

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN SELECTED
URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CHIPATA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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**A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Educational
Psychology**

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DECLARATION

I, **Derick Singogo**, do hereby declare that this dissertation is a result of my own work and the works of other people have been appropriately acknowledged. I further declare that this work has never in part or whole been submitted to the University of Zambia or any other institution for the award of any academic qualification.

Signature of author:

Date:

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation by Derick Singogo is approved as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to establish parents' involvement in children's education in urban primary Schools in Chipata District. With reference to children's education, the study examined ways in which parents get involved, explored the benefits of parental involvement, it also explored the barriers to parental involvement and it established ways of enhancing parental involvement in urban primary schools. Using a descriptive research design, the study utilised a sample of 21 participants from 3 selected urban primary schools in Chipata district which included 3 grade seven class teachers, one from each school, 9 grade seven pupils and 9 parents of the sampled pupils. Teachers and parents were sampled purposively while purposeful random sampling technique was used for pupils. A semi structured interview guide was used to collect data and thematic analysis employed in analysing data. The major findings of the study are that in urban primary schools, parents got involved mainly through the provision of school requisites such as uniforms, pens, pencils and books. They also exposed children to the use of modern technological gadgets such as ipads, Zedupads, laptops and Smart Phones in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, they sponsored educational tours, pupil workshops and school fees. Parents helped children with homework and also attended PTA meetings. On the benefits, the study found that parental involvement motivated the pupils. It was also perceived to have improved academic performance and reduced pupil absenteeism as well as giving teachers an insight of the child's home environment. On the barriers, busy work schedule was the most prominent, low esteem and lack of awareness of their full responsibility as parents. On ways of enhancing parental involvement, the main approach revealed was sensitisation of parents through print and electronic media as well as school initiated workshops, motivating attendance and participation in PTA meetings, advising parents to spare time despite the tight work schedules. The study concluded that parents in urban primary schools were generally involved in children's education, however, it was mainly home based because most them were busy with work schedules and could not effectively participate in school activities. The study recommended effective communication between parents and school staff, initiating sensitisation programmes by school authorities and the Ministry of General Education, office of the Permanent Secretary, through various media such as Radio, Television and workshops to inform parents about the importance of their involvement in children's education.

Key Words: Parental involvement, Children, Education, Urban, Primary School

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Gracious Temwani Singogo who felt my absence every time I was away from home.

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ACRONYMS

CBD: Central Business District

CP: Call Parents

DEBS: District Education Board Secretary

DRGS: Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

EPSSE: Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education

HSSRE: Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee

JETS: Junior Engineers Technicians Scientists

MOE: Ministry of Education

MOGE: Ministry of General Education

PAGE: Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education

PTA: Parent- Teacher Association

PTO: Parent-Teacher Organisation

SES: Socio Economic Status

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides a background to the study. It also brings out the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitation, limitations of the study and operational definitions. Equally provided is a summary of all the issues covered in this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

The importance of involving parents in the education of their children cannot be overemphasised. Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) in Jennings and Bosch (2011, p. 3) view parental involvement as ‘...enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning’. Parental involvement therefore, represents a shared approach to children’s successful education. The concept of parental involvement in children’s education has in recent past attracted a lot of attention to many researchers and other stakeholders. Traditionally, education provision has been viewed as the exclusive job for the experts in the education sector (Bridgemohan, 2002). However, research has shown that there is a positive link between parental involvement and children’s academic achievement (Khajehpoura & Ghazvinia 2011; Arnold, Zeljo & Doctoroff, 2008). This revelation by research means that involving parents in children’s education should not be taken casually but be seriously considered because it offers many opportunities for success. The Centre for Child Well-Being (2010) in Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) notes that parental involvement in children’s education does not only improve a child’s morale, attitude and academic achievement across all subject areas, but it also promotes better behaviour and social adjustment.

Education has an important role in developing high quality human resource and therefore focussing on holistic child development is very important. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that cognitive development, which is the ability to think, understand and process information effectively, is facilitated when a child’s problem solving is guided by adults. Hence, families as the first educators of their children continue to influence their children’s learning and development during the school years, that is, as early as primary school and long afterwards (Jennings & Bosch 2011). This means that, a strong collaboration of parents with school authorities would promote enormous improvements in the academic performance of the child.

Therefore, the educational foundation in primary schools need to be taken care of by identifying features associated with effective parental involvement and boldly encouraging parents to get involved in order to make effective contribution to achieve the desired academic performance in children.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Parental involvement is associated with pupil motivation in its various aspects (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005). When the parents show interest in children's education, children are motivated towards excellence. They constantly look for challenges and persevere in spite of difficulties and show satisfaction towards the school tasks. While teachers are professionally motivating the pupils especially in primary schools, parents should be involved to monitor the home environment to ensure continuity in motivation towards learning (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005)

In the United States of America, Fantuzzo (1999) reports that realising the role parents play in children's education; parental involvement has been the main goal of United States Department of Education. This clearly demonstrates the value that parental involvement has in determining children's achievement, acquisition of skills and enhancing self esteem of children especially in primary schools. In addition to that, Watts and Kidd (2000) posit that no child is sufficient unto oneself. They need the help from others to make fruitful decisions in life. This means that children especially at primary school level need careful support from their parents as well as their teachers to understand the role of education in their life. Teachers play a very important role in facilitating teaching and learning in school. Therefore, good partnerships encourage dialogue, withstand disagreements and provide structures and processes to solve problems. Without a firm base of partnerships, the problems and concerns about schools and students are likely to arise and may affect the education of the children in the process.

Many children, especially in primary schools may not understand the value of taking their education seriously unless they are guided by the parents and the teachers who frequently interact with them. Parental involvement, therefore, provides guidance at home working in collaboration with teachers at school. Kochhar (2013) points out that pupils understand their role in education and handle the day to day problems that they face at home and schools through effective guidance by parents and teachers. However, for successful guidance of these pupils in primary schools, parents need to be involved as much as the teachers do. This,

therefore, becomes a matter of concern as to how involved parents are in urban primary schools in Chipata district.

It is also important to note that in many countries in the world, parental involvement in education emerged a critical issue of concern in the 1980s where countries took a greater role than before in monitoring and maintaining academic standards, while communities became more watchful on the expense of public education (Majzub & Salim, 2011). It was in this regard, that school-community partnerships started growing in order to promote effective parents' participation in education provision (Ministry of Education, 1996; Apling & Jones, 2000). Research consistently shows that partnership between parents and schools correlates with higher academic performance for children and is a key to addressing drop-out at schools (National Education Association, 2008). Truly, it is a well known fact that higher academic achievement is the desire for everyone and this positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement should not be taken for granted but be effectively promoted starting at the lowest level like primary school.

The Ministry of Education in Zambia considered the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children by promoting community participation in the governance of schools. All schools are encouraged to embrace Parents-Teachers' Associations (PTAs) as a linkage between the school and community and are one way through which communities can participate in the governance of schools (Ministry of Education, 1996). In some rural schools of Zambia, research has shown that parents get involved through the School Management Committees, extending classroom blocks and construction of teachers' accommodation (Mubanga, 2008).

The 1996 policy document on education in Zambia, *Educating our Future*, emphasised that the existing primary school sector would continue to be a crucial part of the education system and every effort was pledged to be put in place to build a strong foundation at primary school level (Ministry of Education, 1996). With this commitment from the Ministry, parents' involvement cannot be ignored, but be effectively promoted in order to stimulate both home and school environments for the benefit of the learner. The question of interest is how involved are the parents in primary schools. Lungu's (2015) study in rural schools in Chilanga district as also noted by Mubanga's (2008) study in rural primary schools in Mumbwa district revealed that parents provided labour force for construction of schools. In Zambia, studies on parental involvement in urban areas concentrated on special schools

(Nzala, 2008) and acquisition of literacy skill (Chansa-Kabali, (2014). However, there was need to explore features that characterised parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata district.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that there is a positive link between parental involvement and children's academic achievement (Arnold, Zeljo & Doctoroff, 2008; Khajehpoura & Ghazvinia, 2011). It is therefore important that features that characterise effective parental involvement be known by parents, school staff, educational policy makers and other stakeholders regardless of geographical location or background. However, the current situation only has characteristics of parental involvement in rural locality (Mubanga, 2008; Lungu, 2015). Studies on urban settings have mostly focussed on special education schools (Ndhlovu, 2005; Nzala, 2006) and literacy (Chansa-Kabali, 2014; Kangombe, 2013). Parental involvement in children with special education needs, though done in urban school may have limitations in generalising to the rest of the parents. Literacy, on the other hand, does not express holistic features of parental involvement because it is just a component of parental involvement in education. Therefore, leaving urban characteristics unexplored can lead to failure to come up with effective interventions in Zambia intended to improve parental involvement in children's education. This prompted the researcher to embark on the current study which explored parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata district.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish parents' involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

1.5 Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine ways through which parents get involved in their children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.
2. To explore the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

3. To explore the barriers to parental involvement in their children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.
4. To establish ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the research questions used were:

1. In what ways do parents get involved in their children's education in urban primary School in Chipata?
2. What are the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education in urban primary School in Chipata?
3. What are the barriers to parental involvement in their children's education in urban primary School in Chipata?
4. What are the ways of enhancing parental involvement in their children's education in urban primary School in Chipata?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The participation of parents in children's education is of great importance to children's academic achievement. Therefore, makers of policy may find data generated from this study useful in coming up with strategies of encouraging and enhancing meaningful parental involvement in the education process of their children to promote positive academic achievement. Findings from this study may help education planners, including schools to develop suitable approaches for encouraging parental involvement in the education of their children. Furthermore, the study might stimulate further research to be conducted in the field of parental participation in the education process. More research may reveal various ways of encouraging parents' participation in their children's education. The findings of the study may also add information to the already existing body of knowledge.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Epstein (1995) model of overlapping spheres of influence. The aforesaid model argues that schools, families and the community each make a unique

contribution to the holistic development of a child. However, the theory emphasizes that the contributions would only be effective if all parties are aware of their own and each other's roles and practices in creating conducive learning environment for the child. Epstein (1995) developed a framework for defining parental involvement which has six components and these are:

- 1. Parenting:** Enhance parenting and child-rearing skills as well as understanding child and adolescent development at family level. Assist families with setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level.
- 2. Communication:** Communicate school programs and student progress to families through two way effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.
- 3. Volunteering:** Improve involvement of families in terms of volunteer work at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.
- 4. Learning at home:** Involve families with their children in learning activities at home such as homework and other curricular activities and school related decisions.
- 5. Decision making:** Include families as respondents in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through Parent-Teacher Association (PTAs), school councils, committees, and other structures for parents' participation.
- 6. Collaboration with the community:** Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community at large (Epstein, 1995).

Analyzing Epstein model in the Zambian context, it is clear that child-rearing and creating supportive home conditions are the skills that parents within the family structure, need to have as early as early childhood development. Therefore, a two-way communication, school to home and vice versa requires close relationship between parents and teachers which is not very good now in Zambian schools (Lungu, 2015). Parents and the children themselves are part of such advocacy for starting and continuing their education. The platform that provides the space for parents to volunteer and collaborate with school is the School Management that Ministry of Education requires each school to have.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

The study was confined to only three urban primary schools of Chipata District because it aimed at ascertaining the involvement of parents in urban areas. Due to the descriptive nature of the study, a small sample of 21 respondents was desired. This limited the selection of the sample to only three primary schools situated in urban Chipata.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The study only covered urban primary schools of Chipata district comprising a sample of 21 respondents. Therefore, generalisation of the research findings cannot be guaranteed beyond the immediate study sites and population. This is because the sample was small with regards to the country's population. Nevertheless, the study findings ought to hold and could be used in situations with similar socio-economic characteristics to the study sites.

1.11 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Parental involvement: This reflects how much are parents to these children involved in the education of their children if at all they are, do they check their homework and do they talk to their children on the importance of education.

Education: Refers to academic activities involving children both in school and at home such as doing homework and being taught in class by their teachers. It can also refer to the process of learning and acquiring information.

Obstacle: is something that causes difficulty or prevents one thing from happening.

Class teacher: teacher that is responsible to monitor closely daily activities of the pupils of a particular class such as conducting class registration, keeping class record as well as monitoring general behaviour of the pupils.

Special Schools: Refers to schools where only children with special educational needs are taken.

Urban Schools: These are schools within the radius of two kilometres from the Central Business District (CBD).

1.12 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided the background to the study, clearly stating the study problem and the purpose of the study. The chapter also stated the objectives that guided the study as well as research questions which were derived from the objectives. Also covered in this chapter include the significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, operational definitions of terms and finally provides a summary of what was covered in the chapter. The next chapter focuses on the review of the related literature to the topic under study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

The previous chapter provided the introduction to this study while the present chapter focuses on reviewing literature that relates to parental involvement in education. The chapter deals with analyses of related works done internationally and locally on parental involvement in education in relation to the themes developed from the research objectives. The themes include ways of parental involvement in children's education, benefits of parental involvement in children's education, barriers to parental involvement in children's education and ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education. The purpose of this section was to learn from what other scholars have done on the topic and establish boundaries within which the current study could be placed.

2.2 Parental Involvement in Education

Parental involvement in education has been defined in different ways by different scholars across the world (Zelman & Waterman, 1998). Reynolds (1996) defines parental involvement as any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child's development or direct parent participation with a child's school in the interest of the child. This clearly shows that parental involvement plays a critical role in building the successful future of a child. Furthermore, Epstein (1995) described parental involvement in terms of six guidelines to effective parental involvement. These include developing effective parenting skills, facilitating a two way communication, learning at home, parents volunteering in school activities, a consultative decision making as well as collaboration between school and the community. The six guidelines are a clear description of what is involved in effective parental involvement in children's education (Epstein, 1995).

Parental involvement as stated by Bridgemohan (2002) has a different meaning to different individuals while the degree of parental involvement in different phases of education also varies. It is therefore, important to state that the study of parental involvement is complex in that it involves a range of activities undertaken as well as different perspectives held by the parties. The awareness of and participation in schoolwork, understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and student success in schooling and a commitment are typical

characteristics of what describes parental involvement (National Middle School Association (NMSA), 2006).

Furthermore, Cotton and Wikelund (1989) explain parental involvement as several forms in which parents participate in children's education that includes appreciating school functions by being in attendance during such functions as Annual General Meetings, Parents-Teachers conferences and many others. Additionally, many techniques were noted useful by the Family Support America (2001) in explaining successful parental involvement in children's education. These include creating a motivating home environment for pupils, volunteering by organising support for the parents and effective two way communication to keep both parents and the teachers informed of the welfare of the child at school as well as at home. Parental involvement, therefore, requires a dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain. Parents need to be involved in every area of their child's life including cognitive development in order to ensure success in a child's education (Family Support America 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).

2.3 Ways of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Parental involvement is a multifaceted concept closely associated with children's academic achievement. However, the meaning of parental involvement in the *context* of education can easily be misunderstood if not well researched and communicated. Existing literature on characteristics of parental involvement has varied in terms of focus and locality. For example, Kimu (2014), using a qualitative approach, showed that urban parental involvement in education in Kenya was mainly limited to financial contributions and teacher-parent meetings. The study under review is very informative in that it has identified critical areas that characterised parental involvement in children's education in Kenya. Parents' attention was focussed on assistance in finances and meetings with the school staff. It is important to point out that financial contribution may be mistakenly viewed as constituting holistic parental involvement unless a study is conducted to explore features that characterise parental involvement in education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

Similarly, in the United States of America, Epstein (1995) identified typical ways of engaging parents in children's education. Among them include developing parenting skills meant to create a supportive home environment for students as well as engaging in effective home-school communication and vice versa. This two way communication between the family and school create a mutual understanding between the two parties that may help develop

parenting skills meant to create school-like home environment. Parents also need to facilitate learning at home where children begin to view learning activities at home similar to those at school (Epstein, 2011). Furthermore, parents need to volunteer in school activities such as helping in tutoring to supplement teachers' efforts in facilitating the teaching and learning process. There is also need for parents to participate in consultative decision making in schools to ensure that issues affecting children's education are collectively addressed. The community and the school need to collaborate to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development (Epstein, 1995). The study under review is very informative in that it brought out critical features that characterise effective parental involvement in education though the study was western based.

Moreover, Psychologists have argued that cognitive development in children occurs when a child's problem solving is guided by adults (Vygotsky, 1978). In this regard, parents are among the key stakeholders in scaffolding children in the education process to help children understand the material under study. While teachers play a direct role of facilitating teaching and learning process at school, parents cannot be left in this process in order to provide quality education for the children. Parents must however, bear in mind that children's homework promotes continuity of teaching and learning away from the school environment. This means that parents need to help children where they experience difficulties and not entirely doing the homework for them (Vygotsky, 1978; Epstein, 2011).

It has also been noted that parents in rural schools are committed to the provision of labour in the infrastructural development (Mubanga, 2008). In a qualitative study, the aforementioned researcher explored parental involvement in rural Schools of Mumbwa district in Zambia. In exploring the ways in which parents were involved in their children's education, the results showed that parental involvement in children's education characterised parents being involved in their children's education through being members of the PTAs. They also assisted children with school work at home as well as contributing labour towards school construction projects by physically doing the work. Further, they provided school requirements like books which they bought after selling their farm produce (Mubanga, 2008)

Similarly, another Zambian rural study by Lungu (2015) explored qualitatively, the existence of structures, nature of involvement and the extent to which parents and caregivers participated in Early Childhood Education in two rural early childhood centres in Chilanga

District. The findings revealed that the features of parental involvement among parents who had children in early childhood schools included escorting children to school, paying school fees and when there was an emergent problem to sort out at school, they responded and were in attendance. The author has argued that despite the existence of PTAs and a few policies, these were not effective avenues of engaging parents and teachers (Lungu, 2015). The aforesaid study has brought out critical features of parental involvement in early childhood education. Although the study employed a qualitative approach like the current study, they differed in context, level of education and sample size.

It is important to point out that the two studies above (Lungu, 2015; Mubanga, 2008) brought out interesting ways in which parents got involvement in children's education and that they both used qualitative approach in their studies. However, they were all focussing on rural schools. This implies that the issue of context may have an impact on what features characterised parental involvement in children's education. Therefore, there was need to explore holistically ways in which parents got involved in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

Furthermore, an urban based study by Chansa-Kabali (2014) used a mixed approach to examine the effect of home environment factors in the acquisition of early reading skill in Lusaka. The study revealed that parental reading attitudes, availability of reading materials and home literacy activities were important aspects of parental involvement in children's acquisition of literacy skills. The author argued that these factors were an integral aspect of the home environment that guaranteed positive literacy development (Chansa-Kabali, 2014). Although this study was informative in that it brought out issues relating to home environment and acquisition of early reading skill, it was biased to literacy based on home environment.

Additionally, Kangombe (2013) using a mixed approach examined home-school partnerships meant for literacy development in three basic schools located in a high density residential area in Lusaka District. The study revealed that there were various techniques that teachers employed to partner up with parents in order to develop pupils' literacy such as use of homework policy, provision of extra lessons and giving remedial work to the learners. It is clear that the stated study's focus was partnerships with specific reference to literacy development. However, the acquisition of literacy may be mistakenly viewed as a major

product of parental involvement in children's education without a study meant to explore, holistically, features that characterise parents' participation in education urban schools.

Madueke and Oyenike (2010) conducted a quantitative study on 200 parents representing pupils in ten basic schools in Lagos, Nigeria aimed at identifying patterns of parental involvement in children's education specifically in literacy. The results of the study showed that there was a positive change in family literacy practices which was due to improved confidence in parents to act as examples to their children. From this study, it had been observed that in Nigeria, the involvement of parents in education was being acknowledged and its importance realised. This implies that parents need to embrace literacy activities in homes as role models. This is important because children will be encouraged to work hard as they see their parents actively involved in literacy activities. This study had a well represented sample for parents but unfortunately the pupils and teachers as key stake holders were not included in the study. This could have compromised the validity of the findings.

The teaching and learning in school is only fruitful if pupils are consistently attending classes. Parents have a huge role to play in monitoring pupil attendance apart from the class teachers' active role of monitoring daily pupil attendance. A study by Shooba (2013) investigated the causes of pupil absenteeism from schools in Mumbwa District. The study showed that although parents were involved in ways such as provision of school requisites like books, pens, pencils, they lagged behind in appreciating holistic parental involvement in children's education (Shooba, 2013).

Further, Rogers, Theule, Ryan and Adam (2009) in Canada using quantitative approach identified features of parental involvement in urban elementary schools. Among the ways of parental involvement identified by the said study include encouragement, maternal emotional support and paternal pressure on their children to excel academically. Further, active involvement in homework and active paternal management of the home environment were also identified. This study was interesting in that it showed that gender specific involvement was significant when looking at the characteristics of parental involvement (Rogers, et al, 2009).

Another quantitative study by Moon and Ivins (2004) using survey design in England identified three ways in which parents get involved in children's education. These include encouraging and monitoring attendance, home learning and communication with the school. A survey of 2,021 parents and carers of children aged 5-16 attending maintained schools, in

households containing two parents or carers, and living in England was carried out. The survey showed that 95% of the parents believed that attendance in school was very importance while 84% were in full support of learning at home through such activities as monitoring homework. Meanwhile, 79% of the parents agreed that it was extremely important to enhance communication with the school by appreciating frequent parent-teacher contacts. This study was interesting in that it captured a large sample randomly selected and revealed that attendance, communication and learning at home were key features of parental involvement in children's education in England. However, the study did not take into consideration by including teachers and the pupils as stakeholders in appreciating parental involvement in education.

A study by Matshe (2014) in rural schools in South Africa explored qualitatively parental involvement in education. The study showed that parents participated in education by being members of School Governing Body (SGB) Committees in schools in which they interacted with the school staff on issues that affected children's education. Parents need to actively take part in decision making processes in schools especially through the Parents-Teachers Associations to enable them understand the child holistically (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). Matshe's (2014) study was rural based in South African context though it pointed out important features of parents' involvement in education.

Jeynes'(2011) meta analysis done in California on parental involvement research indicated that the most powerful aspects of parental involvement in children's education include maintaining expectations of one's children, communicating with children as well as the style of parenting. These findings are informative in that they give well researched evidence on the issue of parental involvement. It also clearly points out that parents have a role in communicating to the children their expectation in the education process. There is need therefore, for parents to maintain high expectation of the children's educational outcome and this will in turn improve children's self concept (Hoang, 2007).

Various ways have been identified in which parents can get involved in children's education. It is, however, cardinal to emphasise that parental involvement in children's education requires significant time, energy and emotion work (Erickson & Cottingham, 2014). It can occur within and outside the physical space of schools which include reading with the child at home, engaging them in games that may improve their learning opportunities beyond the school day and helping children do their homework (Crosnoe, 2015; Epstein, 2011). Parents

need to engage themselves in school events such as parent–teacher conferences and school support activities. This will promote interaction focused on the child between the school personnel and the parents as well as amongst the parents themselves. Through such interaction, parents can understand ways in which they can create a home learning environment that supports children's learning and cognitive development (Epstein, 2011). Parents can also model desired behaviour such as reading for pleasure, monitoring homework and tutoring their children (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

Furthermore, a quantitative study by Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) in Philippine noted that parents should maintain positive attitude towards children's educational activities. The positive attitude is critical in encouraging children's morale to excel in education. This implies that parents have an important role to play in creating a conducive home environment that positively affects children's self esteem. It is important to point out that the way parents conduct themselves towards children's education can impact positively or negatively to children's academic achievement (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). The aforesaid study employed a quantitative approach in understanding parental involvement and children's academic achievement. Although the current study focused on features that characterised parents' involvement in children's education, it did not correlate effective ways of parental involvement and improved academic performance. This study qualitatively explored using a semi structured interview, features associated with parental involvement in education in urban primary schools in Chipata which is different contextually, culturally and methodologically from the Philippine study by Sapungan and Sapungan (2014).

Nandago, Obondoh and Elijah (2005) posit that parents can participate in decision making in schools through structures such as the parents teachers associations or boards. These associations create a conducive forum in which parents can communicate the home activities of their child while the teachers empower the parents with skills necessary to enable them create conducive home environment that would facilitate continued learning experiences at home. Parents need actively participate in the school governance such as playing an active role in school in various associations that bring together parents and teachers to brainstorm issues relating to children's education achievement.

Similarly, a study in special schools on parental involvement in the learning of the intellectually challenged children in Lusaka District by Nzala (2006) indicated that parents were involved in school 'open days', provided some teaching and learning materials as well

as refreshments. Although the current study's focus was not on the intellectually challenged pupils, the findings of the stated study were very informative. It should be mentioned, however, that the way one can handle children with special needs is different from the way one can manage physically and intellectually abled ones. It is important therefore to state that despite the fact that Nzala's (2006) study was urban based, it was purely a representation of parents whose children are in special schools.

The Ministry of Education (1996), in Zambia, recognised the role of parents in children's education through the introduction of the structures meant to encourage parents' participation in children's education by engaging in partnership with schools. The policy document on education (MOE, 1996), *Educating our Future*, has provided that all schools should ensure that they provide a link to the community through parents'-teachers' associations (PTAs) and boards. This intervention by the Ministry opened up to partnerships between schools and the community for the benefit of the learner. These associations were initiated to involve parents in the educational affairs of their children through interaction with the school staff in order to achieve the benefits that come along with parental involvement in children's education.

2.4 Benefits of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The benefits of involving parents in children's education cannot be debated. Parents' role in children's education remains a cardinal intervention to a successful child in education. Khajehpoura and Ghazvinia (2011) conducted a quantitative study in Iran on 200 boy students drawn through a randomized process from 10 schools by multistage cluster sampling using questionnaire. The study found that the academic performance of children in family with high parental involvement was better than children in family with low parental involvement. This entails that when a question arises on the differences in academic performance of children, the level of parental involvement cannot be left unexplored because of its positive impact on education. This study examined the role that parental involvement has on children's academic performance in Tehra, Iran. Although the study revealed that there was correlation between high parental involvement and children's performance, the features that characterised this involvement were not explored by merely using a quantitative approach. Hence, the current study undertook a qualitative approach to explore features of parental involvement in urban primary schools in Chipata.

With the increase in studies pointing to sustained benefits of parental involvement in children's academic achievement, calls for continued research in this area and the necessity of

implementing parental involvement programs at all levels of school education cannot be overemphasised. A study by Quiocho and Daoud (2006) on Latino parents in Southern California showed that parental involvement led to higher academic achievement and also improved perceptions of children's competence. This implies that parents' participation in children's education has a positive impact in children's achievement in education. Although, the study under review was Californian based, there is a lot to learn from it. Nevertheless, questions may arise as to whether the prevailing situation in California explains the state of affair here in Zambia or not. To handle such a question, there was need to explore the benefits that characterise parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

Similarly, in Portland, a study by Cotton and Wikelund (1982) on parental involvement in education revealed that the involvement of parents in children's education had a positive influence on their academic performance. The study further revealed that the more parents got involved in children's educational activities, the more beneficial were the achievement effects. Parents need to consistently be in contact with school where their child learns and the feedback from teachers will enlighten the parents about the welfare of the child away from home. These findings demonstrate that in order to effectively improve academic achievement in children's education, parents cannot be left because they influence continued learning experiences at home as the teachers are providing professional ones at school.

Moreover, a qualitative study by Lungu (2015) on parental involvement in rural early childhood centres in Chilanga District identified important benefits of parents' involvement in education. Among the benefits include the positive impact it has in motivating both the learner and the teacher. What was interesting in this study is that teachers became highly motivated in executing their duties when parents got involved in children's education. This implies that parental involvement does not only motivate the child who is usually the key person when it comes to motivation but the teacher is equally motivated in the teaching and learning process. Further, the study revealed that the majority of parents ensured that children were well behaved and respected the values and beliefs of other people. This clearly indicates that parents' involvement in children's education promotes desired behaviour in children as they are monitored by both parents and the teachers. The aforesaid study was similar to the current study in that they are both qualitative studies and employed the descriptive design in the data collection. However, the two studies are different in that the current study focussed on the urban primary schools in Chipata while the former focussed on early childhood centres

in rural area of Chilanga district. Therefore, context and level of education may have an impact on parental involvement in education.

Studies in the US have shown that the benefits of involving parents in education are appreciated by many stakeholders in the education process. A survey revealed that teachers up to 65% held a firm belief that their learners would perform well when parents got involved and 72 percent of the parents felt that children whose parents were not involved sometimes did not perform as well (Johnson & Duffette, 2003). The aforementioned survey was very informative in that it brought out magnificent view of parental involvement in the USA on the issue of parents' participation children's education and the academic achievement. Despite the vast literature indicating that parental involvement in children's education has positive impact on their academic performance, it was not known as to what extent parents got involved in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata in order to appreciate its benefits in education.

Moreover, the involvement of parents in education should be viewed as a matter of urgency because of the many benefits that come with it. Mubanga, (2008) noted a number of benefits of parental involvement that includes improvement in academic performance, school attendance, access to school requisites, improved behaviour and enhance children's self-concept. Parental involvement helps children to believe in themselves and develop a firm image of self as they progress in education. Munsaka (2000, p.57) posits that 'self-concept is not constructed when one begins school, it starts to be formed the moment one begins to interact with the society'. In view of this, it is importance that parents are empowered with skills to appreciate individual children's abilities regardless of their sex even as they continue getting involved in children's education.

It is further important to state that every well meaning parent has a desire for their children to excel in education. A study by Chansa-Kabali (2014) on acquisition of early reading skill in relation to home environment in Lusaka revealed that the provision of reading materials and parental attitudes towards literacy activities significantly predicted reading awareness. The study further observed that high achieving learners experienced a more literate home environment than low achieving learners. The findings were interpreted in terms of the need to guide parents on how they could purposefully and meaningfully be involved in their children's literacy development through actively getting involved in creating conducive home

environment that would stimulate children's acquisition of literacy skills on a consistent basis.

Many scholars have emphasised on the positive effect of parental involvement in children's education and others have stated that it has a direct effect on how children behave both in a school set up and in a social atmosphere. In this regard, Hoang (2007) conducted a survey of 140 Algebra students which revealed that students with parents who were more involved in education exhibited higher levels of motivation. Henderson (1987) adds that the academic benefits, such as reading competence, motivation and improved performance gained from family involvement with elementary school students continued through the middle and high school levels. This entails that pupils are motivated to work hard in their tasks as they see their parents actively involved. The motivation of these children due to effective parental involvement in their education does not only accrue short term benefits such as the academic achievement at primary school level but also help them work and plan for the higher level education. It is therefore, essential to enhance the participation of parents in children's education in order to develop a responsible and highly motivated child in achieving excellence in education (Hoang, 2007)

Similarly, Primrose (2010) posits that parents need to have a role to play in curriculum management because their involvement benefits children's academic achievement. For example, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of South Africa identifies improved academic performance in school, reduced absenteeism and school dropout rates as well as reduced disciplinary cases to be as a result of the effective parents-teachers partnership in the education process. Whereas the NCS in South Africa recognised the importance of engaging parents in the curriculum management, there remained no information as to whether parents had any role to play in the Zambian curriculum management to realise the benefits in children's education.

Researchers have also argued that the path to improved grades and scores in tests does leave behind parental involvement in children's education (Wherry, 2003). This implies that children whose parents are highly involved are most likely to obtain higher grades and test scores than those whose parents are not. This entails that the issue of parental involvement in children's education is very beneficial. It needs to be given an extra attention everywhere regardless of the geographical location in order to achieve the desired results in children's education. It is in this regard that parents need to understand their full role in children's

education in order to appreciate the benefits of involving them in education. Therefore, the school staff must uphold structures that would enhance parents' participation in children's education. It would, however, be misleading to believe that the western studies that examined the benefits of parental involvement in children's education represent the state of affair in Chipata, Zambia unless a study is conducted.

Munsaka (2000) posits that the construction of self concept is mainly dependent on the experiences that one gets through the interaction with others. Furthermore, Charles (1964) in Munsaka (2000) stated that a person sees himself as a success or failure only in relation to his experiences with others. This clearly shows that the experiences children have with parents have an impact on their achievement in school in that parents' involvement in children's education will motivate the children to believe in themselves as they progress in educational activities. While professional educators may appreciate the need to encourage children to believe in themselves, parents may need guidance to understand their role in uplifting children's self-concept for better academic performance, hence, the need to promote home school partnership. This then would make one inquisitive as to how involved parents are in children's education apart from the usual professional educators in urban primary schools in Chipata.

Another study by Mandyata, Kasonde-Ng'andu and Chakulimba (2015) investigated the perception of parents and teachers on partnerships in the learning of children with and without disabilities in inclusive primary schools in Kasama, Zambia. The results showed that Parents and teachers who appreciated partnership stated that parental involvement was a matter of human right as it helped them to share experiences, provided a platform aimed at reducing learning barriers and increased understanding among parents and teachers in schools. These findings entail that parental involvement plays a critical role in education as what happens in a home where the child comes from is shared between the parent and the teacher for the benefit of the child.

2.5 Barriers to Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Despite the fact that researchers have linked parental involvement to children's academic achievement does not mean that there are no barriers to effective parental involvement. Studies have unveiled several barriers to parental involvement in education. A study by Epstein (1995) on the barriers to parental involvement in their children's education revealed that the main obstacle to parental involvement was communication breakdown between the

home and school. The effective communication creates a rapport between parents and teachers in understanding the child's educational needs. Therefore, strong communication channels should be built to avoid lapses in continued learning both at home and school environments.

Additionally, Epstein (2011) articulated that teachers believe that they would perform their job effectively if parents get concerned with their children's education. The participation of the parents in children's education does not only motivate the children but also the teachers. Therefore, it is clear from the aforesaid studies that effective communication between parents and teachers would bridge a gap between them for the betterment of the child. This will also enable them meet the expectations of each other in the education of the child. Epstein (1995) pointed out that school-related issues, such as lack of adequate communication between teachers and parents, influenced the level of parental involvement. Schools setting inconvenient meeting times, lack of transportation means for parents to visit schools, lack of communication from the school, lack of knowledge amongst parents regarding school rules and policies are critical barriers to parental involvement in children's education. The study under review has identified crucial barriers that have an impact on parental involvement in the US but a study was necessary here in Zambia and urban Chipata in particular, to overrule the contextual and cultural issues.

Another study done on parental involvement in rural primary schools in Zimbabwe by Makuba and Mafa (2013) explored the schools' involvement of parents in their children's education using a qualitative approach based on barriers to parental involvement. The study revealed that lack of knowledge by parents on what was expected of them in children's education was a critical barrier to parental involvement. This led to parents exhibiting uncooperative behaviour with the teachers. This means that when parents lack knowledge about their role in children's education, they are not likely to participate effectively in children's educational activities. The aforesaid study used a qualitative approach and therefore, it was informative. Nevertheless, these findings are a representation rural set up in Zimbabwe and therefore generalising the aforesaid finding to urban primary schools in Chipata would be questionable.

The Scottish government's (2005) study of parents' views on improving parental involvement in children's education revealed that parents faced a number of challenges in their efforts to get involved in children's education. Among the challenges revealed by the aforementioned

study were that parents had tight work schedules, lacked technical knowledge of subject curriculum and teaching methodology. They also had difficulties with creating a home environment suitable for reading and were affected by unwelcoming attitude of teachers towards parents. For example, some teachers seemed busy and preferred that parents should not be involved in the life of the school. The Scottish government findings have brought out pertinent issues that are of interest whenever the issue of improving academic performance is to be addressed. While these challenges might have been typical of the place of the stated research, similar impact may be experienced in Zambia but can only be ascertained through a research here in Zambia and Chipata in particular due to contextual and cultural differences between Scotland and Zambia.

Shooba's (2013) study in Mumbwa district using a mixed approach revealed that among the crucial barriers to parental involvement was that parents did not appreciate the value of educating their children but had a negative attitude towards school. Hence, they were to a larger extent not involved in their children's education as they preferred their children being in the farm or heading cattle. Nonetheless, the author observed that parents could not effectively play their role of monitoring children's activities and school requisites which affected school and examination attendance of the pupils in grade seven (Shooba, 2013).

Furthermore, a study by Siririka (2007) conducted on the involvement of parents in children's education in rural schools in the Omaheke region of Namibia revealed that parents in Ngeama rural community were not effectively involved in the acquisition of their children's literacy skills. Among the obstacles noted was lack of reference materials as well as library facilities. In view of these findings, it is clear that parents had challenges in accessing materials to help them effectively guide their children in facilitating learning at home. The aforementioned study was done in a rural community and these characteristics might not have been the case in Zambian urban primary schools due to differences in geographical location unless a study was conducted and this motivated the current study in urban primary schools in Chipata, Zambia.

Similarly, a study by Matshe (2014) explored the challenges of parental involvement in Rural Public Schools in Ngaka Modiri Moleme District of North West Province of South Africa. The study employed a qualitative research design which included two official from the area office, five principals from the cluster, five teachers; five learners from participating schools and five chairpersons of School Governing Bodies of Schools that served as cases in the

research. The selection of the participants was purposively done. The study revealed that one of the challenges was that parents were involved for wrong reasons such as personal financial gain from the School Governing Bodies (SGB). The other barrier was lack of capacity building for parents by the department of education (DoE) on issues relating to school governance. Another great challenge was the interference of other colleagues in the management issues in the education process. This South African study brought out critical challenges to parental involvement. However, the shortcoming in the study under review was that parents were not involved in the study to express their views on the issue affecting them. Further, apart from being an international study, it was typically conducted in rural schools

Moreover, Henderson and Mapp (2002) explored the factors that influenced low income parents' involvement in children's education and the study revealed that experiences and history of the parents had an influence on their participation in children's education. These factors included parents' own educational experiences in school and burden of their additional responsibilities. In the study under review, it is clear that parents' educational background has an impact on their participation in children's education. Other parental commitments hinder their participation in children's education process. While the aforesaid study was informative in that it pointed out that educational background on parents' participation in education, but there was need to explore barriers in the Zambian context in urban primary schools.

Similarly, a study by Lungu (2015) explored the existence of structures, nature of involvement and the extent to which parents and caregivers participated in Early Childhood Education in two rural early childhood centres in Chilanga District. The study revealed that structures were existent in schools, though policies and guidelines of engagement were either weak or non-existent and that teachers became highly motivated when parents got involved in children's education. Among the obstacles to parental involvement revealed by Lungu (2015) included poverty, illiteracy, low esteem, single status of parents, busy work schedules and long distances to school. The long distance to school was also revealed as a barrier to parental involvement by Ndhlovu's (2005) study which noted that long distances to schools were an issue and transport costs was an issue of concern by some parents. Lungu's study brought out a number of obstacles to parental involvement in children's education but the aforesaid study sampled only two early childhood centres in rural communities of Chilanga district and generalising these findings to urban schools would be unfair because of differences in geographical location, level of education and the small sample size, hence the need for the

current study which involved three urban primary schools in Chipata in exploring the extent to which parents got involved in children's education.

It is also important to note that parents' role in children's education remains a cardinal intervention to a successful child in education. According to Khajehpoura and Ghazvinia (2011) who conducted a research in Iran on 200 boy students drawn through a randomized process from 10 schools by multistage cluster sampling using questionnaire found that the academic performance of children in family with high parental involvement was better than children in family with low parental involvement. This entails that when a question arises on the differences in academic performance of children, the level of parental involvement cannot be left unexplored because of its positive impact on education. This study examined the role that parental involvement has on children's academic performance in Tehra, Iran using a quantitative approach. Although the study revealed that there was correlation between high parental involvement and children's performance, the features that characterised this involvement were not explored by merely using a quantitative approach. Hence, the current study undertook a qualitative approach to explore features of parental involvement in urban primary schools in Chipata.

The fact that many studies have linked parental involvement to children's academic achievement does not mean that all stakeholders appreciate this cause in Zambia. On community participation in managing finances in schools in Mansa district, Mulenga (2005) reported that the school authority found it hard to involve parents in managing financial resources. The implication here is that parents would be discouraged in making meaningful contributions as they remain wondering as to how resources are utilised because they are not involved. This study clearly shows that parents were hindered by the school authority from participating in key decision areas such as financial management. This implies that the parents had interest in issues affecting their children's educational welfare but they were sidelined by the school defeating the purpose of the PTA.

Furthermore, a qualitative study by Mannathoko and Mangope (2013) in Botswana sought to investigate the causes of limited parental involvement in their children's education in remotest areas and the result showed that parents in remote areas were not aware that they were supposed to offer the assistance in the teaching services in schools in contributing to their children's learning . The aforementioned study brought out the issues of ignorance about parents' full role in children's education as an obstacle to effective parental involvement. The

current study is similar to the study under review in that they both looked at parental involvement in schools using a qualitative approach. However, the significant differences between the two studies were that the current study was conducted in urban primary schools in Chipata Zambia unlike the former which took the characteristics of rural setting in Botswana.

2.6 Ways of Enhancing Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Studies have shown that there is positive link between parental involvement and children's academic achievement and this implies that involving parents in education cannot be overemphasised. It is therefore important to understand effective ways of enhancing parents' participation in children's education in order to appreciate the benefits of parental involvement in education. Kangombe (2013) conducted a study in high density residential areas in Lusaka using a mixed method in exploring home-school partnership meant for literacy. The study identified interesting ways of engaging parents in education. The most critical way noted in the study was sensitisation campaigns through such media as print and electronic. Enhancing parental involvement also requires sensitisation campaigns by the schools such as initiating social meetings between parents and teachers to enable parents understand their role in children's education (Kangombe, 2013). The findings in the study under review were representation of enhancing literacy development in relation to partnership in Lusaka. There was need to establish ways in which parental involvement would be enhanced in urban primary Schools in Chipata due differences in geographical locations between the two towns.

Eccles and Harold (1996) emphasised that schools need to consistently empower parents with relevant knowledge for them to understand that their involvement impacts positively on the educational achievement. This will enhance parents' participation in education even as their children grow older. This is because there is a reduction in parental involvement in children's education as the children grow older and advanced in their educational levels. Children in elementary schools are more likely to receive parental attention than in middle and high schools (Eccles & Harold,1996). The aforesaid study demonstrated that parents were more involved in their children's education in primary schools as compared to the high schools. However, the method of engaging parents in education in urban primary schools in Chipata remained unknown.

The Ministry of Education (1996) encouraged the participation of parents in children's education through the parents-teachers associations and boards. The main purpose of these structures is to create a rapport between the school and the community to enhance parents' participation in children's education. Parents need to be supported in order for them to understand their role in children's education. Despite this emphasis by the Ministry, it was not known as in what ways could parental involvement in children's education be enhanced in urban primary schools in Chipata.

Mubanga (2008) posits that sensitizing parents on the importance of education is an avenue to improving parental involvement in children's education as most of them are not sure of their actual role apart from the usual provision of school requisites. Therefore, parents need to be supported on how they can effectively get involved in their children's education and empower them with skills that would effectively help them participate in children's education. Indeed, parents send their children to school because they appreciate the value that comes along with education in everyday life, therefore, efforts should be focused on ensuring that parents are made aware on the different ways they can involve themselves in their children's education in order to promote excellence in education.

Shooba (2013) further suggested that parents needed to be sensitised through workshops to enhance their involvement in children's education as they are among the key stakeholders in the fight against absenteeism in schools. Parents should ensure that school requirements to their children such as books, pencils and transport to school whenever there is need are readily available for the children. Furthermore, parents should have a positive attitude towards children's education and giving guidance on the importance of education.

Studies have indicated that communication is among the effective ways to engage parents in children's education. Parents and teachers should realise that all parents have a vast amount of knowledge about their children's skills, interests and backgrounds that should be communicated to the teachers (Epstein (1995)). Teachers need not only to communicate to parents when there is a problem that requires their attention but send information to them to appreciate their efforts and communicate a child's good performance. This will enlighten the parents to understand that two way that is, home-school and school-home communication is important to help both parents and teachers be well informed on issues affecting the child (Epstein, 1995).

Researchers have shown that getting parent involved in children's education requires a caring partnership between the parents and the school. Henderson and Mapp (2002) explored in a mixed approach parental involvement in education with reference to the factors that influenced low income parents' involvement in children's education. The study showed that educational experiences of the parents had an influence on their participation in children's education. The author further argued that engaging in trustful and a caring partnership between the school staff and the parents was a very effective way to promote parents' participation in children's education. This implies that care and mutual understanding between the parents and the teacher is important effectively enhance parents' participation in children's education. There, every parent deserves respect and discrimination should at all costs be eliminated to support parental involvement in children's education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)

2.7 Gaps in the literature

Studies exploring parental involvement in children's education are mainly internationally based such as Canada, USA, Philippine, Kenya, among others. This study fills in the important gap of documenting features of parental involvement in education in Zambia. Further, many studies, both local (Lungu, 2015; Mubanga, 2008) and international (Matshe, 2014; Mannathoko & Mangope, 2013; Siririka, 2007; Makuba & Mafa, 2013) have explored features that characterise parental involvement in rural schools leaving a gap in urban schools. Although there are documented studies on parental involvement in urban setup in Zambia, they are specifically focussing on children with special educational needs (Nzala, 2006, Ndhlovu, 2005) and literacy (Chansa-Kabali, 2015; Kangombe, 2013). Parental involvement in children with special education needs, though done in urban schools, may have limitations in generalising to the rest of the parents. Literacy, on the other hand does not express holistic features of parental involvement because it is just a component of parental involvement. There remained a gap to explore holistically features that characterise parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata district.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

In summary, the review of literature was based on themes derived from the research objectives that include ways in which parents get involved in children's education, benefits of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement and finally ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education. It has been consistently noted from many studies that the

first responsibility of educating a child rests with parents and thereafter, it becomes a shared responsibility between the school and the home. Most studies have noted a positive link between parental involvement and children's educational achievement and further observed that the more parents get involved in children's education, the better the achievement in education. Literature has further indicated that parental involvement is enhanced when there is improved two way communication that involves home school link and vice versa leading to consultative decision making for the welfare of the learner. Children's educational achievement increases due to effective parental involvement in stimulating a conducive home environment for continued learning and being responsible in helping children with their school work.

The Ministry of Education (1996) in Zambia acknowledged the value of parental involvement in children's education. Structures such as the Parents-Teachers Associations were introduced in schools to engage parents in children's education. Despite this commitment from the Ministry, features that characterised parental involvement in education in urban schools remained unknown. Most studies on parental involvement were internationally based. Studies in Zambia concentrated on parental involvement in rural school. This entails that context and culture may not be the same due to differences in geographical location. However, urban were mainly biased to special schools and literacy. This state of affair prompted the researcher to conduct a study exploring, holistically, features that characterised parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the research design, study population, sample and sampling procedures. It also looks at the research instruments, data collection procedures, pilot study, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is defined as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). This study used a descriptive research design. Orodho and Kombo (2002) point out that descriptive research design is used to collect information about people's attitudes, opinion, habits or any of the variety of education and social issues. Jackson (2009) further adds that descriptive research design is informative because it gives a rich description of a particular situation. Owing to the fact that the study was confined to only three urban primary schools, the researcher's desire was to describe the phenomenon "parental involvement in urban Primary Schools" in a holistic manner. This allowed for the use of aforesaid design which gave an insight and a better understanding of the theme under study (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Furthermore, the current study used qualitative approach owing to the fact that it allowed participants to fully express themselves without any restrictions. This view is also noted by Ojala (2003) that qualitative research approach gives a clear documentation of people's beliefs and interpretation of reality as well as their actions. In this study, qualitative data was derived from semi-structured interviews.

3.3 Study Population

A population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement (Kasonde-Ng'andu, 2013). In this study, the population included all grade seven class teachers, all grade seven pupils and all parents whose children are in grade seven in urban primary schools in Chipata District.

3.4 Sample Size

Sample refers to the part of the population that is picked for an investigation (Bryman, 2004). In this study, a total of 21 participants were used, drawn from 3 urban primary schools in Chipata. It also included 3 grade seven class teachers, one from each school, 9 grade seven pupils (3 from each school) and 9 parents whose children had been sampled. All the

Participants were subjected to a semi-structured interview. Figure 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the Participants

Variable		N	%
Parents			
Sex	Male	7	77
	Female	2	23
Employment status	Formal	7	77
	Informal	2	23
No, of hours at work	8 – 10	8	
Pupils			
grade	Seven(7)	9	
Sex	Boys	5	56
	Girls	4	44
Teachers			
Position	Class teachers	3	100
Work experience(Average)	8 years		

3.5 Sampling Procedure

The study used two types of sampling procedures and these are purposeful random sampling and purposive sampling. The teachers, like parents, were selected using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which elements are chosen based on purpose of the study (Crossman, 2015). Purposeful random sampling procedure was used in the selection of pupils and the primary schools. Patton (1990, p. 180) states that “purposeful random sample aims to reduce suspicion about why certain cases were selected for study, but such a sample still does not permit statistical generalizations”. It is important to understand, however, that purposeful random sampling aims at fostering credibility and not representativeness in probability sampling techniques. Therefore, pupils were purposeful

randomly picked by the researcher and interviewed on their convenient time. Each sampled pupil led the researcher to their parents who were also later interviewed after appropriate arrangements. This means that only parents that had children attending school at the targeted schools qualified to take part in the study.

3.6 Research Instrument

In this study, a semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from Pupils, class teachers as well as parents. As explained by Sidhu (2013), a semi structured interview guide is a set of questions which are personally and verbally given. The interview guide was used to collect data from class teachers and parents as well as the pupils. The semi-structured interview guide was used to have an in-depth understanding of the subject under study. This research instrument was also chosen due to its ability to probe, trace the origin of the problem and involve the participants in understanding the problem.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Before the collection of data, the researcher was cleared by Research Ethics Committee, University of Zambia to conduct the current study and thereafter sought permission from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of General Education, Chipata District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) as well as the Head teachers of the sampled schools. The Ethical clearance letter is appearing in the appendix E. Arrangements were made with the class teachers for an interview and all interviews were recorded using a tape recorder with the consent of the interviewee. However, purposeful random sampling procedure was used on the pupils to increase credibility. With the help of the class teachers, the researcher took to class a box containing small pieces of paper according to the number of pupils in that particular class and only 3 were numbered. Pupils were required to pick one piece of paper from the box and those that picked the numbered ones were the participants as well as their parents. The pupils were interviewed in their respective schools.

The researcher first made appointments with teachers who later helped the researcher to sample the pupils. For each school, teachers were interviewed first followed by the pupils and finally the parents who were followed in their homes with the help of the addresses from their children. Parents were asked by the researcher the convenient time and day when they would want to be interviewed. The researcher personally conducted all the twenty (21) interviews and the average period of time for each interview was twenty five (25) minutes. It is

important to state that before each interview was conducted with the respective teachers, parents and pupils, consent forms were made available which the respondents had to sign after reading, understanding and accepting the contents and purpose of the study. This provided a mutual and professional understanding between the respondents and the researcher. For precision and fear of losing relevant data, all interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. The researcher made sure that permission was sought from each respondent before the voice recorder was used. After all the data that had been collected, the researcher transcribed verbatim.

3.8 Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted on one urban primary school in Chipata which composed of 2 grade seven class teachers, 2 pupils and 2 parents totaling to 6 participants. The researcher piloted the interview schedules in September, 2016 in order to ascertain their suitability in obtaining the necessary information. Necessary corrections and adjustments were made to the instrument. Among them included paraphrasing of the questions that were vague and could not achieve the intended purpose. Further, some questions that lacked substance in relation to the objectives were completely removed and replaced with different ones.

3.9 Data Quality Assurance

The researcher piloted the interview schedules in order to ascertain their suitability in obtaining the necessary information. Furthermore, triangulation was done at data collection which included different categories of participants that is, parents, pupils and teachers. Additionally, Member checking was conducted after transcribing verbatim and interpretation of data in order to check the authenticity of the work. Member check was meant to improve credibility, data trustworthiness, accuracy and transferability of a study. Creswell (1994) describes member checking as a technique used by researchers to help improve the accuracy, credibility and transferability in qualitative research. Furthermore, every effort was made to reproduce the interview scripts as accurately as possible during the transcription.

3.10 Data Analysis

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) explains the analysis of data as a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making. The data was analysed using thematic analysis as the research was purely qualitative. Thematic analysis basically refers to

topics or major themes that come out of the interviews or discussion (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007)). In this case, the focus was on the major themes in relation to the objectives and research questions of the study. Audio recorded interview were transcribed verbatim. The information was categorized according to topics, compared responses from different respondents and determined patterns and trends in the responses from different individuals. The data were finally summarized using narrative reports.

3.11 Ethical Considerations.

Creswell (2009) argues that ethical issues need to be anticipated and effectively dealt with by the researcher in the research process. It is important, therefore, to emphasize on the need to take into serious consideration all ethical issues whenever a research is being conducted, be it with human or animal subjects. Researchers need to take responsibility to secure the actual permission, interests and rights of people in the study as well as their privacy and sensitivity. All of these ethics must be honoured unless there are other special reasons to do so, for instance, any illegal or terroristic activity (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 2007).

The current study took into account all the possible ethical issues. The researcher sought permission from the Ethics Committee, University of Zambia. All participants gave written informed consent. They were told that participation was completely on voluntary basis. Regarding privacy, the participants were told that they were free to keep to themselves some information they did not feel comfortable disclosing and not ready to disclose. They were assured that they would not be punished for keeping private information to themselves. Confidentiality was assured to participants after agreeing to participate in the study and signing the informed consent. They were assured that the information they provided was for research purpose only and would be kept in a locked place accessed only by the researcher. There was also an assurance that the recordings done during the research would be destroyed when done with the research process. Anonymity was assured. Participants' names remained undisclosed. The principle of anonymity as pointed out by Trochim (2006) essentially means that the participant will remain anonymous throughout the study, even to the researchers themselves in some cases. Clearly, the anonymity standard is a stronger guarantee of privacy and very necessary. Therefore, withholding the identity of respondents ensured their safety as results generally did not reflect the views of particular individuals but the community as a whole.

3.12 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter looked at the research methodology. The descriptive research design was used to have an insight and a better understanding of the theme under study. The study population included all grade seven class teachers, pupils and parents whose children are in grade seven in three urban primary schools in Chipata District. The researcher sampled the teachers and the parents purposively while purposeful random technique was employed in selecting pupils. A semi structured interview guide was used due to its ability to probe, trace and involve the participants in understanding the problem.

Furthermore, the chapter also expressed the procedures under which data were collected such as the ethical clearance by various responsible authorities, arrangement for an interview with the respondents and the interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee. The collected data were analysed thematically which basically refers to the major themes in relation to the objectives and research questions of the study. Audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and then compared responses from different respondents and determined patterns and trends in the responses from different individuals. The researcher took into consideration all ethical issues in the research process by ensuring that there was adherence to ethics at every stage during the study. The next chapter targets to present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study which explored parental involvement in children's education in urban primary Schools in Chipata. The findings are presented according to the objectives which were: To examine ways through which parents get involved in children's education, to find out the merits of parental involvement in children's education, to explore the obstacles to parental involvement in children's education and to find out ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education. The findings from the pupils are presented alongside those from parents and class teachers. While actual words said by respondents have been used as much as possible in the descriptions, other words have been paraphrased. It must be emphasised that the researcher did the best to ensure that all respondents' identities are kept anonymous in the presentation of the findings. Parents are identified as male or female. Class teachers and pupils are identified according to the school they come from, labeled A, B and C. For example, 'class teacher A' means that the teacher comes from primary school labeled A. For the pupils, they are also identified using school labels, A, B and C but with 'fs' which stands for 'from school'. These labels are meant to ensure that the actual identities of the participants remain anonymous.

4.2 Ways in which Parents get Involved in Children's Education

To discuss the ways through which parents got involved in their children's education in urban primary schools, parents were asked their understanding of parental involvement.

4.2.1 Parents' understanding of Parental Involvement in Education

The study revealed that all the parents in the study had a good understanding of what parental involvement was all about. One parent said;

Parental involvement is where you are in partnership with the school and the parents so that the child should grow and learn in an environment where there are educational needs for the child to grow up. (Male Parent)

In addition to that, the other parent said;

Parental involvement, aah, aah, I would say, it is the participation that parents or may be the support that parents can give to their children. It

could be financial, all the necessities that are needed to the child, school going child. (Female parent)

The other parent pointed out that;

The way I understand it you know, there are sometimes where children are given homework and then needed you to try and help them to understand the question and other things, even you yourself you need to involve yourself to check their books to see what they are doing if really they are really writing exercises. (Male parent)

Other parent who begun by appreciating the researcher for the study said;

...you know sir, we are stakeholders in children's education, so parental involvement simply means total participation of us parents in our children's education and by this I mean providing all school requirements for our children, helping with homework, communicating with teachers to find out about how our children are doing, yaa and many others. (Male parent)

From the responses above, it is clear that parents in urban primary schools in Chipata had knowledge of what is involved in parents' participation in children's education as they were able to point out areas such as homework assistance, provision of school requisites and also emphasized on partnership between parents and school staff meant to facilitate holistic child development.

4.2.2 How Parents got involved in Children's Education

The study revealed many ways in which parents got involved in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata as noted from the responses of parents, pupils as well as the class teachers of which most of them were similar. Common themes that were identified from the responses include homework assistance, provision of extra lessons which were done at home and sometimes at school. They also paid school fees, provided transport, school requisites such as uniform, books, Textbooks, pens and others. Furthermore, some parents acquired Zedupads, Video lessons and also paid for their educational tours and workshops as well as awarding good performance. However, few parents attended PTA meetings. The various ways in which parents involved themselves in children's education as reported by pupils, class teachers and parents are recorded below as said by the respondents.

4.2.3 Parents Responses on how they got involved in Children's Education

Parents got involved in various ways of which include that they organised extra lessons, assisted in homework, gave awards, provided school requisites and many more. One male parent stated;

Yaa, like my daughter here what I have done last term I had involved one of the teachers to do some tuitions, yaa, for her. He used to come, come then later on she told me herself that looking at the programme at school, I don't think I can be managing meeting this man, so just let him stop so that I also continue learning may be even during Saturdays, something like that, yaa. So that is what we used to do. Then later on even myself especially for this term, second term, I have been always just after supper, I always ask her to bring some past papers then we go through together, sometimes I even give her a test. Because the moment I saw the end of term test they were writing... is it the mock exam, yaa, because there are about three subjects she didn't do well especially science and these others so that those I have made sure that I have to concentrate much on thoseyaa.

When asked if the parent volunteered to check on the child and other projects at school, said;

...ummm, usually I'm busy at work, I don't think, it is possible for me, just the material support that includes may be books even sometimes, even monetary form but not offering physical labour. I also give her a k2 or k5, yaa, just for breakfast or whatever that she can buy. For payment, yaa it's a...what do they call it PTA, yaa, PTA but apa, I have got a balance need to pay a k50, I need to pay yaa. (Male parent)

Similarly, the other (female) parent added that although she was busy with her work like the father to the child, she made sure that she checked her child's homework. The following is what she said;

Basically what I do though, I'm busy, I actually have to request for her books to check for her homework, I also encourage her more to read every day and usually I buy her something when she performs well just to motivate her, yaa, so she is doing fine otherwise. I also bought books for their curriculum and Zedupad, though expensive, I manage to secure one

for her and it helps her a lot. It's an e- learning gadget, it works like that program, learning at Taonga Market, you know that program? The father also motivates her every time through awarding her when she performs better, bought her a bicycle, yaa. One other way in which we as parents get involved in our children's education is to participate in decision making in the school through PTA Meetings where sometimes we get advised to check children's homework, sponsor education tours, in order to help them where there is need. Also know what they learn and monitor their academic performance.(Female parent)

While another parent said the following;

....as a parent I make sure that at least I give my boy transport..aah..I transferred him to 'A' primary school which is far from home, also where children are given questions aah, I mean homework, I check their books to see what they are doing if really they are really writing exercises. Attending meetings also... PTAs, though for the last...I think three, no mee...we have never been called for PTA...the meeting..yes, you know, also provide these routine needs such as books, pens and the like. (Male parent).

The other parent echoed similar sentiments. He said:

Umm...the ways in which we are involved when talking about the child's education especially here at home, most of the times I do take care of him and we have to tell him the fact about education, yes, yes, we get involved 100% actually. In terms of help even if he has homework we do help, yes I actually give him examples the goodness of school why he is going to school and the importance of going to school as he is in the future how we can help him...yes we do help him in many ways even at the community here the way he should stay with people, interact with people. Other ways we get involved in terms of financially. Financially, even if it's a challenge but we do help because the importance of school you know how importance the child when he learns. So, financially whenever there is a problem we do help financially, that is at school in terms of payments we pay fees, for tours, educational but some sort of hardships, there it's a challenge there. (Male parent)

When probed further as whether the parent spared time to visit the school, he responded:

Its time, eeh, whenever the teachers call us there, we actually go there, yes we go there at school, even if the teacher call us, we have to go there at the right time. If it's during time to get report books and PTA things, we go there on time. I actually usually meet his teacher eeh because even because when he comes home he explain how the teacher drills him in class, so actually even the teacher knows there that I'm the parent and then even if I go there, they will even actually point at me that this is the father to PM.
(Male parent)

The male parent articulated that;

Apart from financial help and usual school requisites such as books, aah..aah, yaa in terms homework yes I do. I bought my children a desk top computer for use in their school though they misused it. I also monitor their activities at home...time to watch TV is regulated and ensure that they are studying. For the grade seven one, I have made arrangements for the extra lessons to help to catch up or learn even away from school, this is really improving the performance of my child greatly. I don't often go to school to check on the child because of my work though we collect the report during open days. I don't remember being called for PTA by the school..yaa I don't remember that..I don't know whether nowadays PTA are not considered in schools. Apart from that, we also procured Zedupad which contain materials such as past exam papers and others..yes. They are helpful for children..yaa.. so that is how it is.(Male parent).

The above statement clearly shows that the parents and the school staff were not often in contact through PTA meetings as he pointed out that he could not even remember when the school authorities called him for PTA meeting.

While the other parent said that although he was busy most of the times, he spared time to attend to his children's needs. He was involved in checking his children's books and also provided extra lessons to his children after classes. Like other parents in urban primary schools, he was also committed in the provision of school needs such as uniforms.

He stated as follows;

Well in many ways, I encourage him to work hard, check his books and homework though sometimes I am busy but still spare time to interact with him in terms of homework and get concerned with what he is doing in school, also providing these regular needs ...aah.., that is uniform, books, pens but there is also someone who is helping in extras after classes. umm...umm. yes there are issues of paying fees think PTAs of which I do, even report books collection and many more like sponsoring his educational tours to national parks, text books and so on. (Male parent)

One parent had the following to say:

Alright, I pay PTA fees, buy uniforms, books and the like. The other way in which I get involved in my child's education is to attend school meetings... in the school through Parents-Teachers Association Meetings though PTA meetings are dying out of late and sometimes we are being encouraged to check our children's homework in order to help them know what they learn and also to monitor their academic performance. I have never observed class room lesson no, and I didn't know we are required to do that as parents. (Female parent)

The other parent said:

I...I have...you know this change in curriculum, things are difficult now to understand even at primary level but however I have...I have bought most of the text books for my daughter especially sciences and maths...aah, I have also engaged a teacher to coach her, yaa, I'm seeing an improvement, last term's report was better. Any way issues of technology also help...eeh, I also got some...actually I bought some vi...what do you call them, recorded or we would say video lessons in..in maths, yaa, they also help. Yes, we try to provide conducive environment here at home, limited time for watching TV to help our children study as we offer help in homework and others. (Male parent)

From the responses it is clear that parents were participating in children's education such as homework assistance and all the nine parents in the study assisted their children with

homework. They also organised tuitions and others but most of the involvement was home oriented.

4.2.4 Pupils' Responses on how Parents got involved in their education

4.2.4.1 How pupils acquired School Requirements

When pupils were asked how they managed to meet the school requirements, they all acknowledged that they were assisted by their parents except one who reported otherwise. The pupils depended on their parents to provide school necessities in these urban primary schools in Chipata. This means that parents were responsible in the provision of all school requirements for their children such as books, school uniform and many others which enabled the children to function successfully in the educational process. The following are direct words as reported by the pupils in urban primary schools on how they acquired the school requirements: One pupil from school A said;

....as a pupil, I'm helped by parents in my school requirements that I want.. so I get from them...my parents especially my daddy do help me in many things in my school.(Boy fs A)

While the other added;

As for me my parents.., my parents provide everything (Boy fs A)

Similarly, the girl from school C stated;

I usually tell my grandmother, then after my grandfather is paid who works for FRA, after he is paid that is when he gives the money to my grandmother who goes to buy for me. (Girl fs C)

Another pupil reported;

By telling my parents who help me, they help me yes. They are the ones..they..they give me my things for school(Girl fs B)

While the other stated:

Iam helped by my parents..yes my parents provide for my schools needs. I can say they..I receive help of my school requirements by asking my parents who help me in everything. (Girl fs A)

The other pupil pointed out that;

How I manage is by my parents who buy me everything for the sc...what I need for use for my school issues.(Boys B)

Another pupil had the following to say;

For me it's my Aunt who works at UTH in Lusaka who sends me buy money to pay for my school and buy my uniform, books and other things they need at this school because they need a lot of things at this school(Boys C)

However, one who had a different way he manages school requirements said;

I'm helped by God, I do piece works and find money for books and bought shoes for myself but I stay with my mother who doesn't work yes. (Boys C)

In this regard, it is clear that most children were depending on their parents for their school requirements.

4.2.4.2 Pupils' Responses on the help they received from Parents.

The study revealed that pupils were helped by their parents in a number of ways such as paying for their educational tours. All the pupils in the study acknowledged that parents assisted them with their homework. One pupil said the following;

Eeh ,eeh, for example research, when our teacher gives us research, using the internet on their(parents) phone sometimes the questions that come general knowledge in the exam so she give us and they help me understand homework...what this question is really meaning.....also using educational tablets that help even getting past papers from them, I think it was my daddy who downloaded video lesson in science for me and it was really beneficial, yes. They also, also pay for my fees here, also I'm doing tuitions so my parents help me in my school in many ways. The other thing I have just remembered is that at this school, they conduct workshops for us grade seven especially, so my parents pay. (Girls A)

Another pupil added;

They help me so much when it comes to school. For example, they pay my school fees and some other monies like when the teacher says tomorrow you should come with k10 for this and that, they give me. They bought me Zedupad where there are past papers and other things and pay for tour yes educational tours to many places and workshops where they teach us how to answer questions yaa. Im good in my subjects my parents have also engaged the teacher for extra lessons ...yaa, yaa even homework, they help and sign, so they help me a lot.(Boy fs B)

Similarly, the other pupil from another school added that;

,....my parent...,my parents help me in many ways pa sukulu yanga (in my school). Sometimes they encourage me a lot to come to school and help me when I have a difficult question monga masamu (like Mathematics), they help me pay for the trips out of our school. They..they bought me even some video...video lessons which I follow in maths and science to learn, manje oro question yabwela ningayidye.(Boy fs B)

The girl from school C pointed out that her parents were highly involved in her education such that she barely faced any challenge, as she said;

*They help me...or if I need text books they help me buy them or if my uniform has become short they tell Mrs **TK** who sells in the tuck-shop and she is the one who gives. They transport me to and from school so she will be coming....coming to pick me. They make sure that my homework is signed even if it doesn't need to be signed and like for...they make sure that they pay school fees on time....as in k150. They have paid for my tuition to Mr **MB**, so Iam learning and they also bought me a bicycle because i passed very well in the mock exams, yaa...so they do. (Girl fs C)*

The other pupil openly appreciated her parents' commitment to his school and said,

For me i thank my mother, she cooks fritters and earn money and provide me for school like uniforms, shoes, bags and the books. I...they provide me some money to buy food, school fees and sometimes for the journeys to

the...the field learning, yaa, and tells my brother to help me with homework. Um..um..they bought me atlas for maps, sometimes she gives me some money for pamphlets, the teacher sells at school...(Girl fs A)

Another pupil pointed out that;

My parents involve themselves in my education in various ways such as going through my work every day, helping me with homework...aah..aah even signing, and buying school needs such as books, pencils, school shoes, school bag and uniforms and also bought me Zedupad which were being sold here at school where there are past papers for my school. They also bought ...aah, they bought me textbooks for maths and science which I don't perform well. Even if we are told to pay for workshops and tours, they pay, my parents pay. This has a...aah..aah positive help on my academic achievement in that I feel that my parents are concerned about my education and for that I wouldn't....I don't want to disappoint them by failing my subjects.(Boy fs A)

While the other pupil had the following to say;

Help me with my homework to understand what the question is saying and to answer one with one accord with that same question and also help me to help me study...homework, to search for me not to be lazy tell me not watching TV too much.....and also using education tablets that help even getting past papers from it. My daddy downloaded video lessons using the tablet for me for science. The time that I have, I try to research on the tablet. Also, also, pay for tours we usually have here at this school to go learn, like last time we went to South National park in Mfue (Girl fs C).

The other pupil from school (B) also echoed similar sentiments on how parents participated in his education by adding that;

They help me with my homework and they, yaa and they pay for my...like we have trips every month...they also pay for my education fees as well as...and workshops which are conducted here for us grade sevens. They also pay for the papers because the school says we should pay. They also....I have a laptop, they bought me a laptop. (Boy fs B)

One other pupil from a different school had the following to say;

They help me with school fees, even other things like books, they also help me when I don't know anything, they ask me school questions, they also encourage me to study. They also bought me a Zedupad which consists of questions and research like in Mathematics, English, Science, SDS and it has assisted in my performance. Many others, outings for education activities and my...tuitions.(Boy fs A)

Like some responses from parents, children also pointed out a number of ways in which parents participated in their education such as homework and provision of various school needs including modern technology such as the provision of Zedupads, Laptops and smart phones which assisted pupils in urban primary schools in acquisition of knowledge and skills. Parents also sponsored children's educational tours and tuitions.

4.2.5 Teachers' Responses on how Parents got Involved in Children's Education

Similarly, the class teachers pointed out a number of ways from their experiences in which parents got involved in children's education. One teacher said the following;

First of all, as a school we have an open day where we normally talk to our...the parents as they collect their children's report books .Some have organised extra lessons for their children and some teachers here are engaged to do that, yaa and some parents have been on their own to check on the progress of their children which is good. Parents also buy uniforms, sponsor the tours..aah, educational ones and others like one parent brought an award for his child here when the boy got the first position so this is motivating, indeed it is, I would wish many more parents could do that. (Class teacher A).

Another class teacher from School B reported:

Okey, aah, mainly by paying school fees though it's a challenge to some, also when we have open days collection of report forms. And then looking at cleanliness of these pupils, some parents pay attention to their children while others don't, so some come when called and discuss the general cleanliness of their child and change is noticed. They...I mean some parents are serious in assisting their children with homework and every time sign

them. Others come for exhibition such as JETS, though few, mainly parents think activities in school are only concerned with teachers.

When probed further as whether the parents volunteered to go check on their child at school; the teacher added:

Yes I have had situations where some parents come on their own, yaa, we appreciate that spirit because it helps us know the child better but mostly they, aah, aah, its rare. (Class teacher B).

The class teacher from school C had the following to say;

Okey, aah from the time I have been into this school, I have seen parents being involved when... in case of homework when you write homework given to the young one that when they reach home parents would make sure to say that the homework is written and then they endorse their signature. Sometimes some parents join us during sports at the ground to watch their children and we have got careers day they come to support their children. Closing day, giving out report books they do usually come and they question to say but how is my child's performance...we learn to share ideas, we let them know the kind of books they come buy for their children. In terms of transport, they provide transport to their children to school and others come to pick them. (Class teacher C)

Teachers like parents and pupil respondents also noted homework as a common way parents involved themselves in children's education. Others were tuitions, collection of report books and guiding their children daily needs.

4.3 Benefits of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The study revealed that parental involvement was very beneficial to children's education in that pupils were motivated to work hard, improved self worth and academic performance. The following are direct responses from class teachers, parents and pupils.

4.3.1 Class teachers' Responses on Benefits of Parental Involvement.

The teachers pointed out that involving parents in children's education was very beneficial because children whose parents were involved benefited in terms of improved academic performance as well as class attendance which means that absenteeism from class was reduced.

One teacher from school A stated;

Parental involvement does help to improve pupil's performance, yaa, it does very much because when you give the pupils homework, some parents explain better ...where I was failing as a teacher to deliver maybe the parents can do it better and maybe they can even understand it from parents. Parents' involvement, to be honest, has really impacted positively on my pupils' performance in my class because most of the pupils are doing very well and absenteeism has enormously reduced, that's it...Parental involvement also has positive effects on pupils attitudes and social behavior, yes. When parental involvement is present, a child has a greater desire to attend school even further beyond this level, grade seven level, and to learn and hence their out mate performance is very good (Class teacher A)

The other teacher added that;

There are many benefits of this involvement, you know, children begin to develop, aah...aah, they develop self worth very much and succeed in education. They have that... the children have that self-esteem and they perform very well. They are, are, you know, they are generally motivated to work hard if parents are putting a lot of interest to encourage them to go to school, yaa, I have seen that with my pupils even late coming reduces and...and just pup...I mean absenteeism greatly reduces. You know these children need financial and material support such as packed lunch, otherwise stay away from school because they lack these things, so they feel inferior. (Class teacher B).

Similarly, the other class teacher from School C pointed out that parental involvement motivated the children and reduced problem associated with pupil indiscipline and had the following to say;

..Umm, parental involvement bridges the gap between parents and teacher concerning the child, homework will be effectively done and personally as a class teacher problems of pupil indiscipline have been managed due to the interaction I have had with parents. Parental involvement helps us teacher to understand the background of the pupil, for example one pupil used to come with dirty uniform, I called the parents to the boy and we discussed,

the boy is doing fine now, yaa. So it is important because children see parents as role models and get motivated to work hard if they see their parents getting involved in supporting with finances books new uniform, yaa just like that...Some parents award their children for good results, yaa, so they are generally motivated to work hard if parents are putting in a lot of interest by providing their needs like books, it will encourage them to go to school and attendance in class improves greatly yaa so its...it pays.
(Class teacher C)

From the responses above, it is clear that all the teachers in the study acknowledged that parents' participation in education is very meritorious as it connects home and school environments thereby enhancing class attendance and impacts positively on the child's academic performance.

4.3.2 Parents' Responses on Benefits of Parental Involvement

Concerning the possible benefits or importance of parental involvement to the children, it was reported by almost all the parents that children were motivated to work hard and could not stay away from school and the academic performance improved. One parent articulated that;

The benefits are many, my daughter is doing fine..aah..I monitor her performance at home, I also check on her teachers to find out how she is doing and if there are problems we discuss. You know she is feeling that my parents are supporting me, yaa her performance has really improved. There are tuitions also for her here, otherwise the benefits are many... doesn't stay home unless she is sick and sometimes she goes to school even when unwell because we promised her an award if she gets first position. She tries her best, so, we really motivate her because we are there for her, yaa...(Male parent).

The other parent had the following to say;

Pamene nigwapo nimuchita encourage, nimulimbikisa. It means, yeve mwana, he will be motivated to work hard at school. You know, mwana needs a lot for school monga ma uniform, books nivambili,so due to my involvement my child will have vofunikila kusukulu, yaa, so it is good, parental involvement also help him in homework and checking her

books....yaa and because i encourage to study with a friend that side he is doing better but kudala enzeko dull, yaa. So it helps..., it is good. (Female parent)

The other parent said;

The benefit is that the misbehaviour here at home and even...even at school is monitored. The other benefit is where the child..eeh..I have seen a lot of improvement in him where right now he is in grade seven.....he just improves everyday and even at school the teacher knows me, tells me you should be ready because this child will go very far in education. The child feels worth if parents get concerned in his education and is generally motivated in his school work so it..it is.(Male parent)

Another male parent stated;

Children whose parents are involved are generally highly motivated, with high self esteem. I think it is goo....it is beneficial for parents to be involved as they guide the children on the importance of education. We supply food or even money for break time. With these bongos (local minibuses), I provide money for transport tuma k5 or k10 make sure my child is in school, otherwise the benefits are many. (Male parent).

The other parent said;

The benefit, one; the child gets encouraged and get reminded that I need to do my work...homework; my daddy will come and check. Unlike when she doesn't see me involved, she will relax...say aah I think there is nothing to work for. So the child develops a sense of self-worthy and responsible as she deals with her education, yaa. The other benefit is that behaviour is checked and there is room for excelling, yes, children are motivated to work hard as you promise them awards when they perform better at school. So parental involvement is good for pupils, teachers are helped to understand our child as we communicate her background here...yaa..So it helps a child both ways. (Male parent)

The other parent reported;

My involvement has helped my child to do better. Aah, like they ended the year at a good note as best student. There are targets set if they want something and if they meet that target we award them, yaa. The order child is going into secondary, so I'm planning to engage a teacher and also be on her myself to help her. They also get motivated if we are involved, they have got something to look forward to. It pushes them to do better. We...they have got their own ipads at home so most of the things they research online with minimal supervision, yes. Umm, others, I can say generally parental involvement helps teachers to be in contact with the home environment in understanding the child, yaa. I think that's all, thank you. (Female parent)

Similarly, the other male parent acknowledged that parental involvement is is very important in children's education and stated:

They feel motivated, uplifted and supported when I'm there for them. Performance improves if we provide their needs; help with homework, buy text books and other study materials. We see to it that they are in school and not being absent, yaa, so it is important, yes it is. (Male parent).

From the above reports, it is clear that all parents pointed out that parental involvement had positively affected the children's performance and that children were motivated to work hard and always wanted to be in school.

4.3.3 Pupils' Responses on Benefits of Parental Involvement.

The study revealed that parental involvement motivated pupils to work hard in order to meet parents' expectation which improved pupil attendance in school and improved academic performance. All pupils in the study reported material and financial support from their parents assisted them very much in their education. One boy from school A said the following;

They help in supporting me even that motive of education, you get motivated for example, the buying of textbooks helps me by passing through them to understand key words. So, buying me the materials that I need has really benefited me in my performance because some teachers what they do is that for the next topic they would want to give you questions for you to have an idea so those materials have really helped me in my performance, also by paying for my workshops. I can't stay

away from school; my parents will make sure I'm in school. Workshops really help teaching you like some points of what may really come in the exam, e.g. they talk about dispersal of seeds, yaa. (Boys A)

The other pupil (girl from school C) echoed similar sentiments and stated;

Like getting good grades because they encourage me to study every after three hours and not just watching TV and they give me more time to study. Tuitions also help me because at tuitions we learn things.. the things that we are going to write tomorrow in advance. The materials they bought me I'm also benefiting a lot..the ipad for internet which I use for researching questions may be in homework just like that. Our school...at my school they were selling Zedupads at k980 and my father bought it for me, yaa, so it is helping me a lot it has past papers already installed on it..yaa, really good in my school performance now.(Girl fs C)

While the other pupil from a different school said the following;

When you know that your parents are..are concerned with your school, it really feels good, I really feel moti... aah, aah, what can I say, motivated to work hard cause they expect my good results..performance in my subjects.(Boys B)

Another pupil added that;

My parents encourage me a lot, yaa, yaa,i benefit from the homework..they guide me in difficult questions, I watch video lessons my daddy bought for me so i learn at home as I...I do the ..watch them in maths, yaa, so I do benefit and passing better, yes, I will surely pass my exams, yaa. (Boys A).

The other pupil articulated that;

It's more like I have studied ahead what they are teaching me it's like I have studied ahead, so when something comes, I already know it so it will be easy for me to pass. We go out for educational tours in various areas to learn but others whose parents don't pay, they don't go there, yes. I was bad in SDS and my daddy taught me like the dictators of Africa, yes and the capital cities of many, almost all the countries in

Africa. The text books have helped me because it made it easy for me study ahead. (Boys B)

It is clear from the pupils' responses that they also appreciated that parental involvement empowered them with relevant materials for their school and encouraged them to work hard and parents' participation improved their academic performance. Pupils acknowledged that parents' participation in their education was very beneficial in that they sponsored their extra lessons, educational tours, workshops and provided other materials such as textbooks which helped them to improve their academic performance. Almost all the pupils in the study in urban primary schools in Chipata pointed out that their performance had drastically improved because of the help they receive from their parents.

4.4 Barriers to Parental Involvement in Children's Education

As regards to obstacles, the participants were asked to express what obstacles prevented parents from participating in children's education. The study revealed that parents were in most cases committed with work schedules among others. The following was revealed through direct responses from the three groups of respondents, the parents, pupils and the teachers.

4.4.1 Parents' Responses on Barriers to Parental Involvement

The most prominent barrier noted in all the parents' responses in the study was busy work schedules. One parent said;

At my workplace, we are always busy...haa, mwandini, we are not given chance to go out and visit or attend school meetings, even report books are usually collected by her grandmother...yaa, throughout the week busy.(Female parent).

The other noted;

I don't usually go at his school because I'm busy at the farm...so I usually send some people to collect the report books for him. When asked whether he spared time to check on the child's progress in school, he said: aah,yaa! But usually when we are called, I do go there. Sometimes, teachers are too busy to attend to our requests and others just negative attitudes towards us, so that is an obstacle; we are partners for the child's education. (Male parent).

For some parents, it was noted that they needed help from the teachers on how to help the children, but teachers' attitudes towards them was not good as a parent reports;

The obstacle here is that some teachers do not appreciate our effort...I think bad attitudes towards our contribution. The problem that has been there is that you can't get number....phone numbers from them...the teachers to find out about the child progress unless you go to school physically. So it is a challenge you know sometimes these teachers they become... you know, I don't know how I can put it. Going to that school of...where my child goes, it is not always possible, me personally I am usually very busy as a police officer we go out for some time. The other challenge I have faced right now is that I have no material...the material to use when helping my daughter. Some books you...maybe she wants...I want a certain book for her you can't find them in shops around yaa, yaa .We need to....to refer to books, you know the current curriculum is hard even at grade seven.....monga ni grade 8-9 you know.(Male parent)

Money appeared to be an obstacle to some parents: One said;

I work but you find that when a child needs a certain thing for school, may be you are not paid at that time, then we will not be able to give her. Usually I am committed with work but I try to make follow ups to check on progress yaa even during open..open days, we discuss with teachers her strengths and weaknesses.aah, sometimes we parents feel teachers know better and can't appreciate our views anyway. (Female parent)

In addition to the above sentiments, the other parent was also not spared by busy work schedule as she said;

Aah, our lives are too busy, I think our life styles, we are so busy, like aah, sometime I'm so tired, when I get home, I'm so tired I can't even look at their books so they will come and tell you that you haven't even looked at our homework even if I am dosing. The other obstacle is how you value education as a parent, so its background, educational background of parents will make them value education. Perhaps the school should also be motivating us parents, the bad attitude towards parents may also prevent us parents from visiting that school other teachers are not welcoming, appear

too busy to interact with the parents over the child. I think that is it.(Female parent)

The other pointed out that;

You know money is a challenge to us though we push anyhow, issues of books pens and transport of our children to and from school. Children of nowadays can't walk long distance but need to board these common bongos.. yaa. Some families are not able to provide enough for their children in school which ultimately resulted into poor performance by many children in a long run. Therefore, provision of education requisites and many other requirements as a way of getting involved in children's education is dependent on parents' ability to provide for children and only less is being done by the school. (Male parent)

4.4.2 Pupils' Responses on Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education.

Pupils also noted some constraints to parental involvement in their education. Among the barriers, busy work schedule also came out prominently in the pupils' responses in the study;

One pupil said the following:

Sometime they get too busy with work..,ooh lack of time prevents them to participate fully in my education .Umm, sometime it's a distance, like for my daddy he stays far so for him to come here, it's too far.(Girl fs A)

Similarly, the other pupil added that;

My parents are busy like my mother works for for finance bank....my parents are always at work and sometimes they don't even check my homework. Umm, I was at a private school but they could not manage to pay school fees so they moved me to this school because of lack of money. So money is a challenge as well and I have missed many educational tour yaa, that's it. (Girl fs A)

The other pupil said:

..... both my parents work as I said earlier on, so they are usually busy to come in school but things like homework my aunt helps when I don't know some question also the school do not call them for meetings to discuss the meeting.(Boy fs B)

While the other went on to say:

Me I come from far, so transport yaka bongo (small buses), my parents don't manage every day, also school fees its k150, they..they haven't yet paid so it's a challenge. They sometimes..my father works so my brother is the one who come to collect my report forms. (Boy fs C)

The other pupil said;

Umm, may be business, yaa because they are yet busy, you find that your parents have gone for work the time they are coming back they are tired they don't have time for you. They are busy with work, the job to help me with my school needs homework mostly. When they are watching news, when they are watching news my daddy and my mum, they are serious may not help me during that time. (Boy fs A)

Similarly, the girl from school C also articulated that;

In my experience the major obstacle is that my parents are busy..they are busy with work. When..sometimes I want help from them may be they are..they are tired...yaa. The other one is that maybe they are not invited by my school..so they..the school should be inviting them to be attending our school needs at school, some of our parents they don't have enough money to pay..yaa (Girl fs C).

Among the identified barriers in the pupils' responses include busy work schedules, lack of communication, and distance from schools among others. However, all pupils in the study stated that parents were more often than not busy with work commitments and that hindered them to effectively participate in children's education.

4.4.3 Teachers' Responses on Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education

Teachers observed a number of barriers that affected parental involvement in children's education which were mostly similar to those stated by the other two groups of respondents. One class teacher had this to say;

....aah parents mostly give this usual excuses of commitment in their work places..so it's hard to meet them. Others don't just have courage as they think they can't mingle with us teachers..I don't know, others money issues and some don't know their actual role in children here at school and other don't just care, yaa.. just like that. (Class teacher A)

The other one also had similar sentiments and added;

Um, the major obstacle here that ...it is a common song when you meet parents saying they are busy...tight schedules and fail to spare time. Others..some parents think it's us teachers everything not knowing their job in children's education. The other obstacle is that finances, some parents can't come to school, because they fear that, we....they are owing the school, yaa so that is a challenge to parents. Sometimes parents think everything is us teachers and concentrate at home, they feel..aah they cannot mingle with us but they have to be encouraged anyhow to develop a sense of self worth to work together with us for the sake of the child, we as teachers should be in position to welcome them.(Class teacher B).

While the other noted;

Aah.. I think others it's this world which is making people busy, they feel to say they are busy, they wake up 04 or 05 they are already out of home and come back home around 19 they are tired and find children asleep, they are already in bed. Others its lack of interest others they lack interest then others they have got that tendency of saying aah me I have handed this child in your hands do what you can do. Finances also, some parents fear that when I go to my child's school they may ask me...they are going to talk on me say you have got a balance and something like that.(Class teacher C)

It is clear from the teachers' responses that like the parents and pupils, all the three teachers in the study pointed out that parents were hindered in participating in children's education mainly by the busy work schedules. However, financing children's education also came out as a barrier though affected few parents in these urban primary schools.

4.5 Ways of Enhancing Parental Involvement in Children's Education

When asked to give suggestions of ways in which parents' participation in children's education could be enhanced, the most prominent response was sensitisation of parents through media and workshops. The following are direct responses from the respondents that is, Parents, class teachers and pupils;

4.5.1 Parents' Responses on how to Enhance Parental Involvement

Parents expressed their opinion on how they thought parental involvement could be enhanced. The study revealed that parents needed to be motivated and attend to their concerns during PTA

meetings, meetings with teachers, schools to improve communication modes to parents, initiate radio or Tv programs on parental involvement. It is important to note that like teachers, parents also emphasized on the issue of sensitisation as a major way to get parents involve themselves in the education of their children. The male parents articulated that;

Well, may be, hold workshops, perhaps through PTA meetings, inform parents, sensitise them how they can participate in the education of their children , also time to collect report forms the teachers can take advantage to communicate with the parents what they would want to be done to help the child learn well, yaa, something like that, yes (Male parent).

Another parent stated;

I think the schools need to improve on communication to us parents, they only call when there is cp for the child where there are issues. They can intro....there are phones now, they can use sms or direct phone calls by class teachers to update us on what is happening to our children even educate us feel free radio or Chipata TV. Not only that but it is important...aah...teachers need to be receptive to..to..to suggestions by parents that encourage us parents to walk into school and share our concerns with the teachers, yaa, about the welfare of the child and school and not to show us negative attitudes as we sometime experience such, yaa (Male parent)

Motivation of the parents was also a common theme in the study as it came out in parents and teachers as well as pupils responses: One parent noted;

You know, sometimes parents fear the status of teachers and aah, aah, some are not very much educated, so they need to be motivated and appreciate their presence in schools to feel at peace. The.. the other thing is include the..what I mean involve..they should involve us parents in decision making in school, yaa, to help or build the child. Also...you know the Ministry of education should encourage...parents or this issue involvement through some,..some,..prog...programmes on radios or TV here like Chipata TV to sensitise us parents, others don't know what to do in school of children surely. (Male parent)

The other parent mentioned the structures in the school such as the parents-teachers association should be actively used to engage parents in participating in decision making process to enable parents have a voice on what is obtaining in the school. He said;

Being given an opportunity to participate in PTA meetings offers us as parents great opportunities to bring out decisions on issues relating to learning also affords us a chance to participate in key decision making processes such as issues concerning financial contributions. Not only that it also affords us an opportunity to meet and build relationships with teachers of our children. I want to mention that Schools have a major role to play in ensuring that they create conducive environment for us parents to actively participate in decision making processes in the schools. This will improve our involvement in the learning of children. (Female parent).

The female parent had the following to say;

I think there should just more of the sensitization work, should be communicated broadly, perhaps aah, may be through radio programs, even through print media to ensure parents are sensitized, also through short messaging system or sms or whatever. (Female parent)

Similarly, the other parent added that;

Ummm, ummm, may be get the same children, yes, communicate with their parents to get involved, that is the only way I think. There are slips, you write a ka slip give to the children to give to the parents. If they have got phones, may be as a teacher you give the phone number to the pupil to give to the parents and you can communicate. I think, the government nowadays, if I remember very well those, I mean in our days, the PTA was so serious, our parents used to get involved fully. Like nowadays, I think the PTA system is not that effective. I think the radio system can be used, that is one way of communicating. Aah, TVs yaa, you can also use TVs but not everyone has a TV set, even newspapers though very few people buy news paper,yaa. (Male parent).

Additionally, a female parent stated that;

You know, it's difficult to engage a parent who doesn't see its value. Maybe, maybe we should sensitise the parents, yes. Then even as teachers, as teachers they should be able to encourage the parents to be part of their children's work, even what a child is doing. I think the best is to encourage the parents to be more interested in their child's school role models. The only media which I find to be efficient is the teacher when they have those PTAs, when they come to collect the report forms. (Female Parent)

Improving parents' participation in children's education cannot be over emphasized because of the benefits that it has to children's academic performance. The common ways noted in the study to enhance parents' involvement in children's education is to sensitize parents on the importance of participating in children's education process. The school needs to engage parents through PTA meetings by incorporating them in decision making process that affect the affairs of the school. The study also identified ways of sensitizing the parents such as through print and electronic media which may include Radio and Television as well as workshops organised by the schools.

4.5.2 Teachers' Responses on Ways of Enhancing Parental Involvement

When teachers were asked to state some approaches to enhance parental involvement in their children's education, most frequently reported responses was that parents need to be motivated to attend of parents in PTA. All the teachers also pointed out that parents needed to be sensitised through workshops and local electronic media such as Television and Radio. One respondent said:

Parents need to be motivated during PTA meetings to ensure that they understand their role in the education of their children and these meetings should not concentrate finances only as always the case but spend time how a child can learn effectively with the input of both parents and teachers. They can work together with us through assisting children with homework and generally making a home environment good for learning at home, yes so that is important indeed. Further, deliberate programmes can be initiated by the schools or government through may be workshops or TV and Radio and perhaps local Radio stations to inform parents on the importance of involving themselves in children's education, this will help a lot that is what i can say.(Class teacher A).

The other teacher said the following;

.....we (teachers) need to surprise parents sometimes, just visiting them to find out how their children are doing at home educational wise, this may help them realise that it is not only school but also home environment that can produce good performance of their children. Parents need to be sensitised greatly during PTA meeting and others such as media like TV, Radios and school call outs, yaa to educate them about their role in children's education such as helping children with their homework and many more. Communication is very important in this case.yaa workshop can also be good channel to interact with the parents. Yes, teachers' attitude toward parents should be motivating by attending to parents when they want to communicate or find out something about their child. (Class teacher B).

The other respondent said;

Parents should show their children the benefits of education; this can only be effective if parents are also educated because they are role models to their children. Most parents are too busy to attend to their children's school work, so they need to be sensitized through inviting them to meetings and motivating them in understanding the importance of participating in children's education. Surely, other parents don't just know their actual role when in school apart from helping their children at home. So there is need for us teachers to improve communication to the parents to guide them (Class teacher C).

What was also common in their responses was that parents needed to understand that when homework was given to their child, they should be interested to check what a child is doing. Helping children with their homework was mentioned by all the three class teachers as a way of enhancing parental involvement. Special comments were given on the issue of homework and one class teacher pointed out;

...when homework is given, parents need to be interested to check and help where necessary but this can only be effective if parents have some level of education. But workshops on such issues can be held for example by these

schools which can equip parents how ...aah to handle children's work...yaa
(Class teacher A).

The other respondent said,

Sensitizing parents on the importance of education is cardinal and we as teachers should try to accommodate their contributions without underrating them otherwise they may think it's all about teachers in the education of their children. Homework is very important for the learners, so parents need to be encouraged to take homework seriously and not just merely signing (Class teacher B).

The class teacher from school C stated:

You know, homework exposes pupils to continued learning at home. I feel parents need to be sensitised even in the media on such issues, may be through radio breeze, radio Maria, we have progra...I mean programs may be on Chipata TV where you educate parents about the importance of, aah, aah, involvement in, aah, in.. Involvement in school and then in school academic affairs. So, if they are to be oriented, to be told the importance of being involved in the school activities, it can be of good importance. (Class teacher C)

From the suggestion above, it is clear that sensitisation of the parents would help parents to appreciate their role in children's education. This simply means that the schools should ensure that parents are well informed of what is expected of them as they participate in children's education.

4.5.3 Pupils' Responses on how to Enhance Parental Involvement in Education

Pupils suggestion on ways in which parental involvement can be enhanced were also recorded. One pupil said;

Teachers can invite the parents and have a conversation with them and tell them to be contributing to their children's education by checking homework and others like that... (Boys A)

While the other pupil said the following;

when parents are collecting the report forms, the teachers should encourage them by talking to them, also through parents teachers meetings the headmaster or teachers can make sure parents are told to be involved or doing things to help their children in their education such as helping in homework buying us text books paying for some extras and other things. (Girls B)

The other pupil added;

...like last week we had a...they had to come and collect our results ,then the teacher will tell the parents on how you behave in class. Teachers should communicate in such activities to the parents on how they should participate in our education as pupils. Others may be through sensitizing our parents through meetings even i think through radios and Chipata TV so, parents will understand that they need to be involved in many things for school..our education concerns. (Boys C)

One other pupil said;

by encouraging the parents, teachers should encourage them to be involved in my school, the teachers and the parents need to be communicating about my performance may be through writing us letters to give our parents, also through phone calls or may be by radios and TV informing them parents, educating them about the importance of helping us children with education requirement. The other way is by having meetings with parents to talk about many things eg homework and other things. (Boys B)

Another pupil from school (girl from school A) articulated that;

The school can be calling the parents, talk to them...us children can also be telling our parents to be involved, also the government should be sensitizing parents. They can also, the school can also use phone calls though parents ignore the phone calls even just going to them, it's better to follow because whe you call the to come, they may be other difficulties such as transport and other stuff.(Girls A)

A boy from school C stated;

Maybe the school can call them and start discussing on how they are not helping their children. Yes encourage them to be involved our education. Advise them to be helping their children in many ways in their school, may be homework, buying materials, study materials especially for us grade sevens to pass the exams and get good perfo... good results.(Boys C)

The girl added

Eeh what I would say is conducting meetings, giving advice to those parents that may not know the importance of school. Like involving the government, they could like send some people to go and interview some parents so that the parents can know the importance of education.(Girls B)

The study clearly suggested that sensitization campaigns through community awareness programmes, workshops and the media, there could be an improvement in parental involvement in children's education. All the teachers in the study, like pupils and parents pointed out that there was need to embark on sensitizing parents to understand and appreciate their role in children' education.

4.6 Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings of the study placed under major themes derived from the research objectives. The presentation of findings from parents, pupils and teachers were separately done for easy analysis. The results appear under four major themes being; ways through which parents got involved in children's education, benefits of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement and ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education. The study revealed that parents in urban primary schools in Chipata were involved in various ways in children's education such as paying for their school fees and educational tours and almost all respondents pointed out that parents assisted their children with homework. They also provided school requisites such as books, uniforms and exposed their children to the use of gadgets such as Zedupads, laptops and others in the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the benefits of parental involvement included pupil motivation and perceived improved academic performance. With regards teachers' views,

active parental involvement in the education of their children has a positive bearing on the performance of their children. Parental involvement also enabled teachers to be in contact with home environment which was viewed to have reduced pupil absenteeism from classes. As regards barriers to parental involvement, almost all the respondents pointed out that most parents were busy with their work schedules which affected their effective involvement in children's education. Parents opted to sponsor their children materially and financially but could not find time to appreciate teaching and learning in schools. Other barriers include lack of adequate knowledge of their full role in children's education as most involvement was home oriented. It was also noted that teacher attitudes towards parents affected some parents which in turn lowered parents' self esteem to actively participate in children's education.

The study revealed that to enhance parents' participation in children' education, sensitisation of parents was important. Sensitisation was the most cited technique by all the respondents through community awareness programmes, workshops and the media such as Radio and Television. The study also revealed that through 'open days' parents can be informed on how to involve themselves in assisting children with their home work in order to promote continuity in learning at home. Apart from that, teachers need to appreciate and motivate the parents through PTA meetings and communicate to them their role in children's education.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study and the current chapter discusses them. The discussion will be guided by the research objectives which includes; to examine ways through which parents get involved in their children's education, to find out the merits of parental involvement in their children's education, to explore the obstacles to parental involvement in children's education and find out ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata.

5.2 Ways Parents got involved in Children's education

Parental involvement in children's education has been proved to play a positive role in academic achievement and it was therefore important to find out whether parents in urban primary schools in Chipata understood what parental involvement was all about. The study revealed that parents understood what parental involvement was all about as they were able to point out some features that characterised parental involvement in education such as assisting with homework and promoting partnership with schools. For example one male parent said; "...parental involvement simply means total participation of us parents in our children's education and by this I mean providing all school requirements for our children, helping with homework, communicating with teachers to find out about how our children are doing and many others". This finding is in line with Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) in Jennings and Bosch (2011) who explained parental involvement as enabling parents to work with educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning. This implies that parents can only effectively participate in children's education if they understand what it means to involve themselves in children's education.

When parents were asked to express how they got involved in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata, the study revealed a number of ways, among them, included organisation of extra lessons. All the parents pointed out that they provided extra lessons for their children through either direct engagement of teachers to teach their children or other means such as video lessons and even themselves helping through teaching them. One male parent, for example, stated: "Yaa, like my daughter here what I have done last term I had involved one of the teachers to do some tuitions, yaa, for her....Then later on even myself... I have always just after supper, I always ask her to bring some past papers then we go through together, sometimes

I even give her a test especially science”. It is clear from the findings that parents in urban primary schools in Chipata provided extra lessons to their children which positively affected children’s academic performance.

When asked to state whether parents volunteered to engage in school activities away from home such as monitoring classroom activities and providing labour for school infrastructural development, common responses from the teachers and the parents were that parents in urban schools were preoccupied with their work schedules. This finding, however, was contrary to the findings by Mubanga (2008) in rural schools in Mumbwa district who revealed that parents were routinely involved through provision of labour force in the construction of classrooms and teachers’ houses. This implies that parents in urban primary schools could not physically present themselves in contributing to the child’s well-being which may have an impact on the effective involvement in children’s education. This is because the interaction between the teachers and the parents create conducive environment to understand holistically the child’s educational needs by both parties for quality education provision to the child.

Another way in which parents got involved in children’s education revealed by this study was through the provision of various school requirements such as uniform, books, pens, school bags and also paying school fees. What was even more interesting in urban primary schools from the findings was that parents exposed their children to modern technology in acquisition of knowledge and skills through the use of gadgets such as Zedupads, Tablets and Smart Phones as well as Laptops. These gadgets were very helpful in the education achievement of the children as they were able to research on their own and handle tasks that were complex. This can be ascertained by the direct statement from the pupil who said; “Eeh, eeh, for example research, when our teacher gives us research using the internet on their (parents) phones... they help me understand what this question is really meaning...also using educational tablets that help even getting past papers from them”(girl fs A). It is clear from the finding that parents were committed and knowledgeable in guiding their children using modern technology in accessing relevant information for their success in education. This is in tandem with the findings of Chansa-Kabali (2014) who confirmed that high achieving learners experienced a more literate home environment than low achieving learners. Children in these urban primary schools in Chipata were exposed to these teaching and learning materials which helped them to understand effectively in various areas of their study.

In addition, parents got involved by motivating their children through giving them awards as a way of appreciating good performance. All the three teachers in the study acknowledged that a motivated pupil was more likely to perform better than those who were not. The study revealed that most parents in urban primary schools awarded their children's good performance in school. This encouraged their children to work even harder in order to meet the expectations of their parents in the education process. For example, one class teacher from school B stated; "Some parents award their children for good results, yaa, so they are generally motivated to work hard if parents are putting in a lot of interest" Hoang's (2007) study also noted that parents who were involved in such activities as providing school requisites and awarding their children for good performance motivated the children. This entails that pupils were motivated to work hard in their tasks as they saw their parents actively involved. Therefore, there is need for schools to enhance the participation of parents in education in order to develop a responsible and highly motivated child in achieving his/her excellence in education in the urban primary schools in Chipata.

The study further revealed that parents also guided their children in doing homework, going through what children had learnt and taught them in some things where they had difficulties. Indeed, homework is an important component of teaching and learning as it provides continued learning even away from the classroom setup. In these urban primary schools in Chipata, all the pupils in the study pointed out that their parents assisted them with their homework which helped the children to understand certain technical questions given by the teacher at school. For example, one pupil had the following to say; "My parents involve themselves in my education in various ways such as going through my work every day, helping me with homework...aah..aah even signing...provide all my school need".(*Boy fs A*). In line with this finding, the Family Support America (2001) also reported that parental involvement occurs when parents actively, critically, resourcefully and responsibly contribute to promoting and developing the well-being of their children by supporting them with various school needs and also promoting community projects that are education related. It is clear from the findings that parents were committed in assisting children with necessary resources for their education and also helping them in handling problems to do with homework which provide a continued learning at home even after formal learning at school.

Additionally, the study revealed that parents got involved in their children's education through participating in decision making processes in the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. Although it was reported that most parents were busy with work, some parents availed themselves in PTA meetings to contribute in decision making process. It is however important to

point out that very few parents attended PTA meetings not only because they were more often busy but the study revealed that sometimes some parents were not communicated to by the school authorities to attend such meetings. In other words, PTA meetings were rarely held in these urban primary schools in Chipata. One female parent said, “We as parents get involved in our children’s education through participating in decision making in the school by attending PTA Meetings....we have not been called for the meeting for the past three years”. This implies that, despite being one of the major ways in which parents participate in children’s education, PTAs are sometimes merely structures without strength to function as intended. There is need, therefore, for the schools to appreciate the PTAs to effectively engage parents in children’s education.

The above finding is consistent with Cotton and Wikelund (1989) who argues that one of the ways through which parents get involved in their children’s education is by actively taking part in decision making processes in schools especially through the Parents-Teachers Associations. Although this is one of the important ways of parental involvement, it should however be noted that only few parents can be members of the PTA in a given period of time. Therefore, the PTA subjectively represents the parents’ population because some parents have no opportunity to air out their personal views relating to their children’s well-being. This then suggests that Parents need to be involved in children’s education beyond the PTA through other forums such as direct communication to the teachers on issues that may be of value to the child’s educational process.

It is clear from the findings that pupils in urban primary schools had enough learning materials as parents provided them with text books, pamphlets and video lessons. The material support was a very important characteristic feature of parental involvement in urban primary schools in Chipata such that some parents thought that parental involvement was all about financial and material support to their children. In other words, the socio economic status (SES) of the parents was mistakenly seen as a basis of effective parental involvement in children’s education while they neglected other valuable features of parental involvement such as volunteering in school activities, engaging in consultative decision making process with the school staff, promoting effective two way communication as well as community-school collaboration (Epstein, 1995).The material support, however, was an important component of parental involvement in children’s education as children were provided with adequate study materials such as past examination papers accessed through gadgets such as Zedupads.

Contrary to the above finding was the study by Siririka (2007) of rural schools in Namibia which noted that, there was lack of reference materials as well as library facilities which affected effective learning in schools and parental assistance to pupils' work. Parents in urban primary schools were effectively using modern technology in providing adequate materials for their children and this exposed the learners to relevant information for their educational achievement.

The other characteristic feature of parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools, as revealed in the study was that parents appreciated educational tours for their children by ensuring that such tours were sponsored. Through such tours, children visited important sites such as the national parks and museums where they had practical experience of various issues which enabled them to effectively gain knowledge and skills. It was pointed out in the study that parents were actively involved in educative programmes taking place in school which exposed their children to workshops meant to prepare the children for the final examinations. The fact that parents realized the importance of the initiative by the school managements in urban primary schools to engage pupils in local workshops and educational tours was a great progress in parents' participation in children's education. Contrary to the aforesaid finding is the finding by Mannathoko and Mangope (2013) in Botswana who found that parents in remote areas were not aware that they were supposed to offer the assistance in the schools in contributing to their children's learning.

It is important to note that although there were some shortcomings in effective parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools, parents got involved in various ways such as provision of school requisites, paying school fees, sponsoring educational tours, workshops and tuitions which helped most pupils to remain actively engaged in educational activities.

5.3 Benefits of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The study revealed that parents in urban primary schools in Chipata encouraged their children to attend classes and this was perceived to have reduced pupil absenteeism from school. The reduction in pupil absenteeism was viewed to have influenced positively pupils' academic performance, which means children performed better in school when their parents were involved in their education than when they were not. The study also revealed that children's absence from school greatly reduced as a result of parental involvement. This is confirmed in statement from a class teacher from school 'A' who articulated that; "Parental involvement does help to improve pupils' attendance in classes, yaa, it does very much because when you give the pupils homework, parents check and monitor them". School attendance is very important for every

pupil because it allows the learners to consistently follow the teaching and learning process effectively and the end result is good academic performance. This was also supported by other respondents that when children are aware that their parents are concerned with their education, they work hard to meet the expectations their parents and this positively affect their academic performance. This finding is in tandem with Mwape's (1990) study which found a relationship between academic performance and pupil absenteeism and further noted that absentees in particular were low academic achievers than non-absentees. This implies that parents' participation in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata played an important role in improving pupils' attendance in schools. It is, therefore, important to point out that parents need to ensure that children are encouraged to go to school each school day for the betterment of their academic achievement.

Furthermore, one thing to note here as revealed by the study is that most respondents in the study pointed out that parental involvement motivated the children for excellence in education. What was even more interesting in the urban primary schools was that teachers were also encouraged in their duties especially when their call for parents was successful for the benefit of the child. This simply means that parental involved in children's education does not only motivate a child but also encourage the teachers even to perform better as they manage the process of teaching and learning in school. The aforementioned finding was also supported by Epstein (2011) who argued that teachers believe that they cannot do their job effectively without the help of their pupils' families and the support of the community. Parents' participation in children's education helps the educators in the school environment to understand the learner better as they interact with the home environment through the information about the child from the parents.

One other benefit of parental involvement in education revealed by this study was that it helped children to believe in their abilities as the parents appreciated and encouraged them through their day to day interaction. This is important because it helps children to acquire self concept to see themselves worthy to handle a given academic task without isolating themselves from such a task. In trying to state the merits of parental involvement in children's education in urban primary school in Chipata, a class teacher from school 'B' pointed out that; "...children begin to develop, aah...aah, they develop self-worth very much and they can succeed in education. They have that...the children have that self-esteem and they perform very well....if parents are putting a lot of interest to encourage them and appreciate their abilities, yaa, I have seen that with my pupils". Parents are indeed models to their children as children believe in what their parents tell

them. In this case, children develop a sense of self-worth and responsibly deal with their educational tasks if parents positively appreciate their abilities. In line with this finding, Munsaka (2000) argued that the construction of self concept is mainly dependent on the experiences that one gets through the interaction with others. This clearly shows that the experiences children have with parents have an impact on their achievement in school in that parents' involvement in children's education motivate the children to believe in themselves as they progress in educational activities.

Another benefit revealed by this study as perceived by the respondents was that parental involvement in children's education was directly linked to the positive change in the academic performance of the pupils in the urban primary schools in Chipata. It is however important to note that this study did not correlate parental involvement and academic performance but merely pursued the respondents' views on the benefits that characterised parental involvement in children's education. All the three teachers in the study reported that they observed positive change in the performance of some pupils in their classes as a result of improved parental involvement in the education of their children. These findings reflect what Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) in Philippine discovered in their study on the importance, benefits and barriers of parental involvement in children's education. The aforesaid study correlated parental involvement and academic performance and found that parental involvement had a positive impact on pupils' academic performance across all subjects. In this regard, it is important to point out that while many other factors may be considered in order to improve pupils' academic performance in urban primary schools in Chipata, parental involvement needs to be given special attention because of its positive impact on the children's academic performance.

The study further indicated that children were more likely to proceed to higher educational levels if parents were actively involved in their education. Although the stated finding was referred to by few respondents in the study, it is important to note that some respondents believed that parental involvement in children's education had a positive impact in uplifting the children's desire to attend school and subsequently proceed to another level of education. One class teacher from school A had the following to say: "Parental involvement in children's education has positive effects on student attitudes....When parental involvement is present, a child has a greater desire to attend school further..., hence their out mate performance is very good". This clearly points out that the interaction children have with their parents give them an assurance and hope to even plan for the education level higher than what is currently being pursued. This entails that parental

involvement in children's education is very beneficial in these urban primary schools in that school dropout rate is greatly reduced. The aforesaid finding is consistent with Henderson (1987) who found that the academic benefits gained from family involvement with elementary school students continued through the middle and high school levels.

Furthermore, children whose parents were involved, as revealed in the study had more access to school requisites such as textbooks, video lessons, pamphlets, uniforms unlike those whose parents were not involved. This was found to be of great benefit to the children in that they had enough time to study instead of getting committed to accessing school requisites such as uniforms and other needs on their own. This was reported to have encouraged pupils to work hard to meet their parents' expectations of excellence in education. This means that when parents are involved, they find it easy to support their children with various necessities that will help them function at home as well as in the school environment. This finding is supported by Wherry (2003) who posits that when parents are involved, children exhibit higher scores in tests and reduces negative behaviours. This clearly shows that successful parental involvement will create conducive home environment where children are empowered in various ways to ensure that they are not affected during teaching and learning process in school.

5.4 Barriers to Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The study revealed a number of barriers that affected parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools in Chipata. Almost all the respondents reported that busy work schedules greatly affected the parents to effectively participate in their children's education. It was reported that parents had little time to participate in children's education especially school based involvement. What came out most prominently was that parents had tight work schedules which could not allow them engage themselves in school based activities. For example, one female parent stated that; “.At my workplace, we are always busy..haa, mwandini, we are not given chance to go out and visit or attend school meetings, even report books are usually collected by her grandmother..yaa, throughout the week busy”. This was also supported by class teachers who lamented that it was a common song when they met parents that they were busy in various ways and could not spare time to check on how children were doing in schools.

In line with the above finding, the study by the Scottish government (2005) revealed that the major hindrance to parental involvement was lack of time especially for working parents. Parents

were reported busy by almost all the respondents in the study with various work schedules which made it difficult for them to effectively involve themselves in children's education. As a commonly cited barrier, parents in urban primary Schools in Chipata were also not spared by their busy work schedules and it may have an impact on the quality of education provision if left unchecked. There is need for parents to understand that while they provided materials support to their children, it is important for them to always spare time engage themselves in children's education by visiting the schools to find out how the well being of their children.

Furthermore, the study found that parents lacked comfort associated with low self esteem. Some parents felt intimidated and unwelcome at school. The negative experiences by some parents discouraged them to participate in the school based involvement. Although only minimally cited, it was reported to be a huge hindrance for some parents who felt that they were not given enough time to interact with the teachers about the well fare of their children. This impacted on their effective participation because it was difficult for them to regularly visit the schools and interact with the teachers as the parents thought they were interfering with the school activities. However, there is need to build a mutual trust between parents and teachers to ensure a common understanding is developed to bridge a gap that normally exist between them. Parents need to be motivated as they strive to participate in children's education especially by the teachers who are the partners in children's education.

Another barrier revealed in this study was that parents were mainly concentrating on home based involvement. What was noted in the study was that parents seemed not to have known exactly what to do in the school environment because they did not know their full role. Additionally, parents had feelings of inadequacy to extend their involvement in active decision making in the school. One class teacher from school 'C' pointed out that "...Sometimes parents think everything is us teachers and concentrate at home, they feel..aah they cannot mingle with us but they have to be encouraged anyhow to develop a sense of self worth to work together with us for the child's sake". This implies that while parents may have had resources to participate in children's education in urban primary schools, the issue of self esteem had an effect on their interest to communicate and appreciate the school environment such as volunteering in classroom activities. In line with this finding is Apling and Jones' (2000) study which revealed that parents view themselves in relation to the teachers with inferiority complex and this had an impact on the interest to participate in children's education in the school setting. Parents felt that teachers did not consider their views. Therefore, parents found it hard to get involved in

children's education in the school setting. The negative attitudes by some teachers affected parents' desire to get involved in the children's education.

Much as the government's free education policy from grade one to seven is appreciated, parents were required to pay some amount of money to help in the day to day school affairs. The study revealed that though most of the parents in these urban primary schools were capable of paying this PTA fee, some found it a challenge and opted not to visit the school in fear of being reminded to pay the school fees. Provision of transport also came out as a challenge to parental involvement in that not all parents were able to pay for their children's transport to and from school. In this regard, it is important to mention that while most parents provided effectively for their children financially, some parents still found it a challenge as they involved themselves in children's education.

It was further reported in the study that some parents lived far away from the schools and could not often visit the schools and interact with the teachers. One girl from school B had the following to say; "My father stays very far from my school, so it is difficult for him to come here and go for work, he is politician". This clearly points out that distance from school was also a barrier to some parents although it did not come out most frequently in the study. It is important to note that while distance could have been an issue of concern by parents in urban primary schools, the distance in question was mainly related to their work schedules.

The above finding is in line with Lungu's (2015) study which reported that long distance to schools was an issue of concern and transport costs could not be easily mobilized by some parents in rural areas. The aforesaid study further added that schools in rural areas are not very close to one another and in certain instances, are placed five kilometers or more apart. This clearly indicates that parents in rural schools were struggling with issues of sourcing transport to visit the schools. Although urban primary schools in Chipata are not very far from each other, it was found that most residential areas where the pupils were coming from are relatively far from the schools. It is important to state that, unlike the actual distance stated by Lungu (2015) in rural schools, most parents in urban areas in Chipata viewed distance in relation to time spent from their work place to the schools where their children were enrolled. This means that parents were committed in various ways such that it was difficult for them to move and participate in school based activities in urban primary schools in Chipata.

5.5 Ways of Enhancing Parental involvement in Children's Education

The findings revealed that to enhance parental involvement in children's education, the parents, teachers and pupils of urban primary schools in Chipata suggested several ways in which this could be achieved. Teachers mentioned that sensitization of parents on the importance of parental involvement was needed. This was to be done through the media (print and electronic). Teachers felt that some parents' negative attitude towards their children's education was accounted to their lack of knowledge on the importance of education. Sensitization of parents on the importance of their children's education may have a positive impact on effective parental involvement. Such ways include initiating programs on the local TV and Radio stations. One male parent articulated that; "...you know, the Ministry of Education should encourage parents on this issue of involvement through some programmes on radios or TV, here like Chipata TV to sensitise the parents. Others don't know what to do in school of children surely".

The issue of sensitising parents was also prominent in the findings as a way to help enhance parental involvement in children's education. This finding is in line with Kangombe (2013) who found that sensitisation of parents took a centre stage in promoting parental involvement in children's education. It is therefore important that deliberate programs may in this case be initiated to broaden the scope of sensitisation of parents even at school level and ensure that parents are fully informed about their role in education at home and away from home in the school environment. This support to parents can also lead them to become increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, to be models for and to guide their children effectively. It is important, however, to note that while parents may need sensitisation, teachers may also need sensitisation for them to appreciate the role parents play in the education of their children.

Findings of the study also revealed that parents needed to be encouraged to attend Parent Association Meetings in these urban primary schools to participate in decision making process thereby positively impacting their children's education. For example, one female parent had the following to say: "Being given an opportunity to participate in PTA meetings offers us as parents great opportunities to bring out decisions on issues relating to learning...to meet and build relationships with teachers of our children." Nandango et al (2005) stated that school meetings that bring parents and teachers together enable parents to interact with the teachers in school governance. This includes communicating the child's home environment while appreciating the

school environment and engaging in decision making process that may affect children's education.

However, it was noted that PTA meeting were rarely held in urban primary school in Chipata. It is, therefore, important to point out that the school authorities need to uplift the organisations that bring parents and teachers together for the well being of the learner. Parents should be encouraged to check their children's homework in order to help them know what their children learn and also monitor children in doing their homework. Schools should include parents in decisions making and involving them in leadership where they can effectively participate in monitoring and implementing programmes for the wellbeing of the child. Parents-teachers organizations (PTOs) should be functional in these urban primary schools to ensure collaboration between parents and teachers in educating the child.

Another way of enhancing parental involvement in children's education revealed by this study was that the school authorities should promote workshops to educate parents on what is expected of them in children's education. This would enable them appreciate the importance of both home and school based involvements in their children's education. Teachers need to be educate parents on the importance of their involvement in children's education as this might lead them be more supportive to their children's education. While parents need to be sensitised about the importance of participating in children's education, it is important to actively influence positivity in teachers' attitudes towards parents. This is in order to create an inviting school environment that does not discriminate parents as they avail themselves in school based involvement in children's education in these urban primary schools in Chipata regardless of their background.

The study revealed that parents need to assist children with their homework and observe classroom activities that would open their understanding of how to help their children in school work. In line with this finding is an evaluative study finding by Mumba, et al (1998) which revealed that although many parents signed their children's homework and were seen as showing more interest in their education, concrete assistance was less prevalent. Assisting children with homework is one way through which parents get involved in their children's education. However, this has its limitations especially when parents have difficulties in understanding the material; For instance, when homework is given, parents need to be interested to check and help where necessary but this can only be effective if parents have some level of education. Therefore, if parents are empowered with relevant knowledge and skills through workshops and

other modes of communication, they will understand what is expected to be done as they participate in children's education.

It was also revealed that there was need for teachers to interact and create a rapport with the parents to enhance communication between them. Positive teacher attitude towards parents such as exchanging phone numbers with the parents for the benefit of the child was significant in uplifting parents' self esteem (Hoang, 2007). In this regard, Schools have a major role to play in ensuring that they create conducive environment for parents to actively participate in decision making processes in the schools. While parents need to be sensitized for them to understand their role in children's education, it is also important that the school authorities embark on a sensitization campaign to ensure that the school staff understand and appreciate the role of parents in their children's education. This will create a mutual relationship between the parents and the teachers because the two parties will be well informed of what is expected of them in the education of the child. With the effective sensitization of the school staff in urban primary schools in Chipata, parents' participation in children's education in the school environment would be highly enhanced because the two parties will work in partnership to ensure that there is an effective two way communication between home and the school environments for the well being of the child.

5.6 Summary of discussion of findings.

The discussion brought to the fore crucial findings on the study. The study reported many ways in which parents got involved in children's education such as provision of school requisites such as books, uniforms among others. They also assisted with homework, organised extra lessons and paid for their educational tours to mention but a few. Additionally, it was acknowledged that parental involvement in the education of their children was very beneficial in that it was viewed to have a positive impact on performance and pupil attendance in classes. Nevertheless, certain barriers were identified to limit the effective involvement of parents in children's education such as busy work schedules, teacher attitudes and lack of understanding of their full role as well as distance from school. The ways of enhancing parental involvement in children's education were also discussed. The suggestions were that parents need to be sensitised through local school programmes and media such television and radio programmes. Teachers need to be well informed through meetings to create an atmosphere that would accommodate parents in schools and encourage parents to initiate effective learning at home.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study and further makes recommendations to different stakeholders on things that ought to be improved or changed in totality.

6.2 Conclusion

The study revealed that parents in urban primary schools in Chipata were involved in various ways in their children's education. For instance, they paid for their extra lessons, sponsored their transport, bought text books, gave prizes when children passed, collected report books, spoke to teachers about their children's welfare and assisted with homework. Parents were also involved through paying school fees of which every pupil was required to pay in these urban primary schools despite the free education policy from grade one to seven. The PTA fees were meant to supplement government effort in the running of the day to day needs in school. Furthermore, what was even more interesting in urban primary schools was that parents sponsored educational tours and workshops for their children which in turn exposed the children to relevant knowledge and skills which positively improved their academic performance. Not only that, but parents also exposed their children to the use of modern technology such as the Zedupads, Tablets and Smart Phones for accessing past examination papers, downloading video lessons and textbooks which enabled the children to understand the content of the syllabi even after the formal teaching and learning at school was done.

Pertaining to benefits of parental involvement, the study found that pupils were motivated to work hard when their parents were concerned with their educational affairs. Based on the respondents' views, it was also reported that children's academic performance improved as parents were actively involved in the education. It is, however important to state that this study merely sought the views of the respondents on the benefits of involving parents in children's education and did not correlate parental involvement and academic performance. Further, it was reported that parents' involvement helped in the management of pupils' behaviour and this was also acknowledged by the teachers who monitored the children's behaviour in collaboration with the parents. Parental involvement also enabled teachers to be in contact with home environment which was viewed as an avenue to reducing pupil absenteeism from classes which was perceived to have brought positive change in pupils' performance. The implication is that parents need to be encouraged to get involved in their children's education as this would positively affect

children's achievement in education. Parental involvement is therefore very beneficial in children's education as it promotes partnership with teachers in monitoring the child's activities and performance at home as well as in the school environment.

As regards barriers to parental involvement, the study revealed a number of them such as busy work schedule, low self esteem, lack of adequate knowledge of their full role in children's education and teacher attitudes towards parents among others. However, it was found that busy work schedule affected all the parents under study in urban primary schools in Chipata. All the three groups of respondents indicated that parents' participation in children's education was hindered by work commitments. Most parents rarely had time to visit the schools and interact with the teachers as well as their children away from the home environment because of work commitments. They opted to sponsor their children materially and financially but could not find time to appreciate teaching and learning in schools which could have a negative impact on children's performance if left unattended to.

It was also important to find out how parental involvement in children's education could be enhanced and the study revealed that sensitisation of parents was important in order for them to understand and appreciate their role in children's education. Sensitisation was the most cited technique by most of the respondents in the study. It was suggested that sensitization of parents on the importance of their involvement in children's education could be promoted through community awareness programmes, workshops and the media such as Radio and Television. Apart from that, teachers need to appreciate and motivate the parents through meetings such as open days in order to communicate to them their role in children's education. Through such meetings of parents and teachers, parents can be informed on how they could be involved.

However, the Theoretical Framework on which this study was underpinned defines the types of parental involvement in terms of assisting parents with relevant skills in creating conducive home environment that supports children as learners, promoting a two way communication that connects home to school and vice versa, volunteering in school activities, promoting consultative decision making processes as well as enhancing collaboration between school and the community (Epstein, 1995). Therefore, from this perspective, it is important to state that parental involvement in children's education in urban primary schools leaves a lot to be desired. Parents were hindered by busy work schedules neglecting the holistic approach to parental involvement in their children's education. The involvement was mainly viewed in terms of activities associated with learning at home while ignoring other important areas such as engaging in

effective communication and collaborating with the school authorities for the betterment of the child. In this regard, it is justifiable to conclude that although this study brought out important features characterising parental involvement in urban primary schools, parental involvement was still inadequately offered in the urban primary schools in Chipata. This was due to the fact that it was not holistically exercised as postulated by Epstein's (1995) model. Most of the involvements by parents were home oriented such as homework assistance but little was done to improve communication between home and school and vice versa. Furthermore, parents could not volunteer attending to school programs such as observing teaching and learning in classrooms but concentrated on home based involvement which could have a negative impact on children's academic achievement.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Evidence from this study indicates that parents' participation in children's education was mainly home oriented. As such it was seen necessary that the School Managers should ensure to set up clear guidelines of involving parents in the education of their children in the school set up to help parents appreciate holistic involvement in children's education.
2. The study further demonstrated that sometimes teachers' attitudes and at times, parents' own inadequacies negatively affected effective parent-teacher partnerships. Arising from the said, it is recommended that being educators and people who are well informed, teachers need to engage parents more in decision making. This could help increase parents' skills and motivational levels, thereby, increasing their involvement in children's education.
3. It was noted from the study that meetings involving parents and teachers were rarely convened. Hence, there is need for the Permanent Secretary's office, Ministry of General Education to strengthen Parents Teachers' Associations in schools to be practical in order to enhance involvement of parents in decision making processes. This will, in turn, improve levels of parental involvement in their children's education.
4. Based on the evidence obtained in the study that most parents were busy with their work schedules, it is recommended that the Ministry of General Education organise

programmes through media such radio and television that would help parents understand that it is very important for them to spare time and fully participate in children's education for the success of the child in education.

6.4 Implications For future Research

The study explored parental involvement in children's education in urban primary Schools in Chipata covering only three primary schools and this entails that it was limited in scope. Therefore, generalisation of findings to the rest of the Schools may not be guaranteed. Nevertheless, the study still remains relevant because it provides information about the state of parental involvement in urban primary Schools and what is obtaining in the target sites.

In this regard, the following suggestions could therefore be considered for future studies.

1. There is need to conduct a comparative study of features that characterise parental involvement in children's education in rural and urban schools.
2. It would also be good to conduct a study on parental involvement in children's education on large scale by increasing the scope of the study with more respondents and observe if the findings would be consistent.
3. There is need to conduct a comparative study on the level of parental involvement in children's education between government-aided schools and private-run schools.
4. Based on the views of the respondents, it was reported that parental involvement had a positive impact on pupils' academic performance. However, there is need to conduct a quasi-experiment to verify whether parental involvement has a positive impact on children's academic performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: A semi-structured interview Guide for Parents

Dear Respondents,

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia currently pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research on the topic, '**Parental Involvement in Children's Education: A qualitative study of selected urban Primary Schools in Chipata**'.

You are kindly requested to participate in this research by responding to the questions below.

All the responses recorded will be taken as strictly classified. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any harm. Hence, i encourage you to be free when providing your responses.

QUESTIONS

1. Kindly tell me your understanding of parental involvement in children's education?
2. Would you tell me the ways in which you get involved in the education of your child?
3. What do you think is the importance of your involvement to your child's education?
4. Would you kindly tell me the benefits of your involvement in the education your child?
5. Kindly tell me what prevents parents from fully participating in children's education?
6. What obstacles do you meet as you get involved in your child's education?
7. Would you tell me what you think can be done to help parents get more involved in children's school life.

END OF INTERVIEW

I wish to THANK YOU so much for your time and participation

APPENDIX B: A semi-structured interview Guide for the Class teachers

Dear Respondents,

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia currently pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research on the topic, 'Parental involvement in children's Education: A qualitative study of selected urban Primary Schools in Chipata'.

You are kindly requested to participate in this research by responding to the questions during an interview.

All the responses recorded will be taken as strictly classified. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any harm. Hence, I encourage you to be free when providing your responses.

QUESTIONS

1. From your experience as a class teacher, would you tell me some of the common ways parents get involved in children's education?
2. Would you tell me the importance of involving parents in children's education?
3. Kindly, tell me the benefits that come along as parents get involved in your pupils' education.
4. Would you tell me what you can practically point to, if any, to have been as a result of parental involvement in your pupils' education?
5. From your experience, what do you think prevents parents from participating in children's academic affairs.....Why do you say so?
6. What obstacles do parents meet in their involvement in children's education?
7. As a stakeholder, would you tell me what you think can be done to enhance parental involvement in children's education?

END OF INTERVIEW

I wish to THANK YOU so much for your time and participation

APPENDIX C: A Semi-structured Interview Guide for Pupils

Dear Respondents,

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia currently pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research on the topic, '**Parental Involvement in Children's Education: A qualitative study of selected urban Primary Schools in Chipata**'.

You are kindly requested to participate in this research by responding to the questions during an interview.

All the responses recorded will be taken as strictly classified. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any harm. Hence i encourage you to be free when providing your responses.

QUESTIONS

1. Kindly, share with me how you manage to meet the various school requirements in your grade?
2. Would you tell me ways in which your parents get involved in your education?
3. How do you benefit from your parents' involvement in your education?
4. From your experience, what do you think prevents parents from fully participating in children's academic affairs.....Why do you say so?
5. What obstacles do your parents meet as they get involved in your education?
6. Would you tell me what you think can be done to enhance parental involvement your education?

END OF INTERVIEW

I wish to THANK YOU so much for your time and participation.

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form

Dear Respondents,

My name is **SINGOGO, DERICK**. I am currently a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Masters degree in Educational Psychology. This research is a major requirement for me to complete my programme. Thus this exercise is purely academic.

1) Purpose

The researcher intends to investigate parental involvement in children's education in urban primary Schools in Chipata district. The researcher is interested in examining ways through which parents get involved in children's education. Further, the researcher intends to find out the merits of parental involvement in children's education and explore the obstacles to parental involvement as well as finding out ways of enhancing it.

2) Consent

Participating in this exercise is voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in this exercise.

3) Confidentiality

All data collected from this research is treated with utmost confidentiality. Participants are assured that they will remain anonymous and untraceable in this research.

4) Rights of Respondents

All efforts will be taken to ensure that the rights of participants are protected and respected. Participants are assured that they will suffer no harm as a result of participating in this exercise. Participants are free to seek for any clarification at any point of the exercise and to inform the researcher if they feel uncomfortable about any procedure in the research.

6. Declaration of Consent

I have read and I fully understand this document. I therefore agree/disagree to participate in this exercise.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Appendix E: Ethical Clearance Letter



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Telephone: +260 -1- 290258/291777 Ext. 2208
Fax: +260-1-290258/253952
E-mail: drgs@unza.zm

P O Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia

28th February, 2017

Mr. Singongo Derick
P.O Box 510510
CHIPATA

CHASO
Amo
18/4/17



Dear Mr. Singongo,

RE: FULL ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With reference to your research proposal entitled: "**Parental Involvement in Children's Education: A Qualitative Study of Urban Primary Schools in Zambia,**" you are hereby given full ethical clearance to proceed with your research.

ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION: 28th February, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE: 27th February, 2018

However, it is recommended that all data to be collected should be kept confidential and that if there are plans for publication or dissemination of results, the names of the participants should not be linked with the research in order to ensure confidentiality.

Please note that you are expected to submit to the Secretariat a Progress Report and a copy of the full report on completion of the project.

Finally, and more importantly, take note that notwithstanding ethical clearance given by the HSSREC, you must also obtain authority from the Permanent Secretary of the appropriate Ministry before conducting your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. J. Simwinga, PhD
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (RESEARCH)
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

cc: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Acting Chairperson, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies