School Management Strategies to Improve Parental Involvement: Insights from School Principals in Southern Tshwane Primary Schools

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Abstract

Parental involvement plays a very important role in the development of a child's formal education. Even though there are many benefits of parental involvement, there are many factors that constrain parental involvement. This study explored various management strategies that might serve as guidelines to improve parental involvement in Southern Tshwane primary schools. The conceptual framework that informed this study was Factors that Determine School Effectiveness by Heneveld and Craig as well as Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres and her typology on parental involvement that served as the theoretical framework for this study. A qualitative research approach was the method used for this study, as it allowed the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews with six principals in Southern Tshwane primary schools. An extensive literature study and relevant documents were also examined to collect rich and comprehensive information. The research indicates that most schools comprehend the importance of parental involvement, yet lack structured implementation frameworks for parental involvement. The study recommends that schools need to plan, manage and implement a parental involvement programme according to the unique circumstances of the school.

Keywords ;Benefits of parental involvement. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein's typology of parental involvement. Management strategies. Parental involvement.

Introduction

Teachers in South Africa are faced with unique challenges, as classes are filled with a variety of learners, coming from diverse backgrounds. In a country, where diversity is celebrated, effective tailored education is often a lofty goal as opposed to reality. Parental involvement or the lack thereof can be considered as one of the main factors in learning. It has long been established that parental involvement and parental styles play a paramount role in early child development. Parental participation and different parenting styles can often serve as a primary trigger for a child's behaviour (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007, p. 532). According to Roy and Giraldo-García (2018, p. 29), both the school community and parents need to make a conscious and intentional effort to facilitate the development of emotional, social and academic skills in learners. School management teams need to ensure that teachers, parents and learners work in collaboration with one another to ensure effective teaching and learning.

There is an increasing concern in South Africa that there is a lack of parental involvement in the development of a child. One of the biggest problems public schools currently face is the lack of parental involvement. The Department of Education in its publication *Rights and Responsibilities of Parents – A Guide to Public School Policy* emphasises the important "role that it sees for parents and guardians in supporting their children throughout their school-going years". This policy document opens with the following statement (Clarke, 2008, p. 174),

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 requires all children between the ages of 7 and 15 to attend school. All parents and guardians must make sure that all learners of this age are registered to go to school. As a parent, your relationship with the school starts on the day that you decide to register your child with a particular school. This relationship is defined by a set of rights and responsibilities towards the school.

This document contains advice to parents on a comprehensive range of issues. Parents must assist their children to the best of their ability concerning the educational development of their child. Parental involvement is well-defined as those behaviours shown by the parents, both in-home and school settings, meant to support the

development of their children's social and emotional skills and facilitate their educational success (El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010 p. 988).

Parents can make an enormous contribution to the development of a child's education. According to Roy and Giraldo-García (2018, p. 31), parental involvement can affect a child's academic achievements as well as life experiences. Teachers will agree that learners' performance can, most of the time, correlate directly with parental involvement at home and school. According to Gutman and Midgley (2000), it can be seen that learners who have involved parents show higher grades and test scores, and rates for enrollment and graduation statistics from university are higher.

Learners' social and emotional development, as well as their academic performance, can directly be linked to the level of effective parental involvement. According to Munje and Mncube (2018), despite the existence of various policies and acts (namely the South African School's Act, 84 of 1996) to improve and encourage relationships between the school and parents, there is still an ongoing low level of parental involvement in South African schools.

An analysis of the level of parental involvement in the South African culture is necessary to foster the education and early development of learners. This study might have contributed to the knowledge and skills that managers and teachers need to ensure that optimal learning takes place in a classroom. Parents also have to be part of this learning process as there should be a partnership between the school and the parent. Managers in the school organisation should be informed of the reasons for unsatisfactory parental involvement and should be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage these obstacles. Therefore, this study could also give supportive strategies to schools where a lack of parental involvement is evident.

Barriers such as cultural differences and parenting styles should be taken into consideration. It is very important for every teacher, within a South African context, to know and understand the cultural background of every learner, as well as the different parenting styles that accompany it. An exploration of effective management strategies is necessary to improve parental involvement. Active parental participation and involvement will lead to the development of a child's social, emotional and academic performance. According to Wong, Ho, Wong, Tung, Chao, Rao and Chan (2018), parental educational involvement is associated with the psychosocial wellbeing and language competency of a child. These associations are directly linked with parental engagement with their children's schoolwork as well as indirectly affecting the child's behaviour.

It is, therefore, crucial that school management is concerned with the welfare of all children at the school to make sure that optimal learning takes place. The relationship between the school and parents must be managed and controlled to ensure effective parental involvement (Horvat, Curci & Partlow, 2010, p. 702-703).

Parental involvement is an essential facet of effective teaching and learning; yet, certain aspects hinder maximum participation by parents. Managers at schools need to find effective strategies to improve parental involvement in the development of education at primary schools**.**

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following main- and sub-research questions:

How can effective school management improve parental involvement by using various strategies in Southern Tshwane primary schools?

- The main research was the foundation of the following sub-questions that were investigated:
- What are the characteristics of effective school management?
- Why is effective parental involvement important in primary schools?
- Which factors prevent parents from becoming involved in educational development at primary schools?
- What management strategies and approaches from selected school principals might serve as guidelines to improve parental involvement?

The foundation of this study: to explore management approaches and strategies to enhance parental involvement, was based on the conceptual framework of Heneveld and Craig (1996), which has established the

characteristics of effective school management. Based on the review of the research literature done by The Africa Technical Department of the World Bank (Heneveld & Craig, 1996), the following conceptual framework has been developed (Fig. 1):
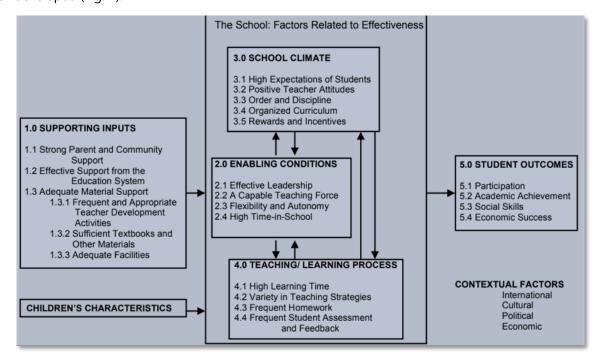

Figure 1: *Factors that determine school effectiveness (Heneveld & Craig, 1996, p. 16)*

The factors that are related to school effectiveness have been divided into five main categories, namely supporting inputs from outside the school, enabling conditions, school climate, teaching and learning processes inside the school and student outcomes, which are the results of effective school management. Students are the centre of the educational process, and the main reason for teachers, learners and parents to work in unison is to help learners succeed (Van Wyk, 2010, p. 220). These factors are all influenced by the context surrounding the school as well as the direct influences on each other.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres (Epstein, 1997, p. 72) (Fig. 2) and her typology of effective parental involvement (Fig. 3). The theory of overlapping spheres of influence is based on data collected from parents, teachers and learners. This theory is based on the foundation that children learn and grow within the collaboration between three different spheres, namely the family, school and community.
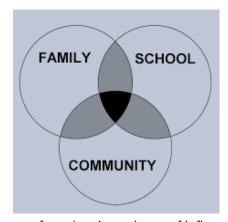

Figure 2: Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1997, p. 72)

Effective schools and families have overlapping shared goals and missions concerning learners (Van Wyk, 2010, p. 206). The model of overlapping spheres of influence (Fig. 2) illustrates that some practices of families, schools and communities are led independently. Still, to establish effective school management, these spheres should share responsibilities (Epstein, 1997, p. 3). When teachers and parents practice separate trusts, the fields of family and school could be pulled apart (Van Wyk, 2010, p. 206).

The community, which is the third sphere of influence, can create opportunities for the school to develop their programmes that strengthen, recognise and reward learners' progress (Epstein, 1995:702). When teachers, parents and community members view one another as partners, development and success within the school are assured (Van Wyk, 2010, p. 207).

Epstein's typology of effective parental involvement (Fig. 3) indicated the following six types of domains for the improvement of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaboration with the community (Epstein, 1995, p. 704).
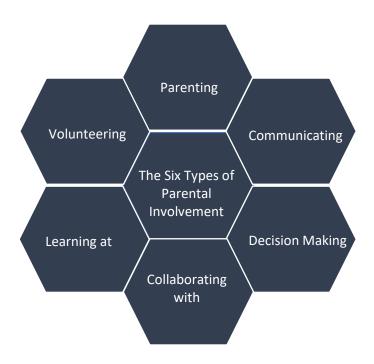

Figure 3: Epstein's typology of parental involvement

This study aims to contribute towards helping schools to exchange ideas, resources and strategies to improve parental involvement. Schools could benefit from using the strategies and approaches found in this study and use them as guidelines at their schools to enhance parental participation. Principals from other schools can benefit from the management expertise of the principals under investigation.

Materials and Methods

This study aims to explore management strategies to improve parental involvement in primary schools.

This social phenomenon can be studied best by using a qualitative research approach. This type of research refers to an in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data in a natural setting that is sensitive to the people under investigation. This study gave meaning to events perceived by participants as well as relationships between events (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 348).

The research paradigm can be defined as a set of conceptual frameworks that explain a specific theory and influence the way knowledge is interpreted and studied (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The researcher conducted this study by using the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm allowed the researcher to gain knowledge and an understanding of the practices experienced by principals, teachers and parents. This paradigm allowed the researcher to ask questions, explore strategies and find solutions to certain behaviours.

Constructivism is a paradigm that acquires knowledge through social interaction. The researcher influences the research at all stages, from collecting data and interpreting it. Thus the researcher forms a crucial part of the study (Blair, 2016, p. 51). Constructivists do not usually start with a theory but rather develop a pattern of meanings or theory throughout the research process (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The researcher developed a model of purposes through the gathering of information in the literature review, the conducting of interviews and finally, the interpretation of these results.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher made use of the phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research describes the meanings and perspectives of lived experiences with the phenomenon and is associated with humanistic methodologies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 32). This approach allowed the researcher to be in the school environment, where the researcher was able to explore, understand and investigate strategies that the school management team uses to improve parental involvement. This approach enabled the researcher to interact with different school principals to gain insightful knowledge for this study.

Population and Sampling

The researcher chose a group of principals who were interested in participating in this study. These individuals had knowledge and expertise in the field under investigation. Purposive sampling was used to select the primary schools to ensure that the schools have effective parental involvement strategies. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to choose the most effective sample to answer the research question actively. This involved developing a framework of the factors that influenced an individual's contribution.

The researcher selected six (6) effective schools where semi-structured interviews had been conducted with the principals of these schools. Therefore, the sample comprises six (6) participants. These principals were able to share information-rich knowledge on parental involvement and the management thereof. These six effective schools were a sample from a population of 2 606 schools in the Southern Tshwane area of the South African province of Gauteng.

Data Collection

The researcher selected specific questions related to parental involvement. In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with the principals from the selected primary schools. To obtain views across a range of social circumstances, principals from six different schools were chosen to take part in an interview comprising a semi-structured interview. The discussions were based on the research at hand and to establish what could be the cause of unsatisfactory parental involvement, as well as exploring strategies that might improve parental involvement in the development of education at primary schools.

Semi-structured interviews comprised of planned, open-ended questions held with interviewees. In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who had expertise, knowledge and experience on parental involvement that they were willing to share with the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 381). The researcher asked the same questions to

each participant but was flexible concerning the order in which they were asked, since the interviewees may have different perspectives and approaches (Yin, 2016, p. 141). There was room for deviation, as each individual had different viewpoints about the topic of the study at hand.

The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The researcher asked permission from the participants to tape-record the discussions. To illustrate the participants' views and knowledge gained in the study, the researcher used direct quotations from the data collected. The interviews were conducted in the language of the participants' choice. The discussions took place in the natural setting of the phenomenon.

Written records and field notes were conducted to collect the date from the interviews. The use of a tape-recorder did not eliminate the need for taking notes. Taking field notes allowed the researcher to be attentive and to pace the discussion (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 386). Field notes helped the researcher to go back and refresh her memory on the events and conversation that took place during the interview. The research question functioned as a guideline for collecting all the data. After the interviews, the data were collected and transcribed.

Analysis

According to Creswell (2007, p. 37), qualitative analysis allows the researcher to establish themes or patterns that are inductive. The interpretation of the data includes the voices of participants and is a complex interpretation and description of the problem. Inductive analysis was used as the process for analysing data in this study. The researcher used inductive analysis to identify themes and categories by studying literature, analysing documents and conducting interviews. The inductive analysis relies on inductive reasoning, which refers to the themes and categories that emerged from the raw data collected. Qualitative researchers use inductive analysis to make meaning from the data, starting with specific themes and ending with patterns and categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 395).

The data collected from the interviews were organised into general themes and categories. The detailed data were kept in separate folders to compare the information on a later stage. For easy interpretation, the data were then coded to group the different categories by using labels and by highlighting the data with different colours according to the different themes. To maximise trustworthiness, member checking was implemented to make sure that no information had been left out. After the data had been recorded, the researcher wrote a report on the findings of the study, which included extracts from the interviews.

Results and Discussion

The main aim of this study was to determine various management strategies that can be implemented by effective school management to improve parental involvement in primary schools. The questions asked in the interviews were intended to clarify what effective school management entails, as well as the importance of parental involvement. The interview questions also focused on factors that prevent parents from becoming involved and which management approaches are implemented to overcome these barriers. Finally, and most importantly, the questions asked were directed to find management strategies and plans that could serve as guidelines to improve parental involvement. Therefore the following themes and sub-themes emerged from the data analysis (Table 1).

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Effective school management	**Sub-theme 1:** Quality education
	Sub-theme 2: Factors that determine school effectiveness
	Sub-theme 3: Communication
	Sub-theme 4: Parent organisations
Theme 2: Effective parental involvement	**Sub-theme 1:** Defining parental involvement
	Sub-theme 2: The importance of parental involvement
Theme 3: Factors that hinder parental involvement	**Sub-theme 1:** Parents' attitudes
	Sub-theme 2: Job dynamics
	Sub-theme 3: Family structure
	Sub-theme 4: Resources, programmes and training
Theme 4: Management approaches and strategies to improve parental involvement	**Sub-theme 1:** Professional development
	Sub-theme 2: Support for parents
	Sub-theme 3: Parents as part of the decision-making of the school
	Sub-theme 4: Strategies and guidelines to improve parental involvement

Table 1: Themes concerning parental involvement in Southern Tshwane primary schools

The findings were analysed according to each of the above themes and sub-themes that have emerged from the data and will be discussed following the four sub- research questions stated earlier.

Findings concerning research sub-question 1: What are the characteristics of effective school management?

From the responses that emanated from the interviews, it was evident that the participants considered quality education as an important aspect of school effectiveness. The definitions of quality education were expressed from different views; however, the participants agreed that quality education encompasses qualified teachers. One of the participants stated the following: "*Quality education is when there are prepared teachers in the classrooms who are qualified in their particular field of study or their specific phase*". This view relates to one of the factors for school effectiveness identified in the conceptual framework by Heneveld and Craig (1996, p. 21), enabling a capability teaching force. According to Matakala (2018, p. 39), to ensure quality education, teachers should be well-informed, competent and committed. They should be fully qualified to teach subjects according to the appropriate phases. Teachers are the curriculum implementers and should take responsibility for their continuous professional development.

The findings also suggest that quality education involves not only the deliverance of the curriculum itself concerning academics but also the management of extra-curricular activities. Schools need to provide many opportunities for learners to develop additional skills and knowledge about teamwork, social skills and physical skills. One of the participants mentioned the following: "*Quality education to me is that the child gets a quality education in terms of academic performance, but not only that but also through cultural activities and sport*". This is in keeping with the view of Botha, Marishane, Van der Merwe, Van Zyl & Zengele (2013, p. 22), which relates effective management to learners' active participation and involvement in various curricular and extra-curricular activities. Quality education also means equipping children with the necessary skills and knowledge for future success.

From the findings, it transpired that schools need to 'dig deep' into the curriculum, rather than just covering a wide variety of topics. Heick (2018) states that this principle can be condensed to a depth-versus-breadth argument. One of the participants thoroughly explained this concept. "*Well, I think quality education is firstly involving every child and what we call the 'dig deep' process. We have a curriculum that is very wide and not that deep. So, what I'm trying to imply is when you teach the frog, you should only show the frog once in grade 1. And that child must never forget the frog*". Teachers need to make sure that learners develop a depth of understanding, and the emphasis should not be on covering a great number of different topics (breadth). According to Schwartz, Sadler, Sonnert and Thai (2008), mastering and focusing on more beneficial or significant contexts are a much more productive approach than covering many different topics. Teachers should cover fewer topics in greater depth, rather than focusing on a broad (breadth) curriculum.

Important characteristics of effective school management are strong school-teacher-parent relationships, school climate, effective leadership, and a sense of trust that needs to prevail throughout the school. All the participants

agreed that teachers and parents need to work in partnership to provide effective teaching and learning. One of the participants stated the following: "*School management is very important for the relationship between the educator, parent and child, in terms of there needs to be an academic or certain school culture*". This is in keeping with Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence mentioned earlier (1997, p. 3), which states that for a school to be effective, there should be a good relationship between the family, school and community. According to Lemmer (2007, p. 218), "excellent partnership between the community, school and family leads to improved social behaviour, school attendance, better self-esteem and learner achievement".

 From the findings, it is evident that an effective partnership between the school, parents and teachers will lead to improved learners' achievement as well as their behaviour. Another key factor that determines school effectiveness is the culture and climate of the school. A healthy school environment needs to be maintained by the management team of the school, and parents need to feel welcome at the school. From the findings, it is

clear that its teachers' attitudes determine a school climate. This is in keeping with the conceptual framework of Heneveld and Craig, which states that schools need to maintain a healthy school environment (1996, p. 20). According to Meyer (2019, p. 17), a positive school climate can improve learner achievement, feelings of safety and influence the attitudes of parents, teachers and learners. The findings from the study suggest that schools need to create an environment that is pleasant and safe where parents and learners feel welcome. One of the participants said: "*School climate relates to the culture of the school. There must be peace and calmness in the school. It should not be militaristic*". Positive teachers will contribute to the effectiveness of the school, as it will be passed on to the learners and their parents. For a school management team to be effective, it requires important and powerful leadership skills. The principal should lead the school and direct the teachers and learners towards success. For the school to be successful, trust needs to be manifested amongst all the school's different stakeholders.

Another key characteristic of effective school management is communication. One of the participants said the following: "*We try to use all methods to communicate with parents. Our primary method of communication is d6 communicator. It's all electronic; they can get the marks and behaviour reports on there. The parent can constantly monitor the performance or the wellbeing of the child if they want to. It is very effective*". This comment is in keeping with Epstein's typology of parental involvement (2008, p. 11) mentioned earlier: Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting), which explains that the school should assist families in supporting their children and to be involved parents. There should also be effective communication between school-to-home and home-to-school, which is in line with Type 2 parent involvement (Communication). The findings suggest that there should be regular communication with parents, whether employing a newsletter, in most cases, electronic, or through face-to-face meetings and interviews. The findings show that positive feedback is more effective, and it encourages learners to work harder. Parents need to be involved in the disciplinary process of the school to ensure effective and successful school management. One of the participants stated: "*We involve the parents with our disciplinary system especially. It's integral that we have a good communication system with the parents*".

Creating parent organisations and involving parents are additional characteristics of effective school management. Class representative and parent committees can liaise between parents and the school to improve communication and ensure effective teaching and learning. One of the participants said the following: "We have a system which is encouraged by the school governing body. We have a grade representative as well as for each class, and they report to the SGB, and the SGB will discuss it at the SGB meetings. So we do hear the parents' voices through this system. It voluntary to be a representative, and parents vote for each representative per class. It is done democratically". The findings show that schools should provide many opportunities for parents to be involved in various activities at the school.

Findings concerning research sub-question 2: Why is effective parental involvement important in primary school

It is considered important to uncover definitions of parental involvement from the participants to determine what effective parental involvement entails. The following descriptions of parental involvement derived from the interviews: "*Walk every step with your child, not in front of them, behind them. It was supporting them, guiding them, Being there. That's parental involvement. No more, no less*". This is by Harris and Robinson (2008, p. 278), who states that parents should support their children not only in their academic success but also in their overall achievements. Another participant's definition: "*Parental involvement is very important, and it's part of the culture in our school that we see the parents as partners. The child needs to be happy, and then the parent will also be happy, and for that, there needs to be good communication between the parents and the educators*".This is in keeping with Epstein's typology of parental involvement: Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) (2008, p. 11). Teachers must know how to communicate positively to parents to create a good relationship between them (Taylor, Carthon & Brown 2014, p. 45).

It was evident that all the participants in the study had insightful knowledge and a good understanding of what parental involvement is. According to the findings of the study, effective parental involvement is very important for the success of the school. The participants defined parental involvement as supporting their children and guiding them concerning their academic development as well as their overall achievements. Parental

responsibility means that regular communication prevails between the parent and the school. It also comprises active participation in school-based and home-based activities, as well as taking part in the decision-making of the school. Parental involvement means that parents need to take full responsibility for the formal education of their children and provide them with the necessary resources. The findings from the study suggest that parental involvement is very important for children to achieve success in the formal education of their lives. One of the participants stated the following in this regard: "*You will see those learners where the parents are involved usually perform better than the others as well as with regards to their behaviour in class*".

Parental involvement is very important for the full development of the child. Parents and teachers need to work together and share their responsibilities to produce successful learners (Lemmer, 2007, p. 220). Parental involvement ensures that learners behave in a respectful manner, which decreases disciplinary problems. Learners perform better when their parents are fully involved, as learners feel that their parents care about them and that they take an interest in their children's activities. Parental involvement is important for the full development of the child and all the stakeholders (parents, teachers and the school management team) need to work together to achieve common goals.

Findings concerning research sub-question 3: Which factors prevent parents from becoming involved in educational development in primary schools?

The study reveals that there are many great advantages for a child when its parents are involved. However, many factors hinder parents from becoming involved. The study showed that some parents believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to discipline their children. One of the participants indicated the following: "*A few years ago, when we had an audit questionnaire. One of the questions was: Who is primarily responsible for educating the child or teaching them about the word of God? 65% of the parents said it was the school's responsibility. This shows you … That's crazy*". Another participant shared the same sentiment: "*Sometimes the parent says it's the job of the educator to discipline my child. We can't keep too good manners if there's a separate set of values at home and school. Then you get the conflict, and that's why you need the parent as well to get common ground on that. Some of the parents don't always realise that we need to close the gates a certain time, because they perceive it culturally in a different way. But you need to find common ground on that and tell them that we respect your cultural beliefs and stuff, but we need to have the children at the school at a certain time to have a productive day*".

Parents' attitudes can have a negative influence on parental involvement, especially when the school and the parents have different sets of values, beliefs and viewpoints. One of the participants stated that the parents' attitude was one of the problems that affected parental involvement negatively: "*One of the biggest problems is apathy. Parents just don't care. Or they are too busy, or they think it's not their place. Or it's not important enough. Or alcohol or too much money or too little money. It depends on their attitude. Their attitude determines everything*". This response is in keeping with Hornby and Lafaele's model of barriers to parental involvement (2011, p. 39), which states that teachers and parents should find mutual ground about their attitudes and their role as parents. According to Taylor, Carthon & Brown (2014, p. 45), as a result of parents refraining from taking responsibility in their children's formal education, teachers need to assume many roles within the classroom. This makes it very difficult to ensure school effectiveness if parents and teachers do not work together.

According to all the participants, one of the biggest factors that prevent parents from becoming involved in their job dynamics. Some parents have to work late, or they work shifts, which prevents them from attending meetings. One of the participants said the following: "*Some of the parents work shifts, so they don't see their children or they work far away and only come back during the weekend*". Other parents are working far away, and they only come home over weekends. Another participant shared these sentiments: "*The most obvious thing is their working hours. Some of the parents work late, or they are shift workers, and they can't always or hardly attend meetings because of their work schedule areas such that they can't attend meetings regularly.*" Another factor that prevents parents from being involved and attending meetings regularly is their low socio-economic backgrounds. Parents with low-paid jobs do not always have money for transport to travel to the school or provide their children with the necessary resources. One of the participants stated: "*Transport is a problem for some of our parents and learners and it is difficult for them to get here in the evenings*". Likewise, low-paying jobs

make it difficult for parents to provide learners with the necessary resources (Anderson & Minke, 2007). This viewpoint is in keeping with Van Wyk (2010, p. 217), who states that parents with a higher socio-economic background tend to be more involved than parents from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The findings from the study revealed that the family structure could also have a great influence on the involvement of parents, guardians or caretakers. Some children live with extended family members or grandparents. The findings show that these family members are not always fully invested in the education of the children, as they are not their children (cf. par. 4.6.3.3). Grandparents may not always have the energy, know-how or the ability to discipline the children or to help them with school-related work. One of the participants said: "*We also found that there are some children that are staying with aunties and grannies and the grannies don't have the energy for these children, and that creates a huge problem. Or where they stay with family members, coming from other areas, might be parents that have passes on and the family are taking care of them now. You find that these family members are not so involved in the children, because they are not their children*". Another participant identified the same barrier to parental involvement: "*There might be some factors like child-headed families, where there is no adult. Children who might stay with their grandparents and the grandparents may not have the know-how or the ability to discipline the learners as they should, or they are not able to help them*". As seen from the statements above, these extended family members cannot always assist the children about homework, or they are incapable of disciplining the learners. According to Munje and Mncube (2018, p. 85), learner performance is greatly affected by these family dynamics. A large number of learners are raised by extended family or grandparents, which makes "parental involvement next to impossible for these learners" (Taylor *et al.* 2014:45).

The study found that the Department of Education offers very little (if any) training and programmes to support schools with parental involvement and the lack thereof. One of the participants stated: "*The DoE does not provide anything. They don't have the human resources, don't know. If a school doesn't decide to do it, it won't happen*". All the participating schools have to conduct their programmes and provide training to teachers regarding parental involvement. Teachers that are not knowledgeable about their subjects is a great barrier towards effective parental participation for schools.

Findings concerning research sub-question 4: What management strategies and approaches from selected school principals might serve as guidelines to improve parental involvement?

It is the responsibility of the school management team to ensure that barriers to parental involvement will be overcome. The main purpose of this study was to establish strategies and approaches that might serve as guidelines to improve parental involvement. The findings from the study suggest that the professional development of teachers is an important aspect of the improvement of parental involvement. Teachers need to gain knowledge and broaden their understanding of all the different types of familial structures within South Africa. Teachers need in-service training, which provides many opportunities for growth and empowerment. Lemmer (2007, p. 227) believes that schools need to provide training to teachers for them to understand the wide varieties of different families in our modern world. The following participant in the agreement stated the following: "*Every teacher is a manager in his/her class as well. And that needs to be enhanced by giving them in-service training and providing them with growth opportunities*". Another participant stated: "*Concerning teacher development, teachers need to be empowered. The school should provide teachers with many opportunities for which they can provide financial support*".

 The study revealed that learners achieve higher levels of performance when teachers are well qualified. Schools can conduct their training by using their own knowledgeable and experienced teachers. One of the participants stated: "*When a new teacher comes into our school we make use of in-service training for instance on how you deal with a parent and we provide training, especially to the starter educator. Especially how to relate to the parent. We train the teachers and encourage them. We mostly do the training ourselves, because we've got the know-how and the knowledge. In our management team, we've got a lot of specialists on that team. There is always someone knowledgeable. And we've got a school support team*". The study also found that teachers need training on how to communicate effectively with parents during one-on-one interactive sessions as well as during parents' evenings. Teachers need to develop diplomatic skills by being considerate and thoughtful when interacting with

parents. One of the participants mentioned: "*In all meetings, we will always talk about how we speak to the parents. You must remember you don't get problem children; you get problem parents, mostly. In our meetings what we are trying to do is, is to supervise or lead the teachers in such a way that they will not look at the behaviour that the child exhibits but the cause of it, so that we can address it with the parents*". This comment is in keeping with Heneveld and Craig (1996, p. 21) who state that schools need to develop a capable teaching force that provides highly trained and qualified teachers.

The findings of the study show that schools need to support parents to facilitate effective parental involvement. The school should go out of its way to accommodate parents so that they can become more involved. Most of the schools provide parent guidance workshops regularly. One of the participants said: "*We have parent guidance workshops, once every month. We have to understand that these parents don't know how to raise a child and it's not because they are stupid, it's because they don't know, so we have to try to help. It's a help programme. It's a discussion, we answer questions, and we try to give some advice. We try to put certain scenarios there, and we try to talk according to that. It's because we care*". This is done in small groups or individual interviews with the parents. The schools also provide services such as therapists and social workers that can assist learners and families in their entirety. Parents are also supported financially in terms of food schemes for the children at school as well as subsidies regarding school fees. This perspective is in keeping with Epstein's six types of involvement (Epstein, 1995, p. 704) that schools can implement to improve parental participation by supporting parents accordingly. Schools can implement Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting) to help families provide a supportive learning environment at home. Besides, families need to share their beliefs and cultural background with the school during programmes and workshops initiated by the school (Epstein, 1995, p. 704; Epstein, 2008, p. 11-12; Epstein & Sanders, 2006, p. 52). About Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home), schools can assist parents in developing skills to support their children with homework and the school curriculum (Brandt, 1989, p. 25).

The findings suggest that parents need to become part of the decision-making of the school as this gives them a sense of empowerment and they feel that they have co-ownership of the school. All the participating schools have various parents' committees and organisations. Parents also serve on the school governing body, which allows them to give their input in a well-structured way. One of the participants indicated the following: "*The parent needs to have co-ownership of the school. They need to feel that he is their school. They mustn't feel like outsiders and feel that they are only visiting the school*". Parents can be part of the decision-making of the school through the SGB and class representatives. This is in keeping with Type 5 parent involvement (Decision-making), one of Epstein's six types of domains for the improvement of parental responsibility (Epstein, 1995, p. 704).

The study revealed that none of the participating schools has a specific programme or school policy in place regarding the management of parental involvement. These schools implement excellent management strategies, yet they do not have a plan or system concerning parental responsibility. One of the participants stated: "*I think all schools are guilty of not doing enough concerning this question of yours. I think it's one of your most important questions. It has an effective programme in place to enhance parent involvement*".

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to determine various management strategies that can be implemented by effective school management to improve parental involvement at Southern Tshwane primary schools. This study demonstrated the potential outcome of implementing effective management strategies regarding positive parental involvement towards the benefit of the learner. All the participants contributed significantly towards identifying effective management approaches to enhance parental involvement, although none of the schools had a specific programme in place. The unique circumstances of each school should determine how parental responsibility must be planned, managed and implemented. It is evident from the empirical findings of this study that all the participating principals have insightful knowledge and skills regarding the enhancement of parental involvement. However, there is still much that needs to be accomplished in terms of establishing an effective parental relationship in all primary schools in the Southern Tshwane district as well as in the whole of South Africa. From the findings of the study, it will be recommended that the school management team should compile an effective parental involvement programme to guide and manage the school towards the

enhancement of parental involvement. The unique circumstances of each school should determine how parental involvement must be planned, managed and implemented.

Data Availability (excluding Review articles)

The data can be accessed by contacting eltheavandiermen@gmail.com. The findings of this study are in PDF format.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare that there are no conflicts of interest upon the submission of this study.

Funding and Statement

The authors funded the publication of this article themselves.

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