and parent involvement in decision making and other aspects of school governance. The parents were adamant that they could assist their schools if they were actively involved in activities or projects. Services such as building and plumbing could be offered by some parents who had the knowledge in those areas. The results show that the parents had a lot to offer if they were allowed to participate in the development of their schools.

4.12.3 Extent of Parental Involvement

The findings of the study show that teachers were mainly involved with the parents in unavoidable instances such as meeting the parents when they collect their children from school or when parents bring fees payment receipts to the class teachers. There were not much of school activities in which the parents were actively involved in for the benefit of the learners and the school at large. Only one school out of the four schools that took part in the study had clearly planned school activities in which parents could partake for the benefit of their children and the school at large.

The above teachers' views on the extent of parental involvement in their children's education concurred with the parents' views. The findings show that they were not actively involved in their children's education. The parents from most of the schools that took part in the study indicated that they were involved in the normal routines of going to school to pay fees and providing their children with school requirements such as uniforms and stationary. They were not involved in any other school activities planned by the school. They only saw things happening and were invited when the schools wanted money from them. Therefore, the parents were not aware of how they could help their children to learn better. Baker and Pettit (2004) state that parents also benefit from being involved in their children's education by getting ideas from school on how to help and support their children, and by learning more about the school's academic program and how it works. Only one school out of the four schools had clearly defined activities such as inviting parents to clean the school grounds and ECD classrooms, inviting parents to work in the garden and organizing trips in consultations with the parents.

Most of the parents indicated that their schools had channels of communication. However, the dominant channels of communication were communication books. Only parents from one school indicated other communication systems such as newsletters that inform the parents about the developments in the schools and messaging on social media. American Federation of Teachers (2007) emphasizes the importance of communication channels when it states that personal contact, including conferences, home visits, telephone calls, and curriculum nights or open houses, seems to be the most effective form of communication and may be among the most familiar. Thus, most of the time, the parents are not aware of what would be happening in their schools because of lack of effective communication.

4.13 Summary

The foregoing chapter presented the findings of the study. The findings were presented according to the following themes; The impact of parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education; Teachers' views on parental involvement in Early Childhood Education and Parental involvement in their children's education. Therefore, the next chapter presents the summary of the survey as a whole as well as the major conclusions made by the researcher. Some recommendations were also made. These were based on the data presented in the foregoing chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish the level of parental involvement in their children's Early Childhood Education in the Nkulumane B Cluster primary schools. This study was guided by the following research questions; What is the impact of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education? What are the views of school teachers on parental involvement in early childhood education? How much are parents involved in Early Childhood Education in Nkulumane B Cluster? In this chapter, the researcher's attention was focused on giving a summary of the research project as a whole as well as offering some conclusions based on the data analysis presented in the previous chapter. Some recommendations were made in response to the findings of the study.

5.1 Summary

The main focus of the study was to establish the extent of parental involvement in their children's Early Childhood Education in the Nkulumane B Cluster primary schools. The main issues addressed in the study were the impact of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education, teachers' views on parental involvement in Early Childhood Education and the extent of parental involvement in their children's education. It was hoped that this survey will offer a basis for constructive action in the design of school programmes or activities.

The study had the assumptions that the respondents who were the teachers and the parents would cooperate and provide reliable responses. However, the study was limited in that it was involving only primary schools in Nkulumane B Cluster and did not involve all the stakeholders of education such as the school administrators.

The literature review was presented in form of sub-sections which included the influence of parental involvement in Early Childhood Learning, views of teachers on parental involvement in Early Childhood Learning and the extent of parental involvement in Early Childhood Learning.

The target population was the four primary schools in Nkulumane B Cluster. All the four schools were used in the study. In these schools the following samples were raised; eight (8) Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers and eight (8) parents with Early Childhood Development children learning at the four schools under study. The study had one set of questionnaires for teachers and interview guide for parents which were used to collect data. The data collected in this study was analysed using more of qualitative procedures and a little of quantitative procedures.

The importance of parental involvement in the education of their children has significant impact on the performance of learners. The teachers highlighted that the low rate of parental involvement in their children's learning was making it difficult for them to teach the learners effectively and therefore, caused slow learners' progress. Parents were not enquiring about their children's progress and also not supportive enough in terms of resources. The parents

also cemented the fact that their children's progress was slow because they were not effectively involved in the learning of their children.

The majority of the teachers indicated that their schools did not have clear policies on parental involvement in their children's education. The teachers blamed the school authorities for the low rate of parental involvement in their children's education. They believed that the school authorities had a negative attitude towards active parental involvement in school activities. Their views were the same as the parents' views who highlighted that the school environments for most of the schools that took part in the study were not conducive enough to allow for active parental involvement in their children's education. However, the study also discovered that a significant number of parents indicated that they could not be involved actively in school activities as they would be at work or committed elsewhere.

The teachers and the parents suggested how the school, the family, and the community could work collaboratively to influence the development and learning of children. They wanted to have regular consultations instead of only once a year. They also suggested that schools should have regular parent meetings where they can share ideas for the development of their schools. The parents also advocated for parents' involvement in school projects where they might even offer their skills and knowledge in certain areas.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that:-

- Parental involvement in their children' education was minimal. Their involvement was basic, thus, only visited schools when paying fees, collecting their children and attending parents meetings where school authorities would be asking for money.

- The school environments were not conducive for active parental involvement in school activities. School authorities exhibited negative attitudes towards active parental involvement in their children's education. They rarely invited parents to take part in educational or developmental school activities.
- There was little collaboration between the school and the parents towards the education of the learners. Parents were observing things happening in their schools without their participation.
- The element of trust was lacking between the parents and the schools. The school authorities did not trust the parents to involve them actively in school activities whilst on the other hand the parents perceived this with doubt.
- Parental involvement was confined to paying fees for the learners, accompanying and collecting learners to and from school, attending to problematic issues and attending meetings were the schools will be asking for funds from them.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researcher came up with the following recommendations that will help improve parental involvement in their children's learning.

5.3.1 School administrators and parents may find that frequent communication between home and school may be beneficial. Multiple strategies such as regular consultations with parents, parents meetings, emails, newsletters, social media such as Whatsapp, and phone calls may be used to ensure effective communication between the home and school. Thus, it may be critical to develop two-way communication with all parents throughout the year, not just with the parents of students with issues.

5.3.2 To ensure effective parental involvement, schools may have partnership programs in place that continually develop, implement and improve plans and practices encouraging parental involvement in their children's education. There must be mutual trust and respect between the school and parents. For instance, some parents may participate in classroom activities and share with the learners their expertise or knowledge on a particular subject, chaperoning trips, class room helpers, volunteers in the school yard, donations to the school, attendance at parent meetings and especially twice a year parent teacher conferences.

5.3.3 Making the parents feel welcomed and comfortable is another key component to building a partnership between the school and parents. School authorities must provide a welcoming and inviting atmosphere to make the school less intimidating and more comfortable for those parents who have negative memories or have had negative experiences in the school. Interactions between the school and home need to be more positive, requiring teachers to make contact with parents throughout the year and not just when problems arise. They should feel recognized and valued. It may be beneficial for school authorities to attempt to involve all parents in the education of their children and make the educational experience more positive for everyone involved.

5.3.4 With some of the parents committed elsewhere such as at work, it may be more difficult to make contact with them. With these circumstances, it may be critical to make extra efforts to allow opportunities for all parents to be involved in their children's education. Parental involvement is not confined to active participation at the school during school hours, but schools may find it beneficial to provide multiple opportunities for parents to become involved. While it may be impossible to require parental involvement at the school, it is

imperative to provide multiple opportunities for parents to be involved in the educational process.

5.3.5 School authorities should be staff developed on the topic of active parental involvement so that they will be able to utilise the assistants they will get from the parents in the education of the learners.

5.3.6 School authorities should organise workshops for parents to educate them about how they can take an active part in the education of their children.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Reading

5.4.1 The study was only confined in Nkulumane B Cluster primary schools. Similar research could be done in all parts of the country.

5.4.2 Another research study could be undertaken on the same topic but this time use teacher interviews to collect information from the teachers and also include school administrators as the respondents.

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4. Can you suggest any practices or activities that could increase parental involvement?

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SECTION C

5. What are the benefits of active parental involvement in their children's education?

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6. How is parental involvement affecting Early Childhood Education learners?

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7. Please share any comments that my questions did not allow you to make.

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Rarely:

Always:

Never:

Can you explain why?

5. Do you think the school is doing enough to create an environment where you parents are free to play an active role in the education of your children?

Yes:

No:

Can you explain why?

6. How has your involvement or lack of it impacted the education of your child?

7. What are the reasons that may prevent you as a parent from being involved in the education of your child?

8. What can be done to improve your participation in the education of your child?