

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Several studies have identified parental involvement as one of several factors which can promote students' educational success. Parental involvement refers to caregivers of children that is parents and guardians becoming involved in their children's learning, both in and out of school. It involves parents reading to their children, checking homework daily, discussing children's progress with teachers, voting in school committees/boards, helping the school to set challenging academic standards and becoming an advocate for better education in communities. Students need to know that their parents have a vested interest in their success. Parental involvement can be a major component of school improvement and planning (Capper, 1993). Literature has revealed that these ways of parental involvement are effective especially with their effects on student achievement.

Parents who help and encourage their children to learn at home, and who help develop positive attitudes toward school, contribute to the personal growth and academic success of their children. Henderson and Berla (1994) discussed the benefits of parent and family involvement for students and schools. Among the many benefits that students and schools enjoy are higher student achievement, better attendance, fewer placements in special education institutions, more positive attitudes and behaviour, improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by parents and more support for families by schools.

Various ways through which schools can gain greater parents' involvement have been suggested by many scholars and writers such as Epstein (1992), Bauch (1994) and Cotton and Wikelund (1982). These ways have several features in common and some of these are: programmes that focus on parenting skills and the development of home conditions that support learning.

A 1993 study conducted in Missouri by the University of Missouri-Columbia based on 56,935 parents' responses from 296 schools completing the Missouri School Improvement Plan Program Parent Questionnaires found that parents with higher income levels had higher levels of parent involvement in their children's school. This would imply that efforts of rural schools to involve parents are hindered by factors such as low income levels amongst parents. Although educational researchers and practitioners have consistently suggested that greater levels of parental involvement play an important role in promoting academic success of their children, they have been less clear about specific processes and factors that facilitate parents' involvement in rural settings (Moreno, 2000). Some researchers like William (1996) have argued that rural communities, because of their size and networks have fewer barriers and provide a more conducive environment for parents to participate in their children's education. Such findings draw from small-scale ethnographic accounts and therefore cannot be generalized to other places, in particular the Zambian setting.

Even though there is inadequate literature that demonstrates the specific processes that facilitate parents' involvement in rural settings, there are wide agreements among many

researchers like Henderson and Berla (1994) and Tizard and Schofield (1982) that it is very important to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's education. It is widely recognized that parents can provide valuable help for their children by showing that they are interested in their school work and see the value of what they study at school. There is strong evidence that this form of support can have a real and positive effect on performance of children at school and, therefore, on their future (The Scottish Office, 2002).

In Zambia, the Ministry of Education realizes the importance of parent involvement in the education of their children. The 2002 Basic Education Sub-Sector Improvement Programme (BESSIP) stated that access to quality education can be improved by enhanced community participation in basic education (Ministry of Education, 2003). To promote community participation in the governance of schools, the Ministry of Education encourages all schools to have Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in the case of Basic Schools and School Boards in the case of High Schools. PTAs and School Boards act as a link between the school and community and are one way through which communities can participate in the governance of schools.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Parental involvement in children's education has been cited as one of the major factors contributing to student academic achievement. Available literature from writers such as Reynolds, et. al., (1996) reveals that parents in rural areas are not as involved in education of their children as compared to their counterparts in the urban areas. However, the situation in rural areas in Zambia, in particular in the selected rural schools

in Central Province in areas of parental involvement in the education of their children is not known. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating ways through which parents got involved in their children's education in rural areas of Zambia and attempted to establish ways of improving parental involvement in children's education. The study further explored barriers that hindered parents' involvement in their children's education.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study investigated the involvement of parents in their children's education in Zambian rural schools. Parental involvement in children's education has been found to have an effect on academic achievement of students as evidenced in the review of literature in chapter two. In Zambia, the Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring that parents participate in the provision of education to their children and this is evident in policy documents such as *Educating our Future* (1996)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study was guided by the following objectives

1. To examine ways through which parents get involved in their children's education
2. To find out the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education
3. To find out barriers to parental involvement in the education of their children
4. To find out ways of improving parental involvement in children's education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following question

1. In what ways do parents get involved in their children's education?

2. What are the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education?
3. What are the barriers to parental involvement in their children's education?
4. What are the ways of improving parental involvement in their children's education?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Considering government's policy of encouraging community participation in education, policy makers 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. Findings from this study may help education planners, including schools to develop suitable approaches for encouraging parental involvement in the education of their children.

Findings from the study may also assist in maximizing parents' involvement thereby increasing children's access to quality education and contributing towards achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Further, 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 parental involvement in their children's education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Epsteins' (1995) theoretical perspectives on parental involvement in children's education. Epstein (1995) agrees with many scholars like

Cotton and Wikelund (1982) and Bauch (1994) that parental involvement plays a key role in the academic achievement of pupils. In his perspectives, he identified several ways through which parents got involved in their children's education and these included: parents volunteering at school, parents helping children's learning at home, joint decision making and collaborating between parents and school authorities. Epstein (1995) argued that the following can improve school-community relations and enhance parental involvement in education; helping families to establish home environments to support children as students, designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school and children's progress, recruiting and organizing parents' help and support, providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, involving parents in decision making, identifying and integrating resources and services from the community.

In his theoretical perspective, Epstein (1995) highlighted some potential benefits of parental involvement. He stated that parents' collaborative relationships with schools have a positive impact on academic achievement and that partnership among school, family and community can help children succeed through their time at school and after they become adults. He further stated that the benefits of parental involvement are not limited to early childhood or the elementary level; there are continuing positive effects through high school. Parents' involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, supportive, long-lasting, and well-planned. Parental involvement has been shown to positively affect student achievement, reduce problem behaviours, and create a positive sense of self-efficacy for achieving in school-related tasks (Epstein,

1995). However, this parental involvement could be constrained by both home and school factors – that is parents’ characteristics and school practices.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Parental Involvement refers to parents helping their children with school work through checking their books daily, attending school events such as PTA meetings and voting in school boards/committees.

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.

School Governance refers to the process by which decisions are made and within schools and maybe related to: electing the office bearers of school committees, delegation of functions, proceedings of the governing body including, convening meetings and quorums.

Illiteracy means not being able to read and write. A person who has not received basic education is illiterate.

Literacy is the ability to read and write and is essential for the growth and progress of individuals as well as society.

Academic Achievement means children excelling in their school work in terms of performance. Academic performance also goes beyond performing in the classroom. It can also relate to positions or jobs that people get at the end of their school years.

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

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study consists of six chapters. The first chapter comprises the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, significance of the study, theoretical framework and definition of terms. The second chapter consists of a review of the literature, while the third chapter comprises the methodology. The research findings are presented in chapter four and a discussion of these findings in chapter five. Lastly, chapter six presents the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature on parental involvement in the education of their children. The chapter highlights literature on ways of parental involvement in children's education, benefits of parental involvement in children's education, parental involvement in Zambia and barriers to parental involvement in children's education.

Parental involvement in the education of their children became a major global issue in the 1980s. This was an era of growing concern about the quality of education. Countries took a greater role than before in monitoring and maintaining academic standards, while communities became more watchful on the expense of public education.

WAYS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

There is no universal definition of what parental involvement entails. Some definitions include greater participation in the life of a school, while others focus on increased contributions to an individual child's learning process. Still others incorporate the family into the learning process through adult education, parenting and other school activities. Some schools engage families in the governance and planning processes and in building broad ownership of student achievement goals. The term parental involvement is also used to refer to several forms of participation by parents in education such as parents/guardians attending school functions or events and responding to school obligations such as 'Open Days', Parent-Teacher Conferences and Annual General Meetings. In addition, parental involvement refers to parents helping their children improve their school work by providing encouragement, establishing a suitable home

environment for study and allowing their children adequate time for study. Parents can also model desired behaviour such as reading for pleasure, monitoring homework and tutoring their children (Cotton and Wikelund 1989). Outside the home, parents can volunteer to help out with school activities and /or can take active roles in the decision-making processes in the school, especially by becoming members of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Parental involvement also occurs when parents actively, critically, resourcefully and responsibly contribute to promoting developing the well being of their schools. Other ways of parental involvement include parenting which requires families to establish home environments to support children as students, communicating from home to school and school to home about school programmes and student progress, volunteering by organizing parent help and support. Learning at home by providing information and ideas from families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities are also ways of parental involvement (Family Support America, 2001).

Ways of parental involvement also include parents being involved in decision making processes at school level, collaborating with the community by identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and student learning and development (Nandango et.al, 2005).

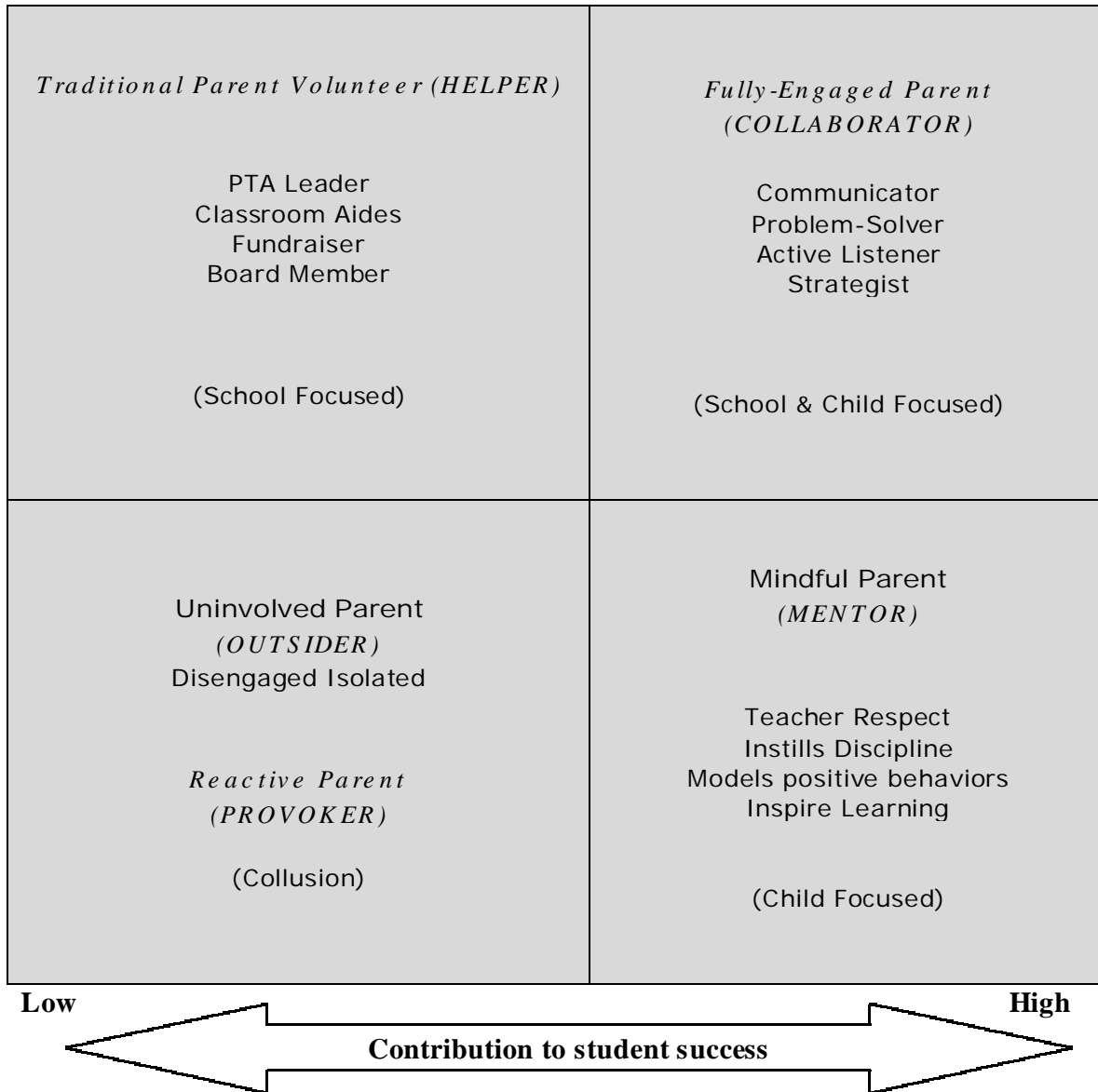
Researchers and educators have explored various types of parental involvement in children's education. They all recognize the fact that involvement varies from family to family and can take many different forms.

Epstein (1995) proposed types of involvement which include parents establishing a home environment that supports children as students, school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programmes and children's progress, parents and guardians volunteering at school, taking part in decision making at school and schools collaborating with communities to identify and integrate resources. Parents should take advantage of opportunities to become involved with school administration and policy development-for example, attend school board meetings and join the PTA.

Monitoring children's homework has also been cited by Ballen and Moles (1994) as a type of parental involvement in children's education. It is not necessary for parents to know all the answers, however, it is important to demonstrate their interest by providing a quiet, well-lit place for doing homework, encouraging children's efforts, being available for questions, and being willing to discuss material the child is learning.

In their model on supporting parental involvement in education, Mitchell and Grijalva (2004) stated that parental involvement could take many forms, both positive and negative. They identified five categories of parent involvement/behaviours within a school community. Each category makes a corresponding contribution to the success of the school community and to student success. The five categories are illustrated in the Figure below:

Figure 1: A Model for Understanding Parent Involvement in Education



(Source: www.parentinvolvementmatters.org)

The above categories are very fluid, that is, parents can move from one group to another depending upon the situation. Each category implicitly makes a contribution to the success of the school community and/or to the academic, emotional and social success of students. The volunteer parents are a vital part of school community, without which

many schools could not provide quality education or raise additional funds for needed programmes and materials. In many schools, this type of traditional parent involvement is at a record low. New ways of recruiting “helpers” must be discovered. The Traditional Parent Volunteer contributes highly to the success of school community but does not necessarily contribute to student success.

The “collaborator” parent understands the concept of “parent-school partnership,” acts in ways that facilitate its development, and recognizes that effective parenting cannot occur in isolation from other parents and the school.

The “mentor” parent approaches parenting with conscious intention but does not necessarily get involved at their children’s school. They work hard to teach respect and instill discipline at home as well as model positive behaviors to their children.

The “outsider” parent is generally invisible in the school community and is isolated from other parents. Some willingly choose to be uninvolved; others face overwhelming challenges in their family lives that leave them with few options.

The “provoker” parent, instead of employing helpful behaviours to influence change, uses techniques such as blaming, rumor, collusion and gossip to achieve results.

Findings from a study conducted by Nzala in 2006 on parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children revealed that parents were involved in the education of their children only minimally. The involvement mainly consisted of attendance at the school ‘open days’. In addition, helping with children’s homework,

provision of teaching and learning materials and children's refreshments to a much smaller extent constituted the level of involvement by parents.

According to Nandango et.al, (2005), parental participation in school governance may include being an active school PTA/Board member or school improvement committees. Activities include goal setting, development, implementing and monitoring of programme activities, personnel decisions and funding allocations, accountability and reporting mechanisms, information sharing systems, power relations in the running of the school, determination and enforcement of rules, procedures and guidelines, stakeholder participation and community-school relations, curriculum content and delivery approaches and teaching and learning resources.

BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The involvement of parents in their children's education has long been found to be of significant importance (Tizard and Schofield,1982). It is the parents who make decisions whether or not to send their children to school, which children to send to school and when. Parental involvement in the education process of their children has positive effects on student achievement, attitude and behaviour.

A research by Cotton and Wiklund (1982) conducted in Portland revealed that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement. Further, the research showed that the more intensively parents were involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial were the achievement effects. This holds true for all types of parental involvement in children's learning and for all types and ages of students. The

research also showed that the earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement began, the more powerful the effects were.

Educators have pointed out the critical role of the home and family environment in determining children's school success, and it appears the earlier this influence is "harnessed," the greater the likelihood of higher student achievement. This works for all ages of students (School Improvement Research Series, 1995-96). Many authors have stated that the more active forms of parent involvement such as working with their children at home, actively supporting school activities and also helping out in classrooms produce greater achievements than the more passive ones. In a research conducted by the Michigan Department of Education (2001), findings revealed that 86% of the general public believed that support from parents was the most important way to improve the schools and that lack of parental involvement was the biggest problem facing public schools.

The research also revealed that family participation in education was twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socio-economic status. The more intensely parents were involved, the better their children's academic performance. The results of the research further revealed that the more parents participated in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level; in advocacy, decision-making, and oversight roles, as fundraisers, as volunteers and paraprofessionals, and home teachers, the better for student achievement. The research established that although most parents did not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support, they may

become increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, to be models for and to guide their children.

According to Reynolds, et. al., (1996), the most consistent predictors of children's academic achievements and social adjustment are parents' expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school. Parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their children's educational activities than parents of low-achieving students. Studies show that parent involvement in their children's education has positive effects on student attitudes and social behaviour. When parent involvement is present, a child has a greater desire to attend school, and to learn. Along with this, the attachment between the parent and child is further developed positively.

Despite the vast literature indicating that parental involvement in children's education has positive impact on their academic performance, some educators maintain that parental involvement can have negative impacts on the education of children. One such viewpoint is the 'Closed- Door position'. This viewpoint takes its name from the general view of some educators that community involvement is extraneous, if not injurious to the education of the child. The basic assumption is that schools can best handle within their walls all major problems of education. Therefore, community participation should be kept to a minimum. The presence of parents in the school will hamper the educator in the performance of his duties (Litwak, 1974).

Literature reveals that although school administrators agree that parents should be involved with the schools in a variety of ways, they disapprove of parent involvement in administrative areas such as teacher/school manager selection and evaluation. They also tend to feel that parents do not have enough training to make school decisions (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989).

The effect of parent participation in decision-making is not nearly as extensively researched as the effects of parent involvement on student's learning. In spite of the lack of substantial evidence linking parents' involvement in governance and student achievement, this should not be taken to mean that parents should not be included in some aspects of school decision making. Educationalists have identified other benefits other than student achievement, which have been found to emerge from involving parents in governance and some of these are as follows:

1. The elimination of mistaken assumptions parents and school people may hold about one another's motives, attitudes, intentions and abilities.
2. The growth of parents' ability to serve as resources for academic, social and psychological development of their children.
3. The increase of parents' own skills and confidence sometimes furthering their own education and upgrading their jobs, thus providing role models for their children.

A 2003 analysis of more than 25 public opinion surveys conducted by a nonpartisan public opinion research organization in the United States of America, found that 65

percent of teachers believed their students would do better if their parents were more involved, and 72 percent of the parents felt that children whose parents were not involved sometimes did not perform as well (Johnson and Duffette, 2003).

Henderson and Berla, 1994 state that besides student success, parental involvement produces other benefits as well. The benefits were seen at three levels; benefits for students, benefits for parents and benefits for the school. When parents are involved, students' grades and test scores improve, they achieve more in reading and attend school more regularly. The result of these benefits is high completion rates as students exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviour. There is also a decrease in negative behaviours such as alcohol use, violence and antisocial behaviour.

Parental involvement has benefits for parents too. When parents are involved in their children's education, their confidence in the school as well as in themselves increases. The confidence instills in them a belief that they have the ability to help their children progress in school. The likelihood of parents enrolling in continuing education increases when they are involved in their children's education. They are able to influence decisions made in the school and develop closer ties to their communities and neighbors (Wherry, 2003).

Providing quality education to students is one of the priorities for most schools worldwide and much of it has been made possible through the involvement of parents in their children's education. When parents are involved, the schools get a lot of support

from families, teacher morale is also seen to improve schools where children fail, improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child's education (Henderson and Berla, 1994).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

In its National Policy on Education 'Educating Our Future' (1996), the government of Zambia states that the issue of parental involvement assumes special significance in the light of the fact that the first responsibility for the education of children lies with parents and after that with the wider community in which the family lives. This concept emphasizes the attention which the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights gives to the protection of parents' right to choose the type of education their children will receive. This means that parents and the community have a basic right to participate in education.

In Zambia, parents are expected to contribute towards cost of schooling at all levels. At primary level, despite the pronouncement of Free Primary Education, there is inadequate funding provided for maintenance of schools and learning materials and therefore, most of these inputs are provided by parents and communities. In some rural areas of Zambia, parents, through the School Management Committees, contribute towards extending classroom blocks and constructing teacher accommodation.

Despite the above mentioned parent-school relations, a survey conducted by Mumba, Chikalanga, Sikwibele and Nkhata in the Eastern Province of Zambia in 1998 revealed

that most parents had limited contact with the school. However, findings from the survey on parental attitudes towards their children's were generally positive. The survey recommended that every school should have a policy on parental involvement and work out a mechanism of putting it into practice.

It has been repeatedly found that a child's success in school correlates positively with parents reading to their children. The survey report by Mumba et al., (1998) revealed that there was a long way to go before parents would be able to provide their children with the necessary support to excel in school. The pupils interviewed 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. Only about half of students were welcomed from school and asked about what they had learned. According to children, illiteracy and a shortage of reading materials almost certainly contributed to this.

A study conducted by Mulenga (2005) on community participation in managing school finances in selected schools in Mansa District revealed that schools' finances were mostly controlled and spent by heads of schools with very little involvement of local communities. This was despite the fact that most parents of children who attended the schools that were under study were economically constrained. The major conclusion of this study was that staff in schools showed reluctance to incorporate local communities in the financial operations of schools.

Findings from a study conducted by Mumba, Chikalanga, Sikwibele and Nhkata in 1998

revealed that illiterate parents were not able to play roles of supporting children's education at home. With the high levels of illiteracy, especially in rural Zambia, it is difficult for illiterate parents to contribute meaningfully to the education of their children in the form of assisting them academically. As a result of high rates of illiteracy in Zambia, many families may not have literate members who may assist children academically. It is suggested that in such cases, members of other families who are literate may be asked to assist. While this is possible, it may not work always as the assistance rendered by the parents of the child is not the same as that rendered by a member of another family.

In a study aimed at ascertaining the willingness and ability of parents to finance basic schools on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, findings revealed that parents were generally willing and able to pay for a variety of school items. However, the degree of willingness and ability varied from one item to another. Items such as school fees and learning materials enjoyed a high degree of parent willingness to pay while others such as school vehicle and teachers' salaries had low support. There was a relationship between the education level, family size, household income and the willingness and ability of the parents to finance basic schools (Silondwa, 1991).

BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Successful parent involvement can be defined as the active, ongoing participation of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of his or her child. Parents can demonstrate involvement at home by reading with their children, helping with homework and

discussing school events, attending functions or volunteering in classrooms. Schools with involved parents communicate with them regularly and incorporate them into the learning process. However, there are barriers to such involvement.

According to the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2005), there are several barriers to successful parent involvement and some of these include perceptions by teachers; schools do not always involve parents because a lot of them perceive that families do not want to be involved when in fact families do not know how to be involved. Inadequate time on the part of parents is another barrier to effective parental involvement. Some parents are too busy and hence cannot find time to successfully be involved in their children's education.

Inability to speak fluent English is also a barrier to effective parental involvement. Parents who are unable to communicate fluently in English which is the common medium of communication in most schools find it hard to be involved in their children's education as they fail to communicate with the schools or let alone help their children with school work. In her study on parental involvement in the education of intellectually challenged children, Nzala (2006) revealed that there were quite a number of barriers that hindered the parents from being involved in the education of their intellectually challenged children. The most prominent were negative attitudes towards the children by parents themselves and lack of skills to apply in their quest to help their children.

A study conducted by Henderson and Mapp (2002) examined the factors that influenced low-income parents' involvement. They found that social factors emanating from the parents' own experiences and history influenced their participation. These factors included parents' own educational experiences in school and burden of their additional responsibilities. The study suggested that when school staff engage in caring and trustful relationships with parents and recognize them as partners in the educational of children, parents' desire to be involved is influenced and how they participate in their children's educational development is influenced.

According to the National Literacy Trust (2000), parental involvement is greatly influenced by family social class, the mother's level education, mental well being and single parent status, poverty, and to a lesser extent, by family ethnicity. It is also influenced by the child's level of achievement: the higher the level of attainment, the more parents get involved. Research has also established that children from poorer and less educated families receive much less parental encouragement for schooling than those from better-off household (Ashby, 1998). One of the main contributing factors to parent involvement is the socioeconomic status of the parents. A research conducted by Forrest and Martin in 2003 revealed that it is typically the mainstream parents with higher socio-economic status and education that were more involved in their child's than were poverty level and minority parents.

According to a research conducted by the Scottish Government (2005) on parents' views on improving parental involvement in children's education, parents reported some barriers to parental involvement and some of these included lack of time especially for

working and or single parents. They also reported that usually, parents lacked knowledge about subject curriculum and teaching methodology and lacked knowledge on how to help and support learning at home. Some parents also felt that being actively involved was beyond the call of duty. They felt it was the responsibility of the school and teachers to educate their children during school time. Some parents expressed concern that too much involvement in their child's education could have a detrimental effect, either by making their child appear different from their classmates or by making their child too dependent upon them. On the other hand, parents reported that attitudes of some teachers posed barriers to effective parental involvement. Some teachers were not as welcoming as they could be and did not encourage parents to be more involved. There was a sense amongst parents interviewed that some teachers were too busy and preferred to have no interference from parents. According to Forrest and Martin (2003), one of the most contributing factors to parental involvement was the socio-economic status of parents, meaning that socio-economic status determines the level to which parents are involved in their children's education.

In a study conducted by Ndhlovu (2005), findings revealed that major reasons for non-involvement of parents in the education of their visually impaired children included breakdown of trust between parents and teachers, lack of skills in reading and writing, self accusation due to belief that disability of children was a result of sins of their parents, belief that education of children with visual impairment was not parents' responsibility but of government and teachers.

Attitudes that some parents and teachers have about each also contribute to non participation of parents in their children's education. For example, some teachers do not feel comfortable talking about issues in front of families while some parents don't trust staff. Teachers think that families are too overwhelmed to participate in their children's education and teachers often are not willing to accept families as equal partners and this makes parents to feel like they have nothing to contribute.

Logistical factors have also been sighted as hindering parental involvement in their children's education. For some parents, transportation is unavailable for them to get to meetings. In some schools, meetings are held only during working hours which may not be convenient for working parents.

Epstein (1995) also discussed barriers to parental involvement in chi education. Findings from a study he conducted in 1986 found that school-related issues, such as lack of adequate communication between teachers and parents, influenced the level of parental involvement. Specifically, 16% of parents reported never receiving correspondence from the teachers, 35% reported never having parent-teacher conferences, and 60% reported never speaking directly to the teachers on the telephone. Findings also found that lack of teacher efficacy was also a factor influencing parental involvement. Teachers with higher levels of efficacy were more likely to be engaged in parental involvement than teachers with lower levels of efficacy. Other barriers to parental involvement included 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.

SUMMARY OF REVIEWED LITERATURE

In summary, literature reveals that the first responsibility of educating a child rests with parents and thereafter it becomes a shared responsibility with the school. Parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement. The more intensely parents are involved in their children's education, the more beneficial are the achievement effects. The government of the Republic of Zambia in its policy 'Educating Our Future' (Ministry of Education, 1996) states that parental involvement can contribute to the development of the school as a whole and can take many forms, from encouraging a child to attend school to participating on various school committees. The literature however is not elaborate on which forms of parental involvement have the greatest positive impact on children's academic achievement.

The literature also reveals that very few studies have been undertaken in Zambia on parental involvement in children's education. The information available is on other countries. However, despite the unavailability of studies done in Zambia, most of the findings from studies conducted in other countries are applicable to Zambia. There may be few concepts that may not be applicable to Zambia due to other challenges that Zambian parents face such as illiteracy and poverty.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the design of the study, population, sampling procedure, instruments used to collect data, data collection procedures and methods of data processing.

Design of the Study

The study used a survey research design. A survey research is one of the most important areas of measurement in applied social research. It is a research tool that includes at least one question which is either open-ended or close-ended and employs an oral or written method for asking these questions. The goal of a survey is to gain specific information about either a specific group or a representative sample of a particular group. Results are typically used to understand the attitudes, beliefs, or knowledge of a particular group. The broad area of survey research encompasses any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents either using short paper-and-pencil feedback to one-on-one in-depth interviews (Trochim, 2000). Survey research designs are valuable tools used for assessing opinions.

The researcher used this research design because of some of the many advantages it presents some of which include; standardization of measurement in that same information is collected from every respondent selected to represent a larger population. It is also unique in nature in that it gathers information not available from other sources and has unbiased representation of the population of interest. In addition, the other

reason for using this research design was that it is simple and conducive for small sample sizes. The questions in the data collection tools made it possible to collect information both orally and in written form depending on the respondents' literacy levels.

In this study, the survey design was utilized to collect data on the following issues; ways in which parents got involved in their children's education, benefits of parental involvement in children's education, barriers to parental involvement in children's education and how to promote parental involvement in children's education. The research involved qualitative methods of collecting data through the use of questionnaires which were administered to both teachers and parents from six basic schools.

Population

A population refers to the target group under investigation or a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. In this study, the population included school managers, their deputies, teachers and parents from six communities in Mumbwa District.

Sample

A sample refers to the population researched in a particular study. Usually, researchers are made to select a "sample population" that is considered representative of groups of people to whom results will be generalized or transferred. The sample was drawn from six government-run basic schools and the surrounding households located in 6 rural communities of Mumbwa District namely Shimbizhi, Nambala, Chabota, Kalundu, Myooye and Nangoma. Mumbwa district is located in central province of Zambia and

has a population of approximately 158,861 inhabitants (District Situational Analysis, 2009)

The sample was drawn from each of the 6 communities to give an equal representation of the area under study. The sample size was as follows, 6 school managers, 6 deputy school managers, 10 teachers and 40 parents.

Sampling Procedure

Sampling procedure is a method used to select participants for a research project. The study used two types of sampling procedures and these simple random and purposive sampling. The teachers were selected using the systematic random sampling technique. Using this technique, the researcher used systematic random selection process i.e. identifying every element/participant in the sampling frame then choosing them on some planned basis ensuring that every element has the same opportunity of being selected. Specifically, at each of the 6 schools, the researcher obtained a list of all the teachers from the school administration and every second name on the teachers' lists was selected. This method was used to avoid sampling bias especially considering the fact that the schools sampled were poorly staffed and most teachers on the staff list were either on study leave or not in school due to other reasons such as pending transfers.

Parents were selected using purposive sampling or judgmental sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which elements are chosen based on purpose of the study. Data generated from using such a method may give internal validity of

findings but not be generalized to other places and people. The lists of parents that had children attending the schools were obtained from school records. The reason for this choice of sampling method was that only parents that had children attending school at the targeted schools qualified to take part in the study. Therefore the sample of parents was chosen from those that had children in the selected schools.

Instruments for Data Collection

In the data collection process, questionnaires were used for both parents and teachers. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Foddy, 1994). The questionnaires had both open and closed ended questions (see Appendices A and B). An open ended question is one which is likely to receive a long answer. Although any question can receive a long answer, open ended questions deliberately seek longer answers. Closed ended questions are those which are likely to be answered with either a single word or a short phrase.

Each respondent had to provide general information about them such as sex, age range, position held in school (in the case of teachers) and level of education for both teachers and parents. The questionnaire for teachers had questions that were aimed at finding out the levels of parental involvement, factors contributing to high and low levels of parental involvement and barriers to parental involvement. The questionnaires for parents included questions on different aspects concerning parental involvement in children's education such as ways of how they are involved, how schools can encourage involvement of parents and barriers to parental involvement.

Data Collection Procedures

Before beginning the data collection process, permission to conduct the survey was sought from the District Education Board Secretary who in turn authorized all schools involved to agree to participate in the study. With teachers, questionnaires were self-administered. These were filled in by the respondents themselves and this was done by distributing the questionnaires and collecting them after they had been filled in. With parents, the researcher had to read and interpret the question in a familiar language to the respondent. The parents could not be given the questionnaires to fill them in as some of them were illiterate. Responses were recorded as they were given. The researcher devoted a few minutes towards introducing the research and its purpose to the respondents. The researcher took this opportunity to inform the respondents about the importance of the research and they were assured that findings from the research were for academic purposes only. Respondents were also urged to present information in good faith about themselves and factors related to parental involvement in children's education.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making. Data analysis has multiple facets and approaches, encompassing diverse techniques under a variety of names, in different business, science, and social science domains (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively and was coded, categorized and put into themes and sub-themes. The quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the quantitative data and this was presented in tables and Pie Charts. Both closed and open-ended questions on the questionnaire were coded for purposes of deriving meaning from them.

Problems encountered during Data Collection

Major problems encountered during data collection process was the busy schedules of some teachers and this made them take longer than anticipated in filling in the questionnaires. The teachers reported to have little time to complete the questionnaires. Regarding parents, it was difficult to find time to interview them as they were out tending to their fields. The other challenge faced was the distance between households. In some communities, houses were much spaced hence the researcher had to walk long distances to get to certain households.

Limitations of the Study

Although the research reached its objectives, there were some unavoidable limitations. Firstly, despite this research being carefully prepared, only a sample of 6 selected schools and their communities were involved in this study. Therefore, findings from this research cannot be generalized to a large population. The other limitation of the study was the inadequate literature on similar studies conducted in Zambia making the research to rely on literature of studies conducted in other countries. Therefore, the researcher found it

difficult to have a wide understanding of the situation in Zambia as it relates to the core topic of the research. Lastly but not the least, part of the data collection was conducted by the researcher herself. It is unavoidable that in this study, certain degree of subjectivity can be found.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the research findings based on the research questions of the study which were: (1) In what ways do parents get involved in their children's education? (2) What are the benefits of parental involvement in children's education? (3) What are the barriers to parental involvement in children's education? (4) What are the ways of promoting parental involvement in children's education?

WAYS THROUGH WHICH PARENTS GET INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In establishing ways through which parents were involved in their children's education, parents were asked if they had ever been in the Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA). Results showed that the majority 26(65%) had never been in the association, while 14 (35%) had been in it. When asked how long ago they had been in the association, 10 (71%) indicated that they had been in the PTA for about 3 years and left as they were not re-elected while 4 (29%) were in the association, at the time of the interview.

When asked if the school called them to discuss their children's affairs, the majority of the parents 26 (65%) reported that the school called them to discuss their children's affairs, while 14(35%) stated that they were not called for such discussions. Parents were further asked to explain the various ways in which they were involved in their children's education. Responses revealed that 20(50%) of the parents said they provided school requisites and 10(25%) helped their children in their school work. Table 1 below shows the various ways in which parents were involved in their children's education

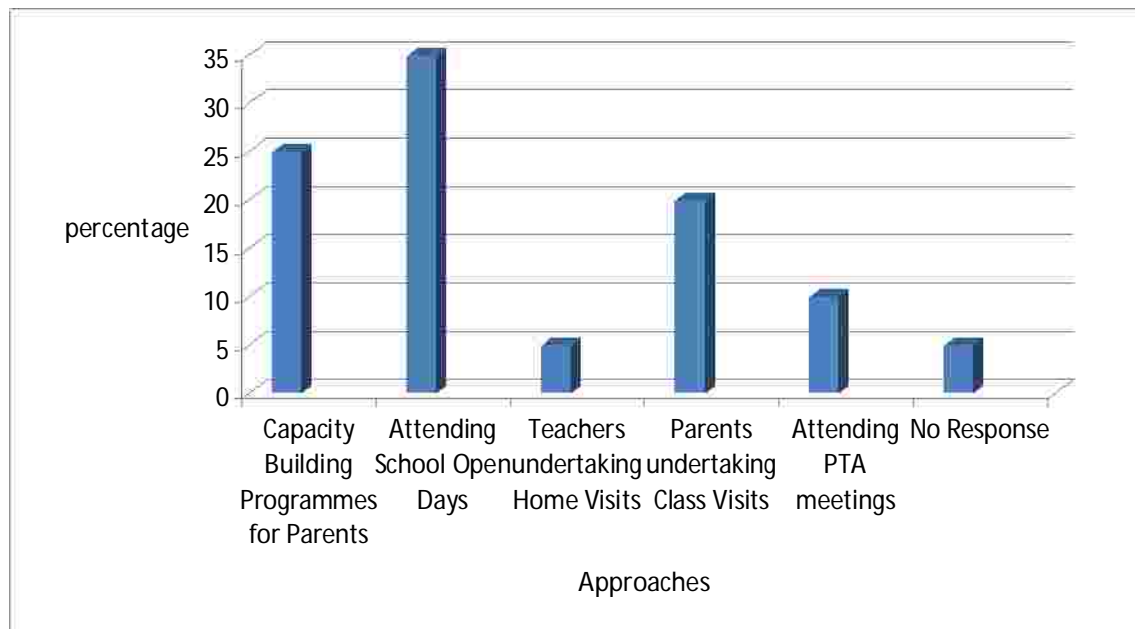
Table 1: Ways in Which Parents are Involved in their Children’s Education

Ways of Involvement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provided School Requisites	20	50
Helped their children in school work	10	25
Attended PTA meetings	4	10
Made financial contributions	2	5
Encouraged their children to go to school	2	5
Helped in building of classrooms	2	5
	40	100

(Source: Field Data, 2009)

In trying to determine whether or not parents found it easy to go to their children’s school, the majority 36 (90%) stated that they found it easy to go to their children’s school and 4 (10%) did not find it easy. When asked whether parents usually go to their children’s schools to discuss academic progress with teachers, 90% said they did while 10% said they did not. When further asked about parents turn-up to school call-outs, 14 said the turn up was 50%, 12 reported that it was 31%, another 7 said it was 10% while 10 said it 10%.

Figure 2: Approaches to Parental Involvement in Children’s Education



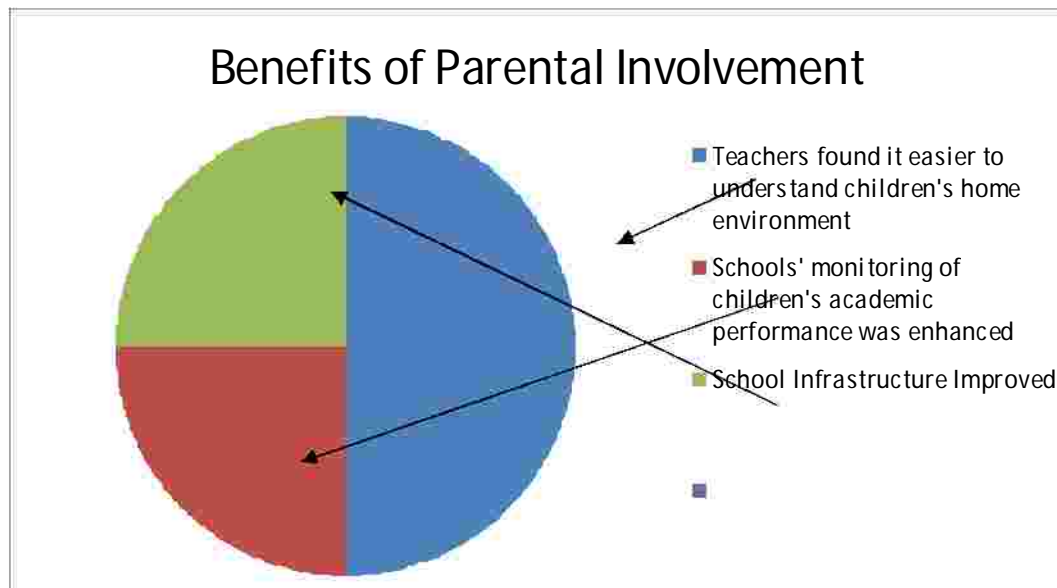
(Source: Field Data, 2009)

When parents were asked to mention some approaches to involvement in their children’s education, 25% reported that capacity building programmes for parents was one of the approaches to parental involvement while 35% felt that attending school open days and signing children’s homework was one such approach. The remaining responses are shown in the figure above.

BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The figure below summarizes the findings regarding the benefits of parental involvement in their children’s education as reported by teachers who were interviewed.

Figure 3:



(Source: Field Data, 2009)

When teachers were asked whether there were any benefits to the school, parents and children when parents were involved in their children's education, 100% reported that parental involvement had benefits for children, the school and the parents themselves.

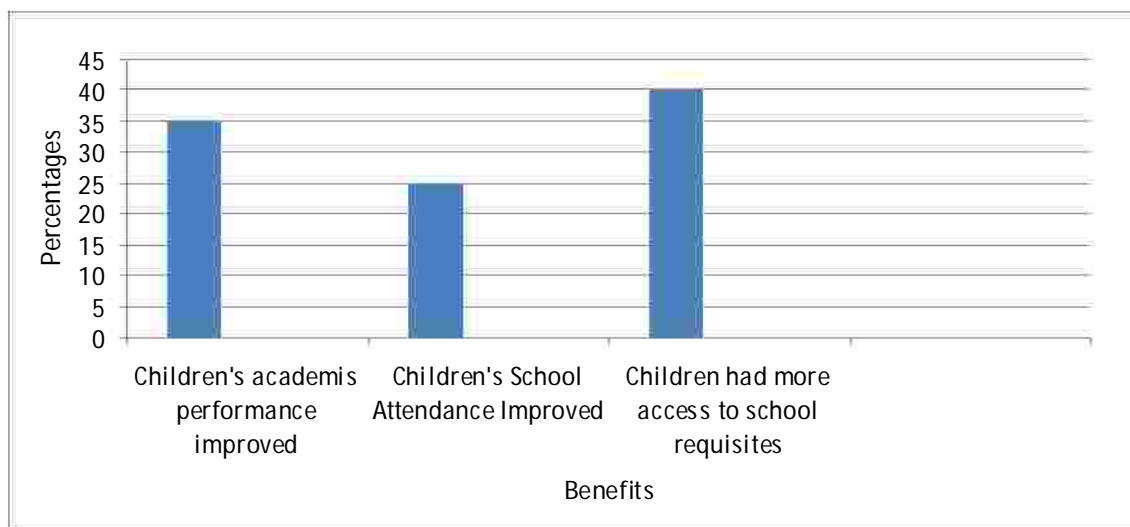
Information obtained from teachers on some of the possible benefits of parental involvement to the school revealed that 50% of the teachers reported that teachers found it easier to understand children's home environment, 25% reported that the school's monitoring and evaluation of children's academic performance was enhanced, while 25% reported that school infrastructure improved when parents were involved in their children's education.

When asked about the possible benefits to parents when they get involved in their children's education, 25% of the teachers reported that parents understood more what

children learned in school, 50% felt that parents developed a sense of ownership of all school programmes while the remaining 25% of the teachers felt that there was an improvement in literacy levels among parents when they got involved in their children’s education.

Concerning the possible benefits of parental involvement to the children, 35% of the parents reported that children’s academic performance improved while 25% felt that children’s school attendance improved while the remaining 40% reported that children had more access to school requisites. The above findings are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 4: Benefits of Parental Involvement to Children



(Source: Field Data, 2009)

BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents also mentioned some of the barriers to their involvement in their children’s education. Findings are illustrated in the figure below.

Table 2: How to Improve Parental Involvement

Way	Frequency	Percentage
Attend PTA Meetings	12	30%
Check children's work	6	15%
Encourage child spacing	8	20%
Parents/Headmen understand school rules	2	5%
Parents understand importance of education	8	20%
Revise school curriculum	2	5%
Improve parent loan schemes	2	5%
Total	40	100%

(Source: Field Data, 2009)

When asked about ways of improving involvement of parents in their children's education, 60% of the teachers reported that there was need for parents to attend Open Days organized by the school, assist children with homework, and observe classroom activities. 15% of the teachers reported that there was need for parent sensitization on the importance of education while 10% felt that there is need to establish adult literacy programs. A further 5% and 10% of the teachers interviewed reported that there was need for greater participation of Parents in PTA meetings and need for teachers to conduct home visits respectively. A small fraction of parents (10%), mentioned that child spacing was one way of promoting involvement of parents in the education of their children in that having too many children within a short space of time would mean that parents wouldn't have adequate time to attend to each the children and worse still be involved in their education.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter discusses findings that were presented in chapter four. It discusses the findings under four research objectives on parental involvement in their children's education. These are: To examine ways through which parents get involved in their children's education, to find out the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education, to find out the barriers to parental involvement in their children's education and to find out ways of improving parental involvement in their children's education, .

In line with the first research objective, the discussion looks at ways in which parents were involved in their children's education. Under the second objective, the discussion looks at benefits of parental involvement in their children's education, while the third objective looks at barriers to parental involvement in children's education. The fourth and last objective looks at the ways of improving of parental involvement in their children's education.

The discussion of these findings will be guided by Epstein's (1992) perspectives on parental involvement in relation to ways through which parents get involved in their children's education.

WAYS THROUGH WHICH PARENTS GET INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The study revealed that there were various ways through which parents got involved in their children's education. Providing school requisites such as books, pencils, pens,

monetary contributions and school uniforms were ways through which parents involved themselves in their children's education. The school ensured that children's learning was facilitated. Even though the Government of Zambia had pronounced Free Primary Education from grades 1 to 7, parents were still playing a major role in provision of such school requisites. School children were still expected to pay what are called 'PTA Funds'. Failure to pay such fees sometimes results in children being sent away from school. Provision of school requisites to children can not be undertaken by all parents due to different economic statuses. With more than one third of Zambians living below the poverty line, most families were unable to adequately provide for their families and this includes educational resources. Therefore, provision of education requisites as a way of getting involved in children's education is dependant on parents' ability to provide for their children.

Findings further revealed that parents also assisted their children with school work for example going through their homework with them. Parents going through their children's work can have a positive bearing on children's achievement in that children will feel that their parents are concerned about their education and the children would do their best in ensuring that their books are up-to-date with school work. Others involved themselves by encouraging children to attend class regularly. The study also revealed that another way through which parents involved themselves was by participating in infrastructure developments in the school such as building of additional classrooms, teachers' houses and pit latrines. Those that were unskilled contributed their labour by ferrying local materials to the construction sites such as building sand and crushed stones,

while the skilled ones undertook the actual construction. In rural areas, it is very common to find parents physically participating in construction projects at school level especially in community schools that receive little or no funding from the government. As much as it is important for parents to participate in such projects, schools need to ensure that parental involvement goes beyond taking part in such projects as this alone will not impact academic achievement of their children. These findings are in line with the views of Cotton and Wikelund (1989) that parents get involved in their children's education through helping their children improve their school work by providing encouragement, establishing a suitable home environment for study and allow their children adequate time for study. Parents also read to their children, monitor homework and tutor their children. The Family Support America (2001) also reports that parental involvement occurs when parents actively, critically, resourcefully and responsibly contribute to promoting and developing the well being of their communities by supporting community projects including those that are education related.

The findings from the research revealed that another way through which parents got involved in their children's education was participating in decision making processes in the school through being members of the PTA. According to Cotton and Wikelund (1989), one of the ways through which parents can get involved in their children's education is by actively taking part in decision making processes in the schools especially through the Parent-Teacher Associations. Although this is one way of parental involvement, it should be noted however, that only a small fraction of parents can be members of this association at any given time. Therefore the PTA is just a representation

of the parent population. Being a member of the PTA does not entirely translate into parental involvement in children's education. Parents and guardians need to be involved in their children's education beyond the PTA through other forms as outlined in chapter two such as helping children to improve learning outcomes. It is a common practice in most rural schools in Zambia for PTAs to be used as 'rubber stamps' by school administrators. The PTA can assist in strengthening school-community relationships but cannot in itself translate into parent involvement in children's education.

Findings from the study revealed that though there are various types or approaches to parental involvement in children's education, the following are some of the most common forms; attending school meetings/open days and children's homework books, others include teachers and parents undertaking home and class visits. In Zambia's rural areas, very few teachers visit pupils' and part of the reason for this is long distances to pupils' homes. Some children live as far as five kilometers from their schools therefore teachers find it difficult to undertake the visits. These findings are in line with those of Cotton and Wikelund (1989) which revealed that parental involvement can take the form of parents and guardians attending school functions, responding to school obligations such as Open Days, helping children improve their work by providing encouragement, monitoring and tutoring children. Another valuable parents can be involved in their children's education is by providing a rich learning environment in their homes to support their children's academic achievement. Providing a rich learning environment can be a challenge in rural areas especial when it involves making available educational resources to complement children's learning from school. Parents

that are economically handicapped may find this impossible or challenging. However, not all hope is lost for the 'poor' parents. Establishing a rich learning environment can imply giving children adequate time to do their homework and this can be achieved by all parents regardless of their economic status. Other approaches that might be of benefit to children include parents communicating with teachers and the school, discussing school activities with the children and supervising their out of school activities.

BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Findings from this study revealed that parental involvement had benefits for parents, the school, and the children. When parents got involved in their children's education, they tended to understand more of what their children learned, therefore offering relevant support; they also developed a sense of ownership of all school programmes which was vital for a healthy school-community relationship. Findings also revealed that parents' literacy levels improved when they got involved in their children's education. These findings are consistent with Henderson and Berla's views (1994) that benefits of parental involvement for parents are that parents develop more in the school and in them as parents and in their ability to help their children. When parents are involved, there is a greater likelihood that they will enrol in continuing education to advance their own schooling. Parents also develop closer ties to their communities and neighbours and learn how to influence decisions made in their schools. lthy school-community relationships develop when parents not only get involved in their children's education, but when the schools develop deliberate policies of encouraging this involvement.

Involvement of parents makes them aware of school programmes and makes them to participate in decision making in the school.

Research findings revealed that parental involvement had benefits for the children. The most commonly sighted benefit was the improvement in academic performance, meaning that children performed better in school when their parents were involved in their education. The study also revealed that children's school attendance rates increased. Children also had more access to school requisites when their parents were involved in their education. This means that when parents are involved, they find it easy to support their children with items such as books, school fees and uniforms as they fully understand the essence of having such items.

The above findings are in line with the views of Wherry (2003) that children exhibit higher grades and test scores when parents are involved in their education. This means that children's academic performance improves when their parents are involved in their education. The author further stated that students exhibited more positive attitudes, behaviour and a reduction in negative student behaviours such as alcohol use, violence and anti-social behavior as parent involvement increased. A study by Collins et al., (1982) revealed that positive outcomes of involving parents in their children's education include improved achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved behaviour and restored confidence among parents in their children's schooling. Though several literature states that when parents are involved children perform better, none states which type of involvement or a combination of types has the greatest impact on student achievement.

Literature from Brady (1999), showed that schools where children were failing improved dramatically when parents were enabled to become effective partners in their child's education. Parents are their children's first and most important and for students to succeed in school, parents must participate actively in their children's academic lives. Parents need to become involved early and stay involved throughout the school years. This is most likely to result in high achievement level children.

Information obtained from teachers on some of the possible benefits of parental involvement in children's education to the school revealed that teachers found it easy to understand children's home environment as a result of constant interaction between parents and the school, the school's monitoring and evaluation of children's academic performance was enhanced because parents were engaged children's education. Teachers also reported that school infrastructure improved due to parents' contribution of skilled and unskilled labour. Most parents and teachers who were interviewed stated that contribution of labour towards school building projects was one way of parental involvement. Parental involvement is more than mere contribution of unskilled labour. Instead, parents need to be involved in key decision making processes in the school and they also need to take on more active roles in the learning of their children. These findings are in line with findings from a study conducted by Goodson and Hess in 1975 which demonstrated that parental involvement had great benefits for the school in that the quality of education was improved. The two educational stated that there was often more support from families when parents were involved. The support could be in form of financial, moral and other resources such as time. Schools that worked well with families

had improved teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents. Schools need to realize that one of the most important benefits of parental involvement is improved student achievement. However, despite this rich information, the two authors do not state in what ways parental involvement impacts quality education. Further they do not explain what quality education means to them. Therefore it makes it very difficult to relate this literature to the Zambian situation.

BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

The study found out that despite many parents getting involved in their children's education, there were also many barriers that affected the extent to which parents were involved in their children's education. The research findings revealed that one of the barriers to parental involvement were the high illiteracy levels among parents i.e. parents' inability to read or write. Parents who were illiterate found it difficult to help their children with school work or even participate in other school affairs such as being part of school committees. About 30% of the population in Zambia is illiterate and the majority live in rural areas (MDG Global Monitoring Report, 2010). This notwithstanding, being involved in children's education does not always call one to be literate. For example membership in school committees is not only for literate persons. The illiterate parents can participate as effective as the literate through participating in decision making using a language that is familiar to them. The head teacher has a duty to ensure that all parents regardless of their literacy abilities are able to participate in decision making processes through membership to various school committees. If a parent cannot speak English, they should still be made to feel comfortable and valued. The findings of this study concerning the effect of literacy on parental involvement are consistent with the survey

report by Mumba et al., (1998) which states that illiterate parents are not able to play roles of supporting children's education at home. These findings also demonstrate that with the high levels of illiteracy, especially in rural Zambia, it is difficult for illiterate parents to contribute meaningfully to the education of their children in the form of assisting them academically. According to the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, Parents who are unable to communicate fluently in English, which is the most common medium of communication in most schools find it hard to be involved in their children's education as they fail to communicate with the schools or let alone help their children with school work. In cases where barriers exist, schools are encouraged to use language translators to assist families Epstein (1995). To some extent, the above can be applicable to the Zambian setting, however in many Zambian rural communities, most people are illiterate therefore finding a person who would translate for an illiterate parent is somehow impossible.

Poverty levels among families were another barrier to active parental involvement. Parents with inadequate financial resources found it hard to provide essential school requisites to their children such as books, uniforms and fund contributions. This finding is in line with findings by Ashby (1998), which established that children from poorer families receive much less parental encouragement for schooling than those from better-off households. Level of family income is clearly related to educational achievement. Though schools might not have the capacity to raise income levels of families, they need to consider economic programs as part of their education goals because issues such as poverty have implications on academic achievement of children. Lack of adequate

financial resources might mean that parents are unable to provide the child with adequate food and clothing and other pre requisites to the child's capacity to do his/her school work. Lack of money might also ultimately lead to children dropping out of school. Poverty can hinder parents from providing educational to their children. In Zambia, the government has pronounced free primary education from grades one to seven, which means that children are no longer required to pay any school fees. However, schools still require pupils to make some form of financial contributions to fund school projects which the government inadequately funds such construction of teacher houses, additional classrooms and other facilities such as toilets. Therefore, parents who are unable to contribute towards these projects often risk their children being chased away from school.

Another factor revealed in the study as contributing to low parental involvement was the parent's lack of knowledge on the importance of education. Forty percent of the parents mentioned that lack of understanding of the importance of education was one of the barriers to effective parental involvement in their children's education. This factor is closely associated with the high illiteracy levels among parents. People who have never attained any form of education are likely not to appreciate the importance of education because they have never experienced the benefits of education. Even though the study revealed this finding, it should also be noted that not all parents that have no form of education do not appreciate the importance of education. Others fully understand its importance and that is why they send their children to school, however, the extent to which they can get involved in their children's education is affected by their level of

education. Some parents do not appreciate the importance of education not because they are illiterate but because of the lack of job opportunities that exist. Most school leavers are unable to get into college let alone find jobs. Therefore, some parents find it worthless to get involved in their children's education. They see schooling as not being of any benefit.

Findings from the study also revealed that some parents do not involve themselves as they feel that teachers do not consider views of parents therefore parents find it hard to get involved in children's education. These findings are in line with findings of a study conducted by the Scottish government (2005) which states that, parents reported that attitudes of some teachers posed a barrier to effective parental involvement. Some teachers were not as welcoming as they could be and did not encourage parents to be more involved. There was a sense amongst parents interviewed that some teachers are too busy and would rather parents did not interfere. Attitudes of teachers and school administrators to a large extent determine the levels to which parents are involved in their children's education. When schools are welcoming to parents and consider their involvement as being very vital to children's academic performance, parents often get involved. Alternatively, if teachers and school administrators have negative attitudes, parents usually shun away from getting involved in their children's education.

Findings from the research revealed that generally, teachers felt that parents made an effort to involve themselves in their children's education. However, they also acknowledged that there were some, whose involvement in their children's education was

still low. Factors that contributed to this low involvement of parents included; lack of knowledge on the importance of education, lack of interest, lack of financial resources and laziness/drunkenness on the part of parents. Majority of these factors are in line with the barriers to parental involvement as put forward by parents in the above paragraph. Teachers often thought that the low involvement of parents was usually caused by parents themselves. They did not realize that they had a role to play in ensuring that parents got involved.

WAYS OF IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Findings from the study revealed parents' suggestions on how to improve their involvement in children's education. Parents mentioned that encouraging them to attend Parent Association Meetings, affords them an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes in the school thereby positively impacting their children's education. This finding is in line with literature from Nandango et al., (2005) who state that attending school meetings affords parents an opportunity to participate in school governance which includes goal setting, implementing and monitoring of programme activities, personnel decisions and funding allocations, accountability and reporting mechanisms. Attending school meetings or any other school related activities enable parents to get acquainted and build interest in school activities. It also affords them a chance to participate in key decision making processes such as issues concerning financial contributions. It also affords them an opportunity to meet and build relationships with teachers of their children. However, it should be noted that merely attending school meetings does not translate into taking part in decision making. Parents need to be active and not passive participants in these meetings. Schools have a major

role to play in ensuring that they create a conducive environment here for parents to actively participate in decision making processes in the schools.

Findings from the study indicated that in order to enhance parental involvement in children's education, parents should be encouraged to check their children's homework in order to help them know what their children learn and also to monitor whether their children are actually doing their homework. Findings of a research conducted in the Eastern Province of Zambia by Mumba et al., (1998) revealed that illiterate parents were not able to play roles of supporting children's education at home. With the high levels of illiteracy, especially in rural Zambia, it is difficult as the teachers pointed out for illiterate parents to contribute meaningfully to the education of their children in the form of assisting them academically. As a result of high rates of illiteracy in Zambia, many families may not have literate members who may assist children academically. Even though illiteracy can prevent parents from getting involved in their children's education, , parents can still play key roles in checking their children's books through asking the children to explain to their illiterate parents what they learned as well as what the homework is about. This keen interest in the children's learning by the parents will motivate the child to work harder in school. Illiteracy in Zambia is a challenge that cannot be solved 'overnight' especially with statistics indicating that over 30% of the Zambian population is illiterate. This means that illiterate parents need to be assisted with ways of how they can get involved in their children's education.

The study revealed that assisting parents to understand the importance of education is necessary in improving their involvement in children's education. This is important, as it will make them appreciate the importance of education. Sensitizing parents on the importance of education will not, on its own increase levels of parental involvement. Parents need to be educated on the importance of their involvement in children's education as this might lead to them being more supportive of their children's education.

Parents suggested that schools should reform the school curriculum i.e. to make it more friendly to enable parents to easily understand what their children learn. This would enable parents to support their children academically. Reforming the curriculum might not be the only way to help enhance parental involvement in children's education, instead, guidance and support to parents can 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.

Parents also felt that if child spacing amongst families was encouraged and practiced, it could offer parents more time to involve themselves in their children's education. In other words, if parents have fewer children, they would find it easy to involve themselves in their children's education. These findings are in line with literature from Litwak (1974) which states that a family with two adults and two children is better able to supervise the children than a family of two adults and five children. Having many children can affect the extent to which parents are involved in their children's education. Parenthood is a demanding 'career' which consumes a large portion of people's lives. It

involves commitment and responsibilities and one of these is taking a keen interest in children's education. Therefore many children can mean parents not having adequate time to be involved in their children's education.

The study revealed several teachers' suggestions on ways of improving parental involvement in children's education. Majority of the interviewed reported that there was need for parents to attend school meetings when they were called for. They believed that attending meetings is one way through which parents can know what is happening in their children's school and also to know how best they could get involved. Teachers mentioned that there was usually apathy when it came to attending meetings. Nandago et al., (2005) and Epstein (1995) stated that schools should include parents in decisions-making and developing parent leaders and representatives. They further stated that PTAs or other parent organizations, advisory councils or committees for parent leadership and participation should be functional. Merely attending meetings is not enough for parental involvement as parents need to actively participate in decision-making in the school and also in programme implementation and monitoring.

The study revealed that teachers felt that parents need to assist children with their homework and observe classroom activities. In connection with this, research findings by Mumba et al., (1998) 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 are illiterate. Nevertheless, parents who can neither read nor write can be offered assistance by any literate member of the family including the children themselves.

Sensitizing parents on the importance of education was suggested as a way of improving parental involvement in children's education. Teachers felt that some parents' lack of involvement in education stemmed from the fact that they had no knowledge on the importance of education. Sensitizing parents on importance of education might increase their levels of parental involvement. However schools need to understand that this alone might not achieve parental involvement as parents need to be supported on how they can effectively get involved in their children's education. Though the research findings showed that parents are not involved in their children's education because they do not understand the importance of education, it should be noted that in the first instance, most parents send their children to school because they appreciate the value of education, therefore, efforts should be focused on ensuring that parents are made aware on the different ways they can get involved in their children's education.

Establishing adult literacy programmes within the schools aimed at helping parents acquire basic reading and writing skills was sighted as one way of improving parental involvement in children's education as this would help reduce illiteracy levels which often are a barrier to effective parental involvement. In line with this finding, a study by Mumba et al., (1998) revealed that adult literacy programs were necessary in assisting parents overcome illiteracy. Epstein (1995) in his framework on parental involvement

stated that parental involvement can be achieved through parent education and other courses or training for parents. Literacy programs can assist parents to become involved in children's education by imparting literacy skills. However, some schools have attempted to establish adult literacy programmes but often these have not succeeded. There is lack of a government policy on adult education and this might account for the failure of some adult literacy programs.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Summary of Findings

In the investigation of parents' involvement in their children's education, the study aimed at finding out ways through which parents got involved in their children's education, benefits of parental involvement for students, parents and schools, the barriers to parental involvement in children's education and ways of improving parental involvement.

The study revealed that generally, parents were involved in the education of their children through being members of the PTA, providing school requisites such as books, uniforms and school fees for children, assisting children with school work and participating in school infrastructure development such as building additional classrooms and toilets. However, to most of the respondents in this study, parental involvement meant contributing labour towards school construction projects.

Regarding the benefits of parental involvement in children's education, the study revealed that when parents were involved in their children's education, they got a better understanding of what children learn in school and their literacy levels also improved as a result of constant interactions with children's school work. The study also revealed that academic performance of children improved when their parents were involved in their education and the school understood better the student's home environment.

The study also revealed barriers to parental involvement and the most common ones included high illiteracy levels among parents, high poverty levels, lack of knowledge on importance of education and negative attitudes amongst teachers towards parents' views on the education of their children.

Ways of improving parental involvement in children's education were revealed in the study and these included parents attending school meetings and assisting children with school work. Sensitizing parents on the importance of education and establishing adult literacy programmes in communities were also sighted as ways of improving parental education. Other ways included encouraging parents to participate in decision making in the school through Parent Association Meetings and parents being encouraged to check their children's homework in order to help them know what their children learn and also to monitor their academic performance. Lastly but not the least, the research revealed that parents should be assisted to understand the importance of education.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives on which this study was underpinned defines the types of parental involvement as they relate to helping families to establish a home environment that supports children as students, effective home-school communication channels, consultative decision-making processes and collaborative efforts between schools and communities. The concepts in this framework are in line with findings of this study. In

this regard, it would suffice to conclude this study with a few remarks about parental involvement in children's education in Zambia.

The Zambian, Ministry of Education realizes the importance of parent involvement in the education of their children and states that access to quality education can be improved by enhanced community participation in basic education. In spite of policy commitments, the country still has a long way to go before parents are able to provide their children with the necessary support to excel in school.

In rural Zambia, parental involvement is viewed in terms of parents contributing their labor towards infrastructure development in the school. They are often not involved in the education process of their children and are often sidelined when it comes to making important decisions in the school.

Most parents in rural areas would like to get involved in the education of their children but they face major challenges which prevent them from getting involved. Amongst these challenges are illiteracy, low education levels parents and poverty. These will have to be addressed if parents are to meaningfully participate in the education process of their children.

Enhancing parent involvement in education can not be achieved by one party, it should involve concerted efforts amongst all stakeholders i.e. parents, schools, government and civil society organizations.

Theoretical Implications

Regarding theoretical implications, the study was concerned with the following issues:

Firstly, it was concerned with investigating parental involvement in children's education in rural Zambia in line with Epstein's (1996) theoretical perspectives. The central theme of Epstein's theoretical perspectives was that parental involvement in children's education can be viewed in relation to the following principles; parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating. The study agreed with Epstein's (1995) theoretical framework on a number of propositions such as helping parents to establish home environment for learning, schools including parents in decision making and schools providing families with information about assisting children with school work. However, it does not mean that all principles that is, parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating as outlined by Epstein can be taken in their entirety. These will have to be modified based on the local culture. Further more, there are different ways of looking at various issues. Different degrees of importance may be attached to various issues in different cultural settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are ded:

- Adult Literacy Programmes should be established and the establishment should be preceded by the finalization of the National Policy on Adult Literacy which will help guide the establishment and operation of adult literacy programmes.

- Issues of parental involvement should be included in the teacher training curriculum either as pre or in-service training. This would assist in equipping teachers and school administrators with skills and positive attitudes needed in enhancing parental involvement in education.
- Deliberate efforts aimed at strengthening parent associations in the schools should be made. Such efforts should include training of school administrators, teachers and PTA members on participatory school governance, roles and responsibilities of parents in the management of schools and ways of promoting stronger school-home linkages. This will contribute towards enhanced involvement of parents in decision making processes which will in turn improve levels of parental involvement in their children's education.
- Parents should be supported on ways that can assist them in making a home environment that supports children's learning such as allowing children time off from chores in order to do their homework, monitoring children's school work such as asking children how their day was at school and ensuring that they have the necessary school requisites. This can be achieved through sensitization meetings targeting parents and schools. Various stakeholders would need to partner with government in ensuring that such activities are undertaken.

Suggestions for future Research

The study was concerned with an important topic of parental involvement in children's education. Being limited in its scope, the study was by no means exhaustive therefore cannot claim to have done justice to the topic. However, it will help in stimulating interest of readers and researchers to investigate further. The following are therefore some of the suggestions for future research:

Since literacy levels of parents are an important factor in influencing their involvement in children's education, a study to analyze and investigate the relationship between literacy and parental involvement should be conducted. This will help to formulate strategies to maximize parental involvement on parents who are illiterate. This can also assist schools to have deeper understanding of the many challenges that illiterate parents face regarding their involvement in children's education.

If valuable data have to be obtained on parental involvement, a large-scale study would be more likely to generate more information compared to the present study which only covered a small area of the country.

Besides the factors affecting parental involvement which have been revealed in this study, there are other important issues which might need further analysis. For example, it was revealed that in rural schools, there was a tendency by both teachers and parents to view parental involvement as only relating to infrastructure development and not participation in decision making. It would be interesting to investigate the extent to

which parents are involved in the governance of schools and how effective Parent-Teacher Associations are in school management.

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RESOURCES FROM THE INTERNET – Sites visited on May 01, 2011

<http://www.familysupportamerica.org>

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/>

<http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/9179.html>

<http://moare.com>

<http://www.ruraledu.org/docs/missouri/intro.htm>

APPENDIX A: TEACHERS/HEADTEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Teachers/Head teachers' questionnaire

This study, in which you are being requested to participate, is being undertaken to investigate approaches to Parental Involvement in education

The information gathered will be treated as confidential and will be used for academic purposes only

I would be grateful if you would answer all the questions

You are kindly requested to answer the questions by either putting a tick in the space () provided next to the answer of your choice, or by writing in the spaces provided.

1. Sex of Respondent Male () female ()

2. Age Range

() 15 – 25 yrs

() 26 – 35 yrs

() 36 – 45 yrs

() 45+

3. Position held in school

() Teacher () Head teacher

Other, specify-----

4. How long have you been in the teaching service

() Above 2 to 5 years

() 1 – 2 years

() Below one year

Do parents come to school to discuss academic progress of their children

YES NO

5. How is their turn up like?

Above 50%

31 – 50%

10 – 30%

less than 10%

6. . Have you ever taught in an urban based school

YES NO

7. If yes to question 7 how would you compare rural and urban-based parent involvement of parents in their children’s education?

involvement is the same

more in urban settings

more in rural settings

9. Give possible reasons for your answer to question 8

10. What factors contribute to low levels of involvement by certain parents

11. What can be done to promote greater involvement of parents in their children's education

12. Are there any benefits to the school, parents or children if parents get involved in their children's education?

School () YES **Parents** () YES **Children** () YES
() NO () NO () NO

13. If yes t question 12, what would list as some possible benefits

14. What are some of the approaches to parental involvement in their children's education?

APPENDIX B: PARENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent's Questionnaire

This study, in which you are being requested to participate, is being undertaken to investigate approaches to Parental Involvement in education

The information gathered will be treated as confidential and will be used for academic purposes only

I would be grateful if you would answer all the questions

You are kindly requested to answer the questions by either putting a tick in the space () provided next to the answer of your choice, or by writing words in the spaces provided.

8. Sex of Respondent Male () female ()

9. Age Range

() 15 – 25 yrs

() 26 – 35 yrs

() 36 – 45 yrs

() 45+

10. Level of education?

() None

() Grade 7

() Grade 9

() Grade 12

() University/ college

Other, specify-----

11. How do you earn income for your family

12. What grade/s are your children currently doing?

Grades 1 - 4

Grades 5 -7

Grades 8 – 12

13. Have you been in the School PTA?

YES **NO**

7. If yes to question 6 how long ago?

1 year ago

2 years ago

3+ years ago

Currently in the PTA

8. Does the school often call you to discuss your children's academic progress?

YES **NO**

9. Explain ways of how you are involved in your child's education

10. Do you find it easy to go to your children's school anytime you feel like?

YES **NO**

11. What methods/ways can the school use to encourage more parents to be involved in their children's education

12. What barriers prevent some parents from getting involved in their children's education

13. What suggestions do you have to improve parental involvement in their children's education

