AN EVALUATION OF THE LEVELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING AND HOW IT IMPACTS ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE

EDRS 6900 Project Report

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

Master of Education

(Concentration in Youth Guidance)

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2013

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ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of the Levels of Parental Involvement in Activities That Support Student Learning

and How It Impacts On Student Performance

Sharlene S. Dookie

Parental involvement appears to be on a decline locally despite being associated with positive outcomes for students. The levels and impact of parental involvement when correlated with various tests of student achievement was explored in a case study of one class in a primary school. Survey research and document analysis were the main methods of data collection. The findings suggested that parental involvement was generally a salient contributor to student achievement. Teacher quality emerged as a possible contributing factor in some areas however this assumption warrants further investigation. Several barriers to parental involvement were found to originate from the school and home.

Keywords: parental involvement, student achievement, student performance, mathematics achievement, language arts achievement, teacher quality, barriers to parental involvement

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Dedication

This research paper is lovingly dedicated first and foremost to my children, Selena and Alex, who have been a constant source of inspiration. They have unknowingly given me the energy needed to tackle all my academic pursuits with eagerness, determination and discipline. Without their love, support and understanding this project would not have come to fruition.

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Chapter One

1.1   Background to the Problem

The term "parental involvement" is perhaps one of the most ambiguous terms in today's educational arena. Nonetheless, it is often recognized as a large contributor to student achievement and overall success. In addition, it is often perceived as a panacea to low student achievement and an essential ingredient in education reform.

Researchers agree that parental involvement has been defined and consequently measured in multiple ways (Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006; Topor, Keane, Shelton & Calkins, 2010). One group of researchers (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992 cited in Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006) defined parent involvement as "parent participation in educational activities at school and home". Whilst another group defined parental involvement as "activities that parents engage in at home and at school and positive attitudes parents have toward their child's education, school, and teacher" (Epstein, 1996; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000 cited in Topor et al, 2010).

The Government of the United States of America in their Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) defines parental involvement as

the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including:

Assisting their child's learning;

Being actively involved in their child's education at school;

Serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in

decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and

The carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA.

[Section 9101 (32)]

These activities include such things as the joint development (administration, teachers and

parents) of a written parental involvement policy in addition to a written school-parent

"compact" that outlines the responsibilities of each entity for improved student academic

performance amongst a comprehensive list of other activities (see Appendix A).

However, no such definition has been put forward by The Government of the Republic of

Trinidad & Tobago (GORTT) despite their pronouncement in the 2011-2015 Education Sector

Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education (MoE) (p.11-12) that "Parental Indifference/Lack of

Involvement" is one of the major challenges and issues impacting the quality of and access to

education today, thereby obscuring the dimensions of this challenge and any real attempts at

alleviating it.

Several researchers have proposed different models of parental involvement (Dimock,

O'Donoghue & Rob, 1996; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Epstein, 1997), which can be utilized and

adapted to add some structure to efforts to allay this dilemma of lack of parental involvement and

thereby increase positive outcomes for students. The model described by Epstein (2009, p.16)

will be used as the conceptual framework to guide this study.

Despite the subjective nature of the term, the importance of parental involvement in children's lives and by extension children's education is well documented. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) underscores the fact that childhood is a period of entitlement as a result of the mental and physical susceptibility of the child. Consequently, the obligation of the family, primarily the parents, is significant in preparing the child for life as an individual in society. This responsibility is clear in Article 18 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which asserts that both parents and in the absence of parents', legal guardians have the primary responsibility for the nurturing and development of the child.

Furthermore, articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC elucidate the rights of the child to education for the purpose of development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest potential. Undoubtedly, as can be garnered from the aforementioned, the role of parents and/or guardians is inherent in a child's education.

According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003, p.7), "it is widely recognized that if pupils are to maximize their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents". They concede that the aforementioned recognition is the impetus for governments, administrators and educators along with parental organizations across North America, Australasia, Continental Europe, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom (UK) to have been occupied with attempts to increase parental involvement in the education of their children.

In the UK parental involvement is covered under sections 110 and 111 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998; which are home-school agreements and supplementary provisions about home-school agreements respectively. Parents of registered pupils are required

to sign the parent declaration to indicate understanding and acceptance of the document.   The

items covered under the sections include but are not limited to:

- The importance of, and responsibility for, regular and punctual attendance

- The importance of, and responsibility for, good discipline and behaviour

- What is expected from schools, parents and pupils in relation to homework and

- The information school and parents will give one another.

(Department of Education- UK)

In New Zealand, a country that boasts one of the most inclusive school systems in the

world; "the role of parental involvement for improving educational outcomes for all children has

been recognized by the Government through publication of the Schooling Strategy (MoE, 2005)

in which improving parental involvement is one of three priority areas" (Hornby & Witte, 2010).

In the Caribbean, more specifically Jamaica, the Education Task Force Report (2004)

"concluded that inadequate involvement of parents in the education of their children was one of

the factors contributing to the decline in the quality of the Jamaican system of education"

(Munroe, 2009).

Similarly in Antigua & Barbuda the Minister of Education Hon. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro

issued a press release on June 6, 2012 in which she declared "without a support structure at

home, a child is more likely to perform poorly in school and demonstrate deviant behavior". In

addition she attributed an escalation of drugs, violence and deviant behaviour to a lack of

parental involvement and as such urged parents to become more involved in the educational

experiences of their children as a means of not only mitigating these behaviours but as a means

to overall success.

So too, in Trinidad and Tobago, the National Report on the Development of Education of Trinidad and Tobago (2004, p.8) acknowledges that parents play a critical role in the lives of their children as the first line of communication in an unfamiliar world. They recognize that in order to achieve developed country status by the year 2020 and the "Education for All" goals, the contribution of all citizens in some form or another is imperative and more so that of parents. Thus, the government made a commitment to develop social programmes specifically geared toward parents. These programmes provide training in an effort to inculcate good parenting skills that can be utilized by parents in the process of upbringing their children.

This commitment was renewed in the 2011-2015 Education Sector Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the GORTT (p. 11-12). This "Strategic Plan" is the first official document that identifies Parental Indifference/Lack of Involvement as one of the major challenges and issues impacting the quality of and access to education today. In order to address this issue the following propositions were put forward:

- Develop community-based programmes to deepen parental involvement in the learning process and the development of schools

- Conduct research to ascertain the issues and challenges confronting parents (2011-2015 Education Sector Strategic Plan of the MoE of the GORTT, p. 23)

The abovementioned identification of parental indifference/lack of involvement as a contemporary challenge that impacts on the quality of education concretizes the general idea that inconsistent and steadily declining levels of parental involvement is an issue that has fraught the teaching fraternity in Trinidad for countless years. More recently in an article in the Trinidad Express (April 23, 2012), Lennox Bernard, an educator for 48 years, states that in the last five

years there has been a growing intensity regarding parents' lack of involvement in their children's schooling.

Bernard (2012) claims that this concern regarding the lack of parental involvement is brought about by an escalation of violence in schools, including bullying, poor expectations regarding the performance of teachers and administrators and doubts related to the relevance of a constantly overloaded curriculum. He also pronounces that many parents have "reneged on their responsibilities as parents" and as such "students are dropping out of school to become the wards of the state, indulging in gang activities or child labour, sometimes with the knowledge of the parent".

Bernard (2012) justified his statement that parents have "reneged on their responsibilities" by referring to the general consensus amongst Principals in a recent workshop he conducted which revealed that many of the local Parent Teacher Associations were non-existent or non-functional and where functional they often attract a low turnout.

A subsequent editorial in the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday (June 22, 2012) also sounds the alarm for greater parental involvement on the heels of the implementation of the Continuous Assessment Component (CAC). The unknown author asserts that "this is crucial, if parents and guardians of children in schools that are today under-performing are to be better positioned to appreciate why the changes are necessary". The demand for increased parental involvement from an earlier age is also noted in this article.

The call for parental involvement at an early age in the aforesaid Trinidad and Tobago Newsday article (22 June, 2012) is buttressed by data collected in Europe by means of a longitudinal study of 3000 children between the ages of 3 and 7. The research found that there

are a wide range of activities that parents undertake with preschool children which is equated

with a positive effect on their intellectual, social and behavioural development. These activities

include teaching songs and nursery rhymes, playing with letters and numbers, drawing and

painting, visiting the library and creating regular play dates with friends in addition to others

(The Effective Provision of Pre-School (EPPE) Project, 2004). Another key finding of the EPPE

study is that "the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and

social development than parental occupation, education or income" The study declares that

"What parents do is more important than who parents are" (p. 1).

A synthesis of research studies on parental involvement conducted over the period 1993-

2002 revealed that "When schools, families, and community groups work together to support

learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more"

(Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Furthermore, Henderson & Mapp (2002) established that many of

the studies reviewed found that

> students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, were more
>
> likely to earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs; be
>
> promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits; attend school regularly, have better social
>
> skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and graduate and go on to
>
> postsecondary education.

These findings are corroborated in yet another study which revealed that

> parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational
>
> achievement at age 10, which in turn is strongly associated with achievement in later life.

Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers.

(Every Child Matters, 2003)

Though it is noted that parental involvement is not the only variable that impacts on student achievement, the assertion of the aforementioned studies is that parental involvement in children's education has a greater influence on intellectual and social development than variables such as socio economic status or background.

The proposition to "deepen parental involvement in the learning process" has finally made it on the list of Ministerial Priorities on the educational agenda of Trinidad and Tobago via the 2011-2015 Education Sector Strategic Plan of the MoE (p. 23) but what exactly has impelled the Government to now consider the aforementioned proposition?

Local Context.

In Trinidad, education is considered a vehicle for social and occupational mobility. This notion originates even from the pre- independence era when the Canadian Missionaries (CM) came to Trinidad in the early 1860's to look after the indentured labourers with the goal to improve and upgrade all aspects of life for these people. With this goal in mind the Missionaries opened schools to provide education for the masses of indentured labourers. From then to now a total of seventy two primary and five secondary schools were opened in various parts of the island by these Presbyterians formerly known as the CM in addition to numerous government and other denominational primary and secondary schools.

From the achievement of Independence from British rule in 1962 to present day, successive Governments have made strides in the education system in an attempt to provide "Education for All" and improve student performance. Some of these initiatives are the upgrade of teacher qualifications from a Diploma to a Bachelor's Degree, the construction and furnishing of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Centres, the launch of the E-Connect and Learn (E-Cal) programme in 2010, where all students entering secondary are assigned a laptop for personal use in order to enhance their performance and create equity, the addition of a Student Support Services Division and the more recent Continuous Assessment Component (CAC) and ongoing Curricula Reform. Despite the above mentioned and prior investments in the education system, students are still performing at a subpar level. These claims are substantiated by the results of International Surveys in which our country participated such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009.

The PIRLS 2011 survey assessed reading literacy of fourth graders or nine year olds in 57 educational systems. This survey resulted in a maximum average score of 571 and a PIRLS scale average of 500. Trinidadian students recorded a score significantly below the scale average. With exactly 100 points less than the highest average score, we achieved an average of 471.   In this survey, only nine educational systems were reported to have lower average scores than Trinidad (Thompson, Provasnik, Kastberg, Ferraro, Lemanski, Roey and Jenkins, 2012).

Similarly, the PISA (2009) survey assessed the reading literacy levels of fifteen year old students in 65 education systems. The average score for member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was 493. Trinidadian students scored well below this average with an average score of 416 and were followed by a mere fourteen educational systems that yielded lower averages (PISA in Focus, 2011), evidence that the problem persists as students get older.

Further analysis of these two international surveys revealed that the aforementioned countries that make concerted efforts to encourage and facilitate parental involvement by means of formal policies and practices were among the higher scoring education systems. For example, in the 2011 PIRLS survey, among the 53 participating countries and education systems, the United States (U.S.) claimed the sixth highest average reading score (556). England had an average score which was not significantly different from the U.S average score (552) and New Zealand amassed an average score of 531 which despite being considerably lower in comparison with the U.S. scores; was superior to 22 participating countries and was well above the average score of 500 (Thompson et al, 2012).

The abovementioned trend was similar to the results of the earlier administration of the PISA survey (2009). However using the average score of the U.S. (500) as a benchmark, it was found in this survey that New Zealand outperformed the U.S. to earn the fourth highest average reading score among OECD countries with an average score of 521. The United Kingdom's average score of 494 was once more not considerably different than that of the United States. Despite scoring only one point above the OECD average score of 493, the United Kingdom was still ranked amongst the higher scoring countries with thirteen OECD and 26 non-OECD countries reporting lower average scores (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, and Shelley, 2010). Once again, these three countries; New Zealand, The United Kingdom and the United States were among the higher scoring education systems.

In addition to our proven academic challenges our society is also fraught with countless social, psychological and economic challenges of this era, many of which are impacting negatively on our nation's children. The breakdown of traditional family systems and the proliferation of single mothers is one challenge of much importance. Furthermore, poverty, juvenile delinquency, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and the negative influence of western lifestyles propagated via various forms of media are among the major concerns. (GORTT Primary Health and Family Life Curriculum, 2006)

As aforementioned, parental involvement in children's education is largely considered a panacea for low student achievement. However, it also sets the stage for students to acquire and exhibit better social skills, improved behavior, and adaptability skills in challenging situations. Numerous researchers have made allusions to the aforesaid benefits of parental involvement (Cai, Moyer, & Wang, 1997; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991 cited in Pena, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 1992 cited in Lin &Yan, 2005; Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999 cited in

Anderson & Minke, 2007), thus it seems that the GORTT has finally bought into this locally

underutilized natural resource, parental involvement in children's education.   Consequently

despite the international arena being replete with various studies regarding parental involvement

in children's education there is an apparent paucity of local research in this area, hence the call

for same in the GORTT Education Sector Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (p.23).

School Context.

The school under study is located in the Caroni Educational District. Usually, most

students who attend the school reside in the immediate vicinity and have parents who are of a

low socio-economic level, with low educational attainment. Furthermore, a vast number of

students come from single parent homes and parent-teacher relationships are also rumoured to be

generally poor.

Despite the aforementioned, the students of the school have generally been under the

tutelage of formally trained teachers and as is the culture of primary school students throughout

Trinidad they seek extra lessons to supplement what is taught in the classroom. Notwithstanding,

the academic performance of students at the school has been consistently poor for a span of over

20 years. Conversely, in recent times there were incidences where students (in most occasions

not from the immediate catchment area) perform well above the national average. It is important

to note that this phenomenon has occurred successively in the last three years.

The students, primarily of East Indian descent, have grandparents and parents who were

previously involved in the business of pottery making or the sugar cane industry. However, over

the past twenty years, parents are increasingly involved in occupations in the service and

construction industries amongst others, an indicator that the earning power of parents has increased and so too has their socioeconomic level. Consequently, the region has been transformed from being considered rural to suburban. The student population is also progressively becoming more diverse and teachers are increasingly becoming more qualified, with sixty six percent of teachers including the principal holding a Bachelor's Degree in Education and a further thirteen percent currently in pursuit of this level of qualification (see Appendix B). Despite these developments, the educational achievement of the general student population continues to remain subpar. This is evidenced by both the SEA and National Test examination results.

The researcher, a past student of the school, had the opportunity in recent times to be in a strategic position (as a parent of two students who attended the institution) to observe the abovementioned phenomenon; where students from the immediate catchment area of the school generally underperform whilst a few others who seek pupillage at the school are able to excel. The researcher, a single parent, having been very involved in the education of both her children who attended the school under study and gained passes for first choice schools along with other students with similarly involved parents, was led to consider if parental involvement impacted on the educational achievement of the students who attend this school. This recent success of a mere 6 % of students (who passed for schools of their first choice) over the past three years heightened the researcher's interest in the topic and her belief that "students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, were more likely to earn higher grades and test scores" Henderson & Mapp (2002).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the skilled tutelage of trained teachers with over twenty years of experience in addition to a strong culture of extra lessons to support what is taught in the classroom, the majority of students of School X continue to underperform at the both the SEA and National Test Examinations. The GORTT suggested that a lack of parental involvement is one of the major challenges facing the local education arena today; consequently, the researcher seeks to investigate and evaluate the levels of parental involvement at School X in activities as outlined in the conceptual framework of Epstein (2009, p.16), and the degree to which it impacts on academic performance.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This mixed methods case study was undertaken to investigate and evaluate the levels of parental involvement in activities both at home and at school that would result in the improvement of their children's educational performance and to determine if a correlation exists between the levels of parental involvement and student academic achievement. Additionally, the study was designed to explore barriers to parental involvement in activities that support their children's learning both at home and at school.

1.4 Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions all of which will be operationalized. The first and third questions are defined by Creswell (2003, p.113) as

descriptive questions focused on the independent variable, parental involvement and the second question defined as an inferential question which relates the independent (parental involvement) and dependent variables (student academic achievement).

1.   To what extent are parents/caregivers of students in Class X at School X involved in activities both at home and at school that support their children's academic performance?

2.   How does the level of parental involvement relate to the academic performance of students in Class X?

3.   What do parents/caregivers of students in Class X at School X perceive to be barriers to their involvement in activities that support their children's academic achievement?

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is the expectation that this study will enlighten all stakeholders of School X of the perceived positive relationship between parental involvement and students' performance and how it can create an arena for positive student outcomes.

Furthermore, the researcher hopes to garner information concerning the barriers to parental involvement from the data collected. This may serve as a catalyst for the development of school policy to guide and foster parental involvement as well as for the development of workshops to aid parents in their duties.

Despite the lack of generalizability of the findings due to the design of the study the results can provide the Ministry of Education with invaluable information on parental involvement; an established area of their interest.

Additionally this study will add to the paucity of research on this topic in the local forum.

1.6 Assumptions

The researcher will be working with the assumption that participants will provide truthful responses to the items on the survey and not responses that are subject to social desirability bias which according to Vogt (2007) are responses that the participants believe they "ought" to give.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms/Variables

The independent variable in this study is parental involvement and the dependent variable is student academic achievement. The following section presents formal definitions for each variable in addition to operational definitions that describe as precisely as possible, the manner in which the variable was measured in this study.

Academic Achievement:

"Achievement encompasses student ability and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth, cognitive, emotional, social and physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in public school and on into post-secondary years and working life"

(Steinberger, 1993 cited in Abisamra, 2000).

Operational Definition:

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary further simplifies the definition of student achievement as "the quality and quantity of student's work". This definition was deemed more suitable to this study and so the researcher operationally defines student achievement as "Students' actual scores on their end-of-term Mathematics and Language Arts tests. Additionally, the terms student academic achievement and academic performance are interspersed throughout the study but they are used interchangeably and mean the same as student achievement.

Parental Involvement:

"Activities that parents engage in at home and at school and positive attitudes parents have toward their child's education, school, and teacher" (Epstein, 1996; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000 cited in Topor et al, 2010.

Operational Definition:

Since this study did not seek to collect parental attitudinal data the researcher chose to operationally define parental involvement as "activities that parents engage in at both at home and at school that support their children's educational achievement".

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this research endeavour was to investigate the levels of parental involvement in School X and ascertain the extent to which it might impact students' educational performance. The hope is to garner substantial evidence that will assist in the identification of levels of parental involvement as a point of leverage for improving students' educational performance.

In pursuit of this focus I found it necessary to seek a holistic understanding of the term parental involvement and examine the professed benefits of same with emphasis on how it impacts on student achievement. I also perused literature that outlined other factors that may impact academic achievement. In addition a review of the perceived barriers to parental involvement and strategies to counteract these barriers was actively pursued.

2.2 Defining Parental Involvement

There is no universal consensus on what is parental involvement and as such it can take many forms; such as, attending parent-teacher conferences or volunteering at school functions to reading to children at home and assisting with homework. An exploration of the literature has revealed that the term 'parental involvement' once had a very limited meaning and was frequently used to describe teachers' attempts to involve parents in ongoing classroom or school activities (Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989 cited in Watkins, 1997). This finding is

corroborated by Mackety and Linder-VanBerschot (2008) who describe this type of definition as one that focuses exclusively on school oriented activities and cite (Shaver and Walls, 1998) as another team of researchers who share such a narrow vision of parental involvement.

Anderson & Minke (2007) argue that the aforementioned definition which is primarily based on school oriented activities usually represent teachers' views of parental involvement. They suggest that parents may take a more community-centric view that includes keeping their children safe and getting them to school. Lawson (2003) cited in Anderson & Minke (2007) proposes that "when the different definitions are not recognized, miscommunications can occur that lead teachers to blame families for child difficulties and parents to feel unappreciated for their efforts".

Many researchers have since broadened the definition of parental involvement to include a range of home and school oriented activities. One such expanded definition was developed by Dimock, O'Donoghue, and Rob (1996) cited in Feuerstein (2000) which identified five categories of parental involvement: (a) school choice, (b) decision making through formal structures or site based councils, (c) teaching and learning, (d) effect on the physical and material environment, and (e) communication. Feuerstein (2000) concedes that this model can be useful in the context of a framework for analyzing various types of parent involvement but rejects its widespread utility based on its lack of specificity and resultant inability to measure parent activity in a "statistically meaningful way".

Feuerstein (2000) further clarifies his criticism of Dimock et al's (1996) model to represent parental involvement by comparing it to the quantitative measures of parental involvement developed by Milne, Myers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg (1986) which he maintains have

been successfully used to investigate the association between parental involvement and student achievement. Feuerstein (2000) argues that most of Milne, Myers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg's (1986) measures fall into only two of the five categories of Dimock et al's (1996) model i.e. teaching and learning or communication.

Feuerstein (2000) later gives credence to the measure of parent involvement designed by Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) for use with the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). He explains that this measure included 12 indicators of parent involvement clustered around four variables which are (1) home discussion, (2) home supervision (3) school communication and (4) school participation. According to Feuerstein (2000) parental involvement was described by (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996) as a multidimensional construct. The utility of this measure was also acknowledged in A New Wave of Evidence (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Regardless of the acceptance of the aforementioned measure it is the framework that was developed by Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the Center on Family, School and, Community Partnerships at John Hopkins University that has been hailed by Sumaiti (2012) as "one of the most useful tools developed for defining parental involvement practices" and described by Henderson & Mapp (2002) as the framework that many researchers use some variation of. This internationally acclaimed framework boasts six types of parental involvement across three interrelated spheres of influence which are family, school and community.

These six areas comprise (1) parenting-helping families to develop child-rearing and parenting skills); (2) communicating-developing effective two way communication between home and school; (3) volunteering-creating ways to involve families in activities at the school; (4) learning at home-disseminating information to support learning activities in the home that

reinforce school curricula; (5) decision-making-including families in the decision-making process through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other committees; and (6) collaborating with the community-matching community services with family needs and serving the community (Michigan Department of Education, 2001)

This definition provides a comprehensive understanding of the term parental involvement and includes collaborating with the community as a valuable resource; an area (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996, cited in Feuerstein, 2000) despite their multifaceted approach failed to consider in their parental involvement model.

According to Henderson & Mapp (2002) this type of strategy, i.e. community organizing, is gaining in popularity in the United States and the efforts which are led by parents and community members are aimed at low performing schools.

For the purpose of this research endeavour Epstein's Six Types Framework will be adopted to guide the evaluation of parental involvement amongst the participants and is therefore considered the conceptual framework of the study.

2.3 Benefits of Parental Involvement with Emphasis on Student Achievement

Parental involvement in education has been associated with many positive outcomes for students. Epstein (1992) as cited in Yan & Lin (2005) suggested that "students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations and other

positive behaviours if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved".

Similarly, researchers (Cai, Moyer, & Wang, 1997; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991 cited in Peña, 2000) report that parental involvement correlates with increased emotional development and positive behaviours. These positive behaviours include increased ability to self-regulate behaviour (Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999 cited in Anderson & Minke, 2007) and lead to higher levels of social skills (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino cited in Anderson & Minke, 2007).

Anderson & Minke (2007) also quote several researchers who agree that parental involvement is linked with other positive outcomes such as lower dropout rates (Rumberger, 1995) and fewer retentions and special education placements (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

Furthermore, a recent study conducted with a sample of over 1300 children from ten U.S. cities and published in the May/June 2010 issue of the Journal of Child Development concluded that

> when parents boosted their involvement in elementary school (by increasing visits to the school and encouraging educational progress at home), children's problem behaviors (including both aggressive and disruptive behaviors as well as anxiety and depression) decreased. At the same time, their so-called pro-social skills (such as cooperation and self-control) improved. Society for Research in Child Development (2010, May 20)

A growing body of research also suggests that increased parental involvement results in many positive benefits for schools. Among the benefits are the claims that 'schools that favour parental involvements outperform schools with little parental involvement' (Epstein, 1987;

Henderson, 1988 cited in Peña, 2000). Furthermore, Rioux & Berla (1993) also cited in Peña (2000) argue that schools that have long lasting, comprehensive parent programs are more effective than those without and schools become more collaborative and caring in nature when they work with the community (Henry, 1996 cited in Yan & Lin, 2005) .

Additionally, more specific benefits are claimed such as that of Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie (1987) cited in Yan & Lin (2005) who report that some teachers gain confidence in their efficacy to teach children as a result of increased parental involvement.

Albeit the acknowledgement of aforementioned benefits of parental involvement, it is the impact on academic achievement that is of paramount importance to governments, educators and even researchers. A meta-analysis of studies that embody 40 years of research shows that the effect of parental involvement on achievement is "positively statistically significant and stable" (Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006). Improvements are noted in overall achievement (Shaver & Walls, 1998 cited in Anderson & Minke, 2007) and higher grade point averages (Gutman & Midgley, 2000 cited in Anderson & Minke, 2007).

More specific achievement gains have also been reported. For example data analysed from the Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation's (OECD) Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 reported a strong correlation between parental involvement with children during primary school and the child's reading performance at the age of 15. This data shows that children whose parents reportedly read to their child at least once or twice a week during their first year of primary school had markedly higher reading scores than children whose parents read to them only once or twice a month (p.2).

The results for Mathematics and Science achievement reflect a similar pattern. Olatoye and Agbatogun (2009) report that the findings of their study on the effects of parental involvement as a correlate of achievement in mathematics and science show that parental involvement is an important predictor of mathematics and science achievement in primary school pupils. They concede that according to Olatoye & Ogunkola (2008) their findings corroborate with many research studies such as Hixon (2006) and Epstein (1995) who also found that parental involvement could help improve student achievement in school.

In addition, a study conducted by Yan & Lin (2005) that examined the relationship between parental involvement and mathematics achievement revealed that students from 8th to 12th grade also had a statistically significant gain in mathematics scores regardless of race and ethnicity.

Conversely, the literature does not paint an overall positive picture on the issue of parental involvement. A recent study conducted by the Society for Research in Child Development and published in the May/June 2010 issue of the Journal of Child Development claims that the results reveal that children whose parents were more involved throughout their elementary school years exhibited fewer problem behaviours and better social skills, but that the children's academic performance were not affected.

Furthermore, Watkins (1997) reminds us that child achievement is recognized by several researchers (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Kelleghan, Sloane, Alvarez & Bloom, 1993; Scot-Jones, 1987; Seginer, 1983; Yoon et al, 1993; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992) as a key factor that can encourage parental involvement. He reiterates that the relationship between child achievement and parental involvement has been described by

these researchers as bi-directional and as such the relationship is dependent on the action of each variable.

Additionally, research has shown that there is a negative association with parents contacting the school about teenager's performance and achievement despite the pronouncement made by Scott-Jones (1995) cited in Yan & Lin (2005) that parent's contacting the school about their children's behaviour may be an important aspect of monitoring. Muller (1993) cited in Yan & Lin (2005) suggests that this may be explained by the negative association between test scores and behavioural problems.

2.4 Other Factors that May Impact Student Achievement

Notwithstanding the significant effect that parental involvement has on student achievement several researchers concede that there are other factors that might also impact student achievement.

These factors can be found at the school level and beyond. Greenwald et al. (1996) cited in Okpala, Okpala & Smith (2001) suggested that achievement may be defined as a function of educational inputs or resources such as (1) school characteristics and facilities and (2) student characteristics such as ability and socioeconomic status (SES). Hartman (1999) also cited in Okpala, Okpala & Smith (2001) further describes school characteristics to include student/teacher ratio or class size, teacher education level, experience of the teacher, teacher salary and expenditure per student (instructional supplies).

Okpala, Okpala & Smith (2001) investigated the correlation between three variables: parental involvement, instructional supplies, family SES and student achievement. Their findings revealed that there was no significant correlation for parental involvement and instructional expenditures with the lowest correlation coefficient being reported for instructional supplies expenditure and a negative correlation between family SES as measured by percentage of students enrolled in free/reduced price lunch programs. Consequently they do not dismiss parental involvement as an insignificant factor as it relates to academic achievement but rather they explain that this result may have been a reflection of the method used for measuring parental involvement which was school based (volunteer hours). They elaborated by citing Desimone (1999) who reported that the most important school-related activities are those that occur in the home. In addition some of the parents surveyed did not have children in the school in which they were volunteering.

Conversely, Greenwald, Hedges & Laine (1996) also investigated the effect of school resources on achievement and reported findings contrary to the abovementioned. They concluded that "a broad range of resources were positively related to student outcomes with effect sizes that were large enough to suggest that moderate expenditure would result in significant increases in achievement".

Furthermore, researchers such as Rowan, Correnti & Miller (2002) investigated teacher effects on student achievement and reported that in well specified models of academic growth in both reading and mathematics achievement teacher effects were found to be substantial.

Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2000) also explored teacher quality and student achievement to reveal similar findings. She concludes that measures of teacher preparation and certification are the strongest correlates of student achievement in mathematics and reading.

Additionally, Barton (2004) as cited in Wood (2007) reportedly created a framework of fourteen specific factors that impact on student achievement which he further classified into environmental factors and school factors. According to Wood (2007) these environmental factors include low birth weight, lead poisoning, malnutrition, television, parental availability, student mobility and parental participation. Furthermore, the school factors listed by Barton (2004) cited in Wood (2007) include rigor of the curriculum, teacher experience and attendance, teacher preparation, class size, technology assisted instruction and school safety which includes the physical condition of the school plant in addition to such things as a positive disciplinary climate.

The above mentioned factors are important to note since they can be confounding variables and must be carefully considered when interpreting the results of this research endeavour since they reduce the possibility of drawing a direct and indisputable link between parental involvement alone and students' academic achievement.

2.5 Barriers to Parental Involvement

Albeit the strong theoretical milieu that summaries the numerous advantages of parental involvement, concerns about the lack of parental involvement continue to exist. As a matter of fact the researcher has found evidence of a local resurgence of interest toward this concern.

The literature proposes that this lack of parental involvement may stem from various barriers at the level of the individual i.e. personal barriers and barriers imposed by the school that continue to keep parents from actively participating both at home and at school in meaningful ways to their children's education.

2.51 Personal Barriers.

Investigators report (Stevenson & Baker, 1997 cited in DePlanty, Coulter_Kern & Duchane, 2007) that there is a positive correlation between a mother's education level and her degree of involvement in school activities. Peña (2000) concludes that limited education may lead to fear and mistrust. Moreover she suggests that parents are intimidated by "technical jargon" used by teachers which may complicate communication between them and the teachers. Low self-esteem may also result from limited parental education which further impedes effective communication between home and school. Kaplan, Liu & Kaplan, (2001) have reported that level of self-esteem or self-rejection may have a moderating effect on certain situational, behavioural and psychological relationships such as parental involvement.

In addition, low parental education may also inhibit involvement in home activities that contribute to academic performance. One such activity is that of the inability to assist with homework which may further manifest itself as a child gets older and parents become less knowledgeable in the academic subject areas (Eccles & Harold, 1993 cited in DePlanty, Coulter_Kern & Duchane, 2007). They also posit that parents may feel inadequate when helping their children with homework, which may add to parents' negative self-feelings.

Low socioeconomic status (SES) is another concern that affects effective parental involvement. Sheldon (2002) cited in DePlanty, Coulter_Kern & Duchane, (2007) suggests that

parents with access to more financial resources are more likely to be involved and have larger

social networks. He posits that resources are gained from these networks that further contribute

to involvement. This according to Coleman (1988) cited in Feuerstein (2000) is known as social

capital.

These trying economic times have also resulted in a great amount of mothers entering the

workforce or returning to school in an effort to assist or to better provide for their families (in the

case of two parent families) or simply to make ends meet (in the case of single parent families).

Traditionally, mothers bore the primary responsibility for parent-school communication on

behalf of their children and as such they are no longer easily available for conversations with

teachers (Swap, 1987). According to Peña (2000) educators often assume that poor parent

attendance at events translates into parents not being interested in their children's education.

Swap (1987) argues that the real issue is time, since the struggle to balance the competing

demands of work, family life and sometimes school leaves little time for involvement with their

children's education. A survey commissioned by the British Department for Children, Schools

and Family (DCSF) was done in 2007 and reported findings that substantiate Swap's argument

which was made twenty years earlier. The survey revealed that 64% of parents mentioned work

commitments as a barrier to involvement in their children's education. Similarly, Bauch (1993)

cited in (Peña, 2000) reports that conflict with the working hours of parents are a common

barrier.

2.52 Barriers Imposed by the School.

Schools can pose serious handicaps to parental involvement in children's education.

DePlanty, Coulter_Kern & Duchane, (2007) concur that evidence shows that many parents want

to become involved but are not encouraged or lack the open communication lines or the support required from the school to do so.

Whilst some researchers attribute the aforementioned lack of encouragement, support and open communication lines to differences in values and living patterns between middle class educators and low-SES families (Gordan, 1968, cited in Peña, 2000) in addition to some educators' belief that parents are not savvy enough to assume leadership roles in schools. Others (Carrasquillo & London, 1993, cited in Peña, 2000; Epstein & Becker, 1982, cited in DePlanty, Coulter_Kern & Duchane, 2007) argue that teachers think involving parents is of extreme importance but the general lack of time poses a constraint on the amount of time required to deal with parents. According to Swap (1987) "parents & teachers are both busy, with multiple demands upon their time", she posits that teachers also have families and because teachers' salaries are not on par with other professional jobs they sometimes need to hold two jobs in order to make ends meet.

Many teachers also complain that they have limited skills necessary for effective interaction with parents. This lack of skill may affect a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which according to Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) as cited in DePlanty et al (2007) is "a judgement about his or her capability to influence student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated". Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, (1992) also cited in DePlanty et al (2007) speculate that teachers with a higher level of efficacy might invite and receive more parental involvement than teachers with lower levels of efficacy.

2.6 Strategies to Counteract Barriers to Parental Involvement

Whatever the nature of the barriers imposed on parental involvement it is important to employ strategies to lessen the negative effects of same and thereby facilitate parental involvement in their children's education. Though this may seem a daunting task to educators and parents alike it is not impossible. Swap (1987) proposes that in order to promote parental involvement there are two basic goals: (1) to increase the quality of the contacts between parent and teacher and (2) to increase the quantity of parents who interact with the school. While Swap's points are valid to a certain extent, much more is required for the effective promotion of parental involvement.

More recent research suggests a multidimensional approach. Epstein et al (2009) have conducted extensive research with educators, parents, students and the community. They conclude that new concepts are needed to organize effective partnership programs. In keeping with the aforesaid they suggest that "School, family and community partnerships" is a better phrase than parental involvement since the concept of 'partnership' recognizes that in addition to parents and educators others in the community share the responsibility for students' learning and development.

This framework as proposed by Epstein et al (2009, p.16) constitutes six types of parental involvement or programmes of partnership as mentioned earlier. In this six typology framework Swap's propositions are represented by only one category; communication whilst Epstein et al's model recognizes all three components; school, family and community as overlapping spheres of influence with the student located at the center. Epstein et al (2009) propose that if students feel cared for in all three domains and if they are encouraged to work hard in the role of student they

are most likely to do their best to learn to do academic work in addition to other skills and talents.

This comprehensive framework holds the promise to be a panacea for the aforesaid barriers to parental involvement if carefully implemented. By involving the support of the community both parents and teachers can access relevant and appropriate programs and services to facilitate parental involvement for the benefit of all stakeholders.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

The literature review revealed that the definition of what constitutes parental involvement varies among individuals. While some are in agreement that parental involvement requires parents to become involved in activities at school that support their children's education others believe that it is involvement in activities both at home and at school that support their children's education that is considered parental involvement. Nonetheless another set of researchers argue that parental involvement is made up of a range of activities organized across three spheres: schools, families and community. Whatever the definition being used, another group of researchers contend that it is imperative that it be known to all parties involved in order to avoid miscommunication.

Another issue that came to the fore was the numerous benefits to be had by the increase of parental involvement in children's education. These benefits range from behavioural to social gains in addition to increased academic performance for students and increased effectiveness for schools.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming support in the literature for parental involvement as a major contributor to academic achievement, several researchers suggest that there are other

factors that might impact on academic achievement. Just as parental involvement includes activities that occur both at home and at school so too these factors originate from both the home and the school.

The literature also highlighted a series of barriers to parental involvement at the level of the individual as well as the school. A highly popular comprehensive framework for addressing these barriers with a view toward counteracting the negative effects of same was also uncovered. This strategy revealed a shift from the traditional methods used to increase parental involvement such as increasing the quality and quantity of parent-teacher communication.

Yet still I believe that each school, family and community is different and as such any strategy employed will have to be tailored to fit the uniqueness of the situation.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to describe and defend the 'research design' which according to Vogt (2007) is the methods employed to collect evidence for the purpose of answering the research questions or more simply put; the plan or proposal to conduct research (Creswell (2009). Furthermore, aspects of the research design such as the sampling technique and the resultant sample, the data collection technique and instrument, ethical precautions and limitations would also be addressed in this chapter. Additionally, methods adopted for the measurement of the variables under study and analysis procedures for interpreting the evidence collected will be discussed.

3.2 Overview of the Research Design

This study utilizes a mixed methods research design; a combination of both quantitative and qualitative forms of research. Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) cited in Creswell (2009) posit that in mixed methods research, both approaches are used concomitantly thereby increasing the overall strength of the study beyond that of which qualitative or quantitative methods alone would convey (p.4)

Creswell (2007) puts forward the concept that research designs are a product of philosophy, selected strategies of inquiry and specific research methods. This study is embedded in the philosophical worldview of pragmatism. According to Rossman & Wilson (1985) cited in Creswell (2007, p.10) the focus from this worldview is not on methods but on the research

problem and in to order fully comprehend the problem the researcher may employ pluralistic approaches.

Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the existing levels of parental involvement and determine if a correlation exists between the levels of parental involvement and students' academic performance, as well as to explore the barriers to these parents' involvement in activities that would increase the educational attainment of their children, a mixed methods approach was deemed befitting.

The overarching strategy of inquiry was the concurrent embedded strategy which is one of several mixed methods approaches. This strategy utilizes a simultaneous mode of data collection during which both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected. According to Creswell (2009) this approach has a primary method that guides the study and a secondary method which is embedded or nested within the primary method. He adds that the secondary method may address an entirely different question than the primary method and that "the mixing of the data can reside side by side as two different pictures that provide a composite assessment of the problem" (p.214). This study adopts the aforementioned approach since the quantitative phase was designed to provide answers to research questions one and two, which seek to investigate the current levels of parental involvement in specific activities and the correlation between these levels and the students' achievement respectively whilst the qualitative phase was designed to elicit responses to question three, barriers to these parents involvement in activities that support their children's academic achievement.

Consequently, the primary research methodology or strategy of inquiry was survey research (Vogt, 2007; Creswell, 2009). This primary research methodology was consistent with

the research design of several researchers who investigated parental involvement (Watkins,

1997; Feuerstein, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Yan & Lin, 2005 & Anderson & Minke, 2007;

Olatoye & Agbatogun, 2009). According to Vogt (2007, p.9) and Marshall & Rossman (1999)

cited in Best & Kahn (2006), survey research can be used "to provide evidence that can be

handled in either quantitative or qualitative ways"; a characteristic that allowed the researcher to

collect both qualitative and quantitative data together using the same instrument. Moreover, this

characteristic of survey research facilitated the adoption of the concurrent embedded model of

mixed methods research which as previously mentioned requires the simultaneous collection of

both types of data and provides further justification for the method of choice.

The secondary strategy of inquiry however was the case study which falls under the

qualitative paradigm. There are several views regarding case study research. Researchers (Stake,

2005 cited in Creswell, 2007) suggest that case study research is not a type of methodology per

se but rather a choice of what one wants to study (a case within a bounded system). Creswell

(2007) on the other hand chooses to look at case study research as a methodology, a type of

qualitative research design, an object of study and also as a product of inquiry (p.73). In

addition, Yin (2003) cited in Creswell (2007, p.74) posits that both qualitative and quantitative

approaches can be adopted in case study development and that cases can be further defined as

exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. This study can be considered a case as it conforms to all

of Creswell's aforementioned views and also incorporates Yin's position regarding the use of

both qualitative and quantitative data to describe (data collected by survey using quantitative

methods) and explore (the barriers to parental involvement via open ended responses) the case.

Furthermore, according to Stake (1995) cited in Creswell (2007, p.74), this study can be more

specifically described as a single instrumental case study; where a researcher focuses on an issue

or concern (parental involvement and how it impacts on student academic achievement) and then selects one bounded case (School X) to illustrate the issue.

Peña (2000) utilized a case study approach in her investigation entitled Parental Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications, where she studied Mexican American families at one school in Texas. In addition to parents she interviewed the administrator and teachers in an effort to identify the variables that led to successful involvement of the parents in this school context. Likewise, in addition to seeking the voice of parents in order to ascertain their barriers to parental involvement, the researcher also interviewed both the administrator of the school and the class teacher to help identify potential barriers to parental involvement at the level of the school. Creswell (2007) posits that data collection is usually of an extensive nature in case study research and so in addition to the aforementioned interviews the researcher also engaged in non-participant observation of Parent Teacher Meetings and other school activities when possible in an effort to triangulate data.

DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane's (2007) study entitled "Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Academic Achievement" is an example of a study that incorporated interviews and focus groups in addition to the development of a survey designed to gather quantitative data regarding parental involvement in activities identified as important to student achievement. Though not explicitly stated, this study used a mixed methods approach and can also be considered a case study since it was confined to one school in a rural county of a Midwestern state.

The objective of the quantitative phase was to provide statistical evidence of the influence of specific types of parental involvement to increase students' academic achievement

and thereby sway parents toward maximum involvement of this nature in their children's

education. Whilst the qualitative phase was designed to elicit the barriers that parents need to

overcome both at home and at school in order to become more involved in their children's

education thus informing future parental involvement attempts at the level of the school.

The third and final aspect of the research design according to Creswell (2009) is the

specific research methods or the framework for data collection, analysis and interpretation which

will be discussed later on in the paper.

3.2 Sampling Technique

The population under study encompassed two hundred and fifty three students (133 boys,

120 girls) distributed among fourteen classes. The nature and design of the study precludes the

random selection of students. Consequently the resultant sample, one intact, standard five class

of seventeen students (12 boys and 5 girls) was purposively chosen. This simply means that the

sample was gathered deliberately, with a purpose in mind, but not randomly (Vogt, 2007).

This purpose was to select an intact group/class of students with an average age that was

consistent with the age of students who were observed in the preceding years and were the

catalysts for this study (see background-school context). In addition the particular class needed to

be taught by one of the two standard five teachers whose classes were observed in an attempt to

control the potentially confounding variable of teacher quality; a variable that has been found to

be a strong correlate of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This precondition

offered the researcher a choice of one of two classes to comprise the sample. However, one of

the two teachers who fit the criteria required for controlling the variable of teacher quality was

no longer assigned to a standard five class thereby making her present class ineligible for selection due to the average age requirements.

The case selected for study is a variation of purposive sampling, according to Patton (2002) cited in Flick (2011, p. 76) it can be best described as a typical case or a case that underscores what is normal or average in some schools/classes since the researcher has observed the phenomenon, where at other schools in in this educational district one or two students perform extremely well, gaining places in first choice schools with at least one being amongst the "top 100 SEA performers", whilst others in the same class underperform dismally.

3.3 Profile of Participants

Participants in this study were predominantly female (92.3%) and were between the ages thirty and forty nine (77%) (see Appendix C). They were largely of East Indian descent (53.8%) with the remaining sample being Mixed (30.8%) and African (15.4%). Whilst most of the children reportedly belonged to two parent homes either by marriage or common law association (69.2%), of this amount (15.4%) were grandparent homes. The remaining (29.8%) belonged to single parent homes. The sample reported levels of educational attainment as no more than Technical/Associate (15.4%) with the majority having attained a maximum of Secondary Education (61.5%) and others only a Primary Education (23.1%). However of the (61.5%) who have attained a Secondary Education (15.4%) are currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree. The sample also reported family income levels in some cases to be in excess of eight thousand dollars per month (38.5%) and less than four thousand dollars per month (30.8%) with the remaining (30.7%) earning somewhere between four and seven thousand dollars per month. The maximum number of children under eighteen in any household was four (23.1%) and the minimum was one

(15.4%) However most families reported having two children (53.8%) and a mere (7.7%) had three children.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

In this study the primary instrument for data collection was the survey. The online Web Center for Social Research Methods defines a survey as any measurement procedure that entails the asking of questions from respondents and suggests that surveys can take any of two forms: the questionnaire (a paper and pencil instrument the respondent completes) or the interview (completed by the interviewer based on what is said by the respondent). Furthermore, they propose that the questionnaire can be administered by mail, individually, or as a group administered questionnaire, whilst the interview can be done by telephone, in person or as a group interview or focus group.

Vogt (2007) advances that when deciding on a data collection method one must be practical but also be guided by the nature of the research problem and the characteristics of the respondents. In consideration of the aforementioned, the group administered questionnaire was the method of choice whereby each individual was given a questionnaire to answer in a group setting. Here the participants provided responses to the closed ended items. This method of administering the questionnaire was endorsed by Best & Kahn (2006, p.313) who posit that it has many advantages for the researcher. They explain that the researcher has an opportunity to establish rapport with the group, clarify the purpose of the study and attend to any requests for clarification of items that are not understood. Best & Kahn (2006) also highlight the time and cost savings that are realized by having a group of participants in one place at the same time.

Since the concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods research is the primary strategy of inquiry the qualitative data was collected simultaneously from parents/participants by transitioning to a focus group type atmosphere for the open ended section of the questionnaire with the researcher acting as the facilitator. This focus group interview method is consistent with the qualitative tradition of inquiry and also presents many advantages such as time and cost efficiency as previously mentioned. But the focus group method can be further advantageous according to (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1998; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) as cited in Creswell (2007, p. 133) "when there is interaction amongst interviewees which will most likely yield the best information and when individuals in one on one interviews may be hesitant to provide information". In addition to the focus group interviews, semi structured interviews were conducted individually with the administrator and the class teacher in a face to face setting.

Marshal & Rossman (1995, p.79) contend that observation is an activity that necessitates the recording of events, behaviours and artifacts or objects in the social setting selected for the study in a systematic way.   They add that initial observations may be done broadly without a prearranged objective but that with time patterns may begin to emerge which ultimately guides the development of observational checklists to guide later, more focused observations.

Consequently, non-participant observations were also made whenever possible to facilitate triangulation since according to Best & Kahn (2006) this technique, direct observation, can also make an important contribution in descriptive research. Consequently the goal of the observations was to get a sense of what exists with regards to the attendance at parent teacher meetings, the type of parent- teacher communication and how the general atmosphere may or may not be welcoming to parents at the school.

Additionally, document analysis will be utilized to collect student's scores on achievement tests in both Mathematics and Language Arts. This document refers to students report books which are according to Flick (2011, p.122) "official statistics, which have been produced not for research purposes but for the purposes of documentation.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The primary data collection instrument was the questionnaire which comprised of three sections labeled 'A' to 'C', and a total of forty six (46) questions (see Appendix D). The first section 'A' which contained a total of thirteen (13) questions was designed by the researcher to collect demographic data on the participants (parents). Section 'B' contained a total of twenty four (24) items which were designed to quickly, easily and accurately elicit the levels of parental involvement in specific activities as it pertains to the six types of involvement in Epstein's (2009, p.16) model; Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making and Collaborating with the Community. According to Ringenberg et al (2005, p.123) items under the construct 'Parenting' assesses the extent to which parents create a home environment that is supportive of the child's intellectual development whereas 'Communicating' evaluates the degree of home school communication regarding the child's academic performance and other information deemed necessary for academic advancement.   The third construct, 'Volunteering' refers to a variety of school and classroom activities in which the parent participates and 'Learning at Home' returns the degree to which parents encourage their child to work hard in the role of a student and actively assists them with this role. 'Decision Making' assesses the extent to which parents shape the school environment and the final construct, 'Collaborating with the Community' evaluates the degree to which parents are aware of and appeal to community resources to aid their child's cognitive development.

This questionnaire entitled the Parent And School Survey (PASS) was borne out of the efforts of an alliance of agencies in Northwest Indiana in exchange for a Grant from the U.S Department of Education for a Parent Information Resource Centre.

The researcher ensured that the instrument selected for use was designed/reviewed by experts in education to establish construct validity which refers to the agreement between a theoretical construct and the instrument being used to measure same (Best & Kahn, 2006, p. 296) and subsequently pilot tested (in this case with forty parents, predominantly white females) in order to highlight any ambiguities. Pilot testing is essential since according to Creswell (2009, p.150) it not only helps to establish content validity or the extent to which the items measure the constructs in its entirety (Best & Kahn, 2006, p. 295) but also improve the format, and general improvement of the questions and the scale being used. Based on the results of the pilot testing phase the items on the original instrument were reviewed. The original questionnaire comprised thirty (30) items but was subsequently reviewed after rigorous testing for reliability was done by a team of four researchers under the expert guidance of Matthew C. Ringenberg, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Valparaiso University in Indiana. The resultant Parent And School Survey for which permission was sought and granted (see Appendix E) was utilized in this study and as aforementioned comprises twenty four items. Furthermore, Best & Kahn (2006, p. 297) posit that the reliability of a test can be increased by increasing the number of items in the test. Consequently the instrument designers ensured the inclusion of as many items as was feasible and necessary to effectively measure parental involvement regarding each construct. Therefore each one of the six typologies which comprise the model was represented by four items.

In order to yield quantitative data this Section entitled Section B utilized the Likert Method. For each of the questions asked respondents were provided with five choices; each

representative of a different level of involvement. A quantitative value which ranged from 5

(most favourable response) to 1 (least favourable response) was assigned to each of the possible

responses for each question. The respondents selected an answer that best described their

behaviour from a choice of "strongly agree", "agree", "partially agree/partially disagree",

"disagree" and "strongly disagree" for each item on the survey. The items and responses were

phrased so as to facilitate reverse scoring at times. This was to ensure that parents carefully read

the questions and responses before selecting an answer.

Consequently for this survey the highest possible total would be 120 for each respondent.

This would be calculated as follows and be indicative of:

24 x 5 = 120 – Most favourable response possible or highest possible level of parental

involvement

Additionally, the data for each construct can be calculated individually to determine in which

area parents were more or less involved; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at

home, decision making or collaborating with the community.

The final section, 'C', was intended to elicit open ended, personal responses of a

qualitative nature. As such the nine (9) questions which comprise this section of the survey

instrument was designed to serve as an interview protocol. The questions were designed to elicit

the barriers to parental involvement at home and at school and to determine what practices are in

place at the school to foster parental involvement based on the last two of Epstein's six types

model (2009, p.16) of parental involvement; decision making and collaborating with the

community. In addition, the questions solicit parent's opinion of what a parental involvement

programme should consist of at this school.

3.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the survey instrument was first summed and the resulting scores for parental involvement and student achievement (Mathematics and Language Arts scores) as revealed in the students' report books was transcribed in a tabular format for analysis. Vogt (2007, p. 28) confirms that this format is ideal for further analysis using spreadsheet software such as excel or statistical packages such as SPSS. Each row in a table represented a specific student and each column represented a different variable (parental involvement, student achievement). Descriptive statistics such as the means and standard deviations were calculated in addition to the correlation between the two variables. The findings were reported in a discussion format. The descriptive statistics provided an answer to the first research question which pursues information regarding the current levels of parental involvement in activities both at home and at school that support the students' academic achievement. Whereas the computation of the correlation between the two variables: parental involvement and student achievement provided a response for research question two, which seeks to investigate this.

Similarly, the qualitative data analysis followed a systematic procedure which according to Creswell (2009, p.184) includes (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis by transcribing (2) reading through all the data to get a general sense of its meaning (3) Begin coding the data (4) combining similar codes to form themes or categories (5) selecting a type of narrative (6) interpreting the data. This analysis addressed the third research question which sought to determine what parents/caregivers of students in Class X at School X perceive to be barriers to their involvement in activities that support their children's academic attainment.

3.7   Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study it was important for me as a researcher to do so bearing certain ethical considerations in mind (Creswell, 2003, 2007, 2009; Best & Kahn, 2006; Flick, 2011). Creswell (2007) tells that in order to gain right of entry we must find a gatekeeper; an individual who gives the researcher the right of entry. In the context of my study this individual was the Administrator or Principal of the school. Thus I solicited an appointment with the Principal and explained as much as possible about my research interest. In order to further gain her trust I forwarded a written account of the details regarding my study for her perusal. Following her verbal consent I prepared a letter of informed consent (see Appendix F) which outlined the purpose of the research, the research procedures, the average amount of time required to conduct the research, the risks involved, the benefits to the participants, the issue of confidentiality, the right to withdraw from the study and the procedures to be followed should any participant require information regarding the study.

Similarly, a letter of informed consent was prepared for each parent (see Appendix G). This letter included the aforementioned details in addition to a request for the parents to allow their children to participate in the study where necessary and to gain access to students' academic report books.

Furthermore, the issue of reciprocity was of a major concern to the researcher. Creswell (2007) defines this term as "giving back to participants for their time and effort". The researcher in consideration of reciprocity will purchase one year's membership for the school from a local organization that promotes and fosters good parenting, additionally the researcher will arrange

for the said organization to conduct a workshop for all interested parents of the school on

parenting.

3.8 Limitations & Delimitations

Limitations.

The sample size is uncontrollably smaller than preferred with a total of only seventeen

(17) students and parents which increases the chance of sampling error.

The validity of the instrument used for data collection was not formally established with

this sample but it is important to consider that validity was formally established with another

identified sample.

The failure to establish triangulation due to the inability to survey the class teacher for the

students for the purpose of validating the parents' responses to the items on the survey based on

her perceptions proved to be another limitation. This resulted from of a lack of time due to the

teaching demands at this class level (Standard 5) and point in time (proximity to the SEA exam).

The non-experimental nature of the research endeavour confines the results to a

correlation and as such causation cannot be inferred.

Delimitations.

The sample of students and parents was restricted to one class in one school in the Caroni

Education District. This eliminates the possibility of extending any conclusions made beyond

this population sampled. However, though the generalizability of the research is compromised the results will have implications for all schools.

In addition, as a result of the recent introduction of the Continuous Assessment Component (CAC) initiative that influences the manner in which Essay Writing is currently being assessed, as well as the lack of importance placed on Science and Social Studies at this level; student achievement for the purpose of this research endeavour will be delineated to the students' scores in Mathematics and Language Arts.

Furthermore, no statistical methods were used by the researcher to control for intervening/mediating variables for example environmental variables such as teacher quality, availability of resources and genetic variables such as intelligence.

3.9 Conducting the Study

Permission to conduct the study was sought and granted in late January, immediately after which a formal observation exercise (sitting in at a PTA meeting) occurred. The Principal was informed that the collection of survey data would commence in early-mid March. On March 11th letters requesting participation and consent in addition to the bio data section of the questionnaire were distributed to all students. Eleven of these letters were completely filled and returned on March 13th. Immediately after, these parents were contacted by telephone, thanked for their willingness to participate and given a choice to attend either of two focus groups sessions being held on March 22nd. Permission was also sought for the researcher to follow up with a reminder call prior to the focus group session. This reminder took place on March 21st. The focus group sessions were held in the privacy of the school's library. Before commencing the researcher made sure that all participants were made to feel comfortable and assured of the high level of

confidentiality with which all data will be treated. The sessions were attended by four and three

parents respectively. Each session lasted between one and a half and two hours after which the

participants were generously thanked and served light refreshments. Following these focus group

sessions the parents who did not attend were again contacted in an attempt to reschedule but this

proved futile at the time due to scheduling issues (work). However these four parents indicated

that they were open to completing the survey on their own time. Since this was the end of the

school term survey reminder letters were sent out to those parents who previously did not

respond.

On April 19th, one week into the new term the researcher visited the school to get feedback with

regards to the reminder letters. Only two parents responded. These two parents in addition to the

previous four parents who demonstrated their willingness to participate were contacted but

scheduling issues arose once more. The researcher did not want to pressure parents due to the

proximity of the SEA exam and thus a decision was taken to send the surveys home and inform

parents of the option to contact the researcher for any clarification if required. This procedure

was in keeping with the survey research as previously described. All six surveys were

subsequently completed and returned. The researcher telephoned the parents thereafter and

offered sentiments of gratitude. The total response rate was therefore 76 %.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this study the concurrent embedded strategy, one of several mixed methods approaches was utilized since the goal was to amass and combine both quantitative and qualitative data to give a composite assessment of the problem. Consequently the researcher operationalized all three research questions which guided the study.

These questions were as follows:

1.   To what extent are parents/caregivers of students in Class X at School X involved in activities both at home and at school that supports their children's academic performance?

2.   How does the level of parental involvement relate to the academic performance of students in Class X?

3.   What do parents/caregivers of students in Class X at School X perceive to be barriers to their involvement in activities that support their children's academic achievement?

The data was analysed and presented in a format that would be interpretable by the all consumers of research, inclusive of parents and teachers. Consequently visuals were presented where practicable to aid in understanding of the written material.

4.2 Findings in Relation to Research Question One

4.2.1. Levels of Overall Parental Involvement.

Preliminary analysis of the data showed that based on the responses to the items on the Parent And School Survey (PASS) all parents reported relatively high levels of involvement in activities that support their children's academic performance. The total parental involvement (PI) scores for the sample ranged from a minimum of 75 to a maximum of 109 (See Fig. 1 below).
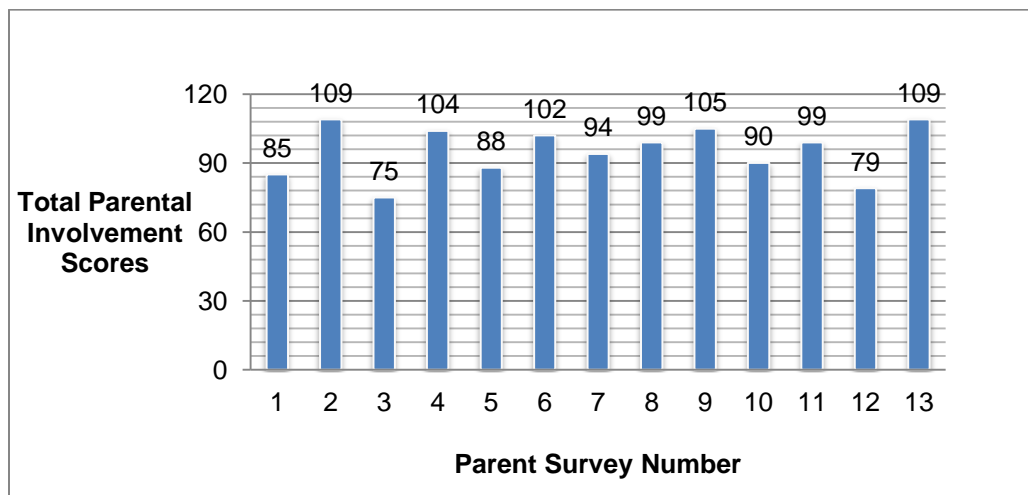
Figure 1. Parental involvement levels. This figure shows the levels of parental involvement as distributed in class X.

All scores were indicative of a somewhat acceptable level of parental involvement. The vast majority of parents (69.2%) reported levels of involvement which were in the upper quartile of the range. Whilst a mere (30.8%) reported slightly lower levels that was in the upper half of the third quartile in the range. The average parental involvement score was 95.2 with a standard deviation of 11.1.

Careful scrutiny of this data revealed that those parents/caregivers who returned total parental involvement scores of 90 or lower only attained formal education up to the primary

level (50%), are in a significantly lower income bracket when compared to the others in the

sample (75%), are single parents (50%) or guardians (25%) and are employed full time (50%),

part time (25%) or are retired (25%). Conversely within this group lies a parent who completed a

technical level of education and who subsequently has a higher income level than the rest of this

group but works full time on a shift basis while being a single parent (see Appendix H).

Therefore it is evident that despite having the highest level of educational attainment in

comparison with the entire sample and a higher salary than approximately half of the sample, the

aforementioned dynamics (shift work, single parenting) set the stage for a lesser level of parental

involvement.

Additionally, further exploration of the data showed that whilst for the most part parental

involvement levels were paralleled by corresponding test scores there were incidences where a

high level of parental involvement was reported but the corresponding average of the total test

scores, mathematics scores and language arts scores were low. So too there were incidences

where parents reported a lower level of parental involvement than the rest of the sample whilst

the corresponding test scores were higher. To exemplify this relationship all the variables were

converted to a score out of 100 and subsequently mapped on a graph for ease of comparison (see

Figure 2 below).
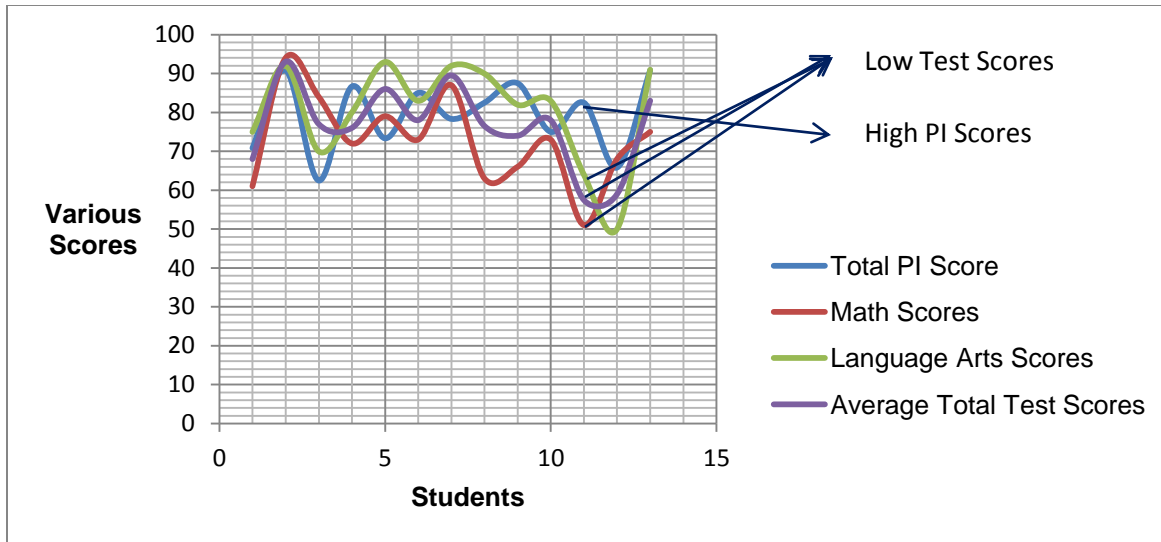
Figure 2. Relationship among parental involvement levels and corresponding variables. This figure shows how parental involvement levels are linked to the corresponding scores for selected variables for each student in class X.

4.2.2 Levels of Parental Involvement According to Epstein's Six Types of Involvement.

When the data was analysed by examining each of the six dimensions of parental involvement individually, the source of the above mentioned variations in overall parental involvement levels came to the fore.

'Parenting' was the type of involvement that revealed the highest scores. The content of the items covered by this construct can be seen in Table 1 below. The range of scores for this construct was 11 to 20, with an average score of 18.1 and a standard deviation of 2.5.

The construct with the second highest score was 'Communicating'. The range of scores for this type of involvement was 12 to 20 and as seen from Table 2 the average score was 17.8 with a standard deviation of 2.4.

Next in the series was 'Volunteering' for which the range of scores was once more from 12 to 20 with an average of 16.8 and a standard deviation of 2.3.

'Learning at Home' followed with a noticeably larger range of scores. The minimum score for this construct was 9 whilst the maximum was 19. An average of 15.2 was calculated for this construct and a standard deviation of 3.1.

'Decision Making' was next in the sequence with a range of scores from 11 to 19 and an even lower average of 14.5 with a standard deviation of 2.3.

Epstein's Constructs	Item Number	Item	Average	Standard Deviation
Table 1. Average Scores and Standard Deviations for Each Item on the Parent and School Survey				
Collaborating w/ Community	10	I talk with other parents frequently about educational issues	3.5	1.5
Collaborating w/ Community	11	My child attends community programs regularly	2.8	1.4
Collaborating w/ Community	20	If my child was having trouble in school I would not know how to get extra help	3.7	1.5
Collaborating w/ Community	24	I know about many programs for youth in my community	2.8	1.4
SubTotal			**12.8**	**4.0**
Communicating	3	If my child misbehaved in school I would know soon afterward	4.7	0.5
Communicating	6	Talking with my child's principal makes me uncomfortable	4.1	1.0
Communicating	7	I always know how my child is doing academically in school	4.5	0.9
Communicating	17	Talking with my child's current teacher makes me uncomfortable	4.5	1.1
SubTotal			**17.8**	**2.4**
Decision Making	8	I am confused about my legal rights as a parent of a student	3.8	1.3
Decision Making	13	I have made suggestions to my childs teacher about how to help him learn	3.5	1.7
Decision Making	21	I know the laws governing schools well	3.5	1.2
Decision Making	22	I attend school board meetings regularly	3.6	1.3
SubTotal			**14.5**	**2.3**
Learning at Home	2	I display my child's schoolwork in our home	3.2	1.3
Learning at Home	5	I compliment my child for doing well in school	4.9	0.3
Learning at Home	9	I read to my child everyday	3.3	1.3
Learning at Home	18	I don't understand the assignments my child brings home	3.8	1.2
SubTotal			**15.2**	**3.1**
Parenting	4	I explain difficult ideas to my child when he doesn't understand	4.4	1.2
Parenting	14	There are many books in our house	4.8	0.4
Parenting	16	My child misses school many days each term	4.4	1.0
Parenting	19	Reading books is a regular activity in our home	4.5	0.7
SubTotal			**18.1**	**2.5**
Volunteering	1	I feel comfortable visiting my child's school	4.6	0.5
Volunteering	12	I visited my child's classroom several times in the past year	4.6	0.5
Volunteering	15	I attend activities in my child's school several times each term	4.4	1.0
Volunteering	23	I regularly volunteer at my child's school	3.2	1.2
SubTotal			**16.8**	**2.3**
TOTAL AVERAGE P.I. SCORE			**95.2**	**11.1**

The lowest score was amassed from the construct known as 'Collaborating with the Community' (see Figure 2). The range for this type of involvement was the largest of all the six types of involvement, with scores from a low of 5 to a high of 20. The average for this construct was 12.8 with a standard deviation of 4.0.
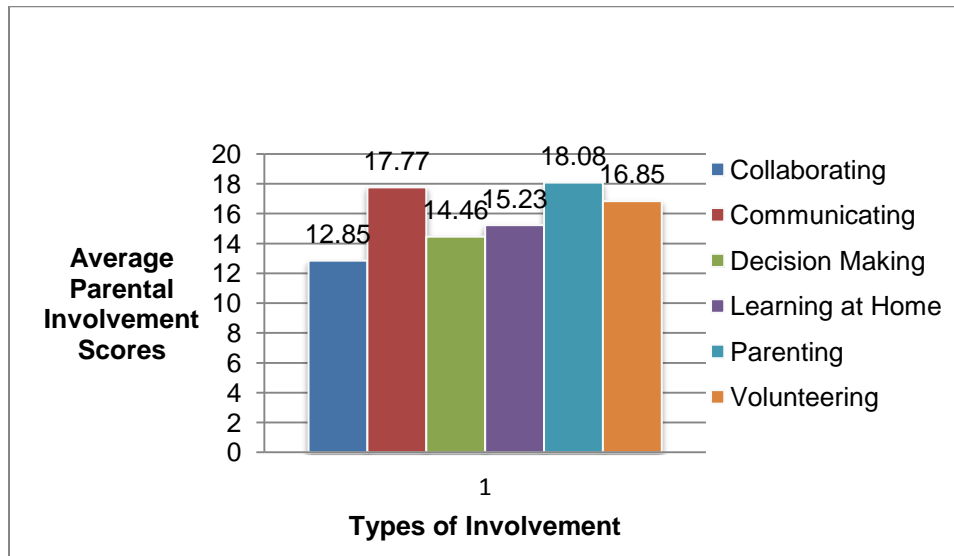
Figure 3. Average parental involvement levels in class X. This figure shows the varying levels of parental involvement according to Epstein's six types of parental involvement model.

4.3 Findings in Relation to Research Question Two

4.3.1. Correlation between Parental Involvement and Various Test Scores.

Question two sought to determine if there is any relationship between the levels of parental involvement in activities determined by Epstein (2009) as supportive of children's academic performance and these children's academic performance.

The parental involvement scores and students total test scores (mathematics and language arts combined) were prepared for analysis using Excel by plugging the data values into a series of rows and columns where each row represented a case (student) and each column a variable which in this case was parental involvement scores and students total test scores. Calculation of

the Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation (Pearson's r) between the

aforementioned variables revealed a value of (r = .352) which according to Best & Kahn (2006,

p.388) is considered a low correlation. Consequently this data when charted on a scatterplot

showed a low but positive linear relationship. Calculation of the coefficient of determination (r^2)

or the variance revealed that approximately 12% of the variance (r^2) in test scores was

attributable to parental involvement.
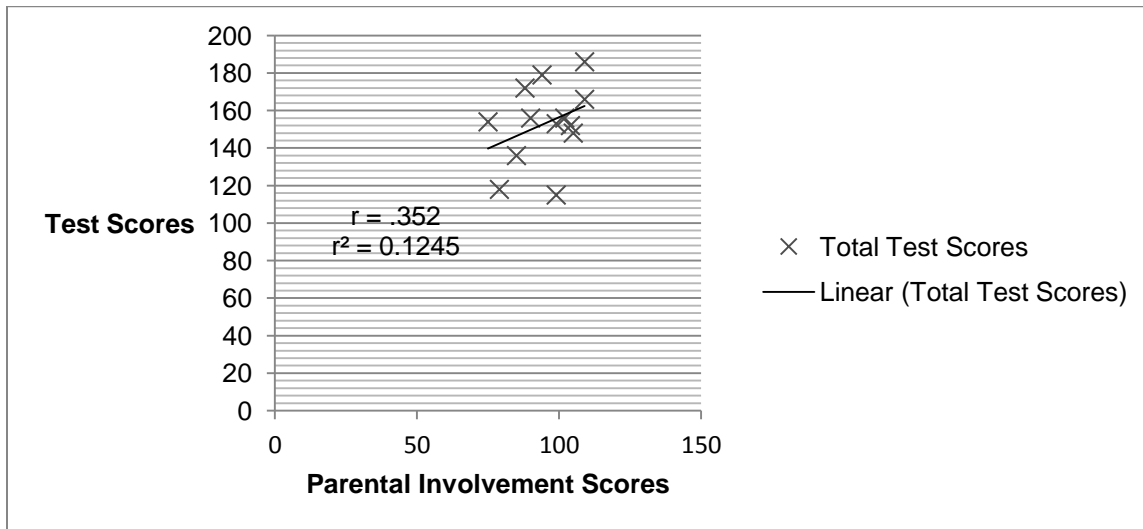
Figure 4. Correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. This figure illustrates the

relationship between parental involvement and the student achievement for students of class X.

Further analysis was performed on the data by breaking up the total test scores into its

constituents; mathematics and language arts scores. The correlation between parental

involvement and each of these subject areas was subsequently calculated and revealed striking

results.

First the relationship between parental involvement and language arts was represented by a correlation coefficient of (r = .554), which falls in the range of a moderate correlation (Best & Kahn, 2006, p.388). The linearity of this relationship was also positive but representative of an even stronger relationship (see figure 4) than was found between parental involvement and students' overall test scores. Consequently as much as 30% of the variance (r^2) among the test scores could be attributed to parental involvement.
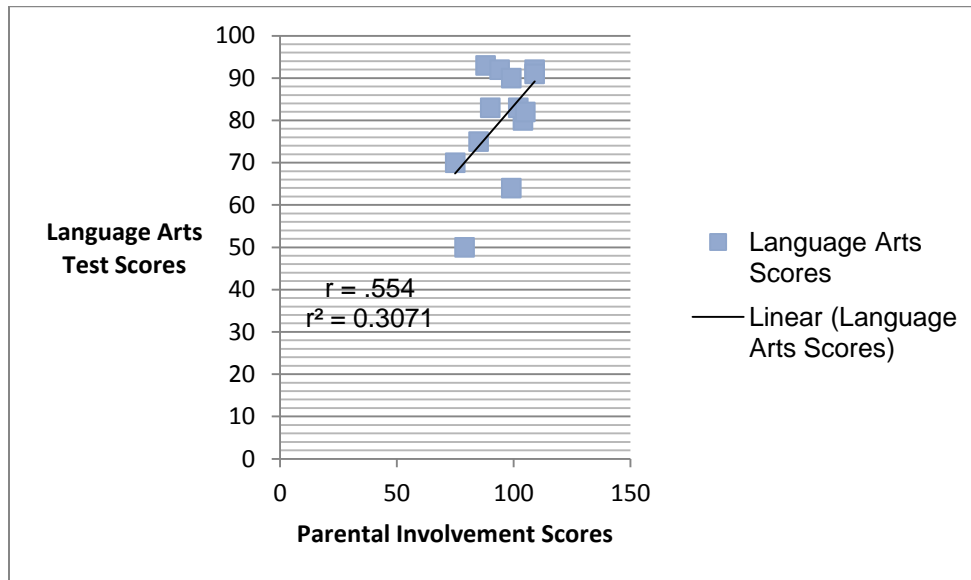
Figure 5. Correlation between Parental Involvement and Language Arts Scores. This figure illustrates the relationship between parental involvement and language arts scores for students of class X

Conversely when the correlation coefficient between parental involvement and students' mathematics test scores was calculated another picture emerged. The correlation representing the relationship between these two variables was negligible with a value of (r = .025). The linearity as depicted on the scattergram (see Figure 6.) was evidence that there was no relationship between parental involvement and students' mathematics scores. Consequently the variance

among these scores could not be explained by parental involvement and therefore must be

attributable to some other factor (s). The researcher was led to consider whether teacher quality

was a significant mediator in this relationship since the class teacher was specially qualified in

the area of mathematics teaching.
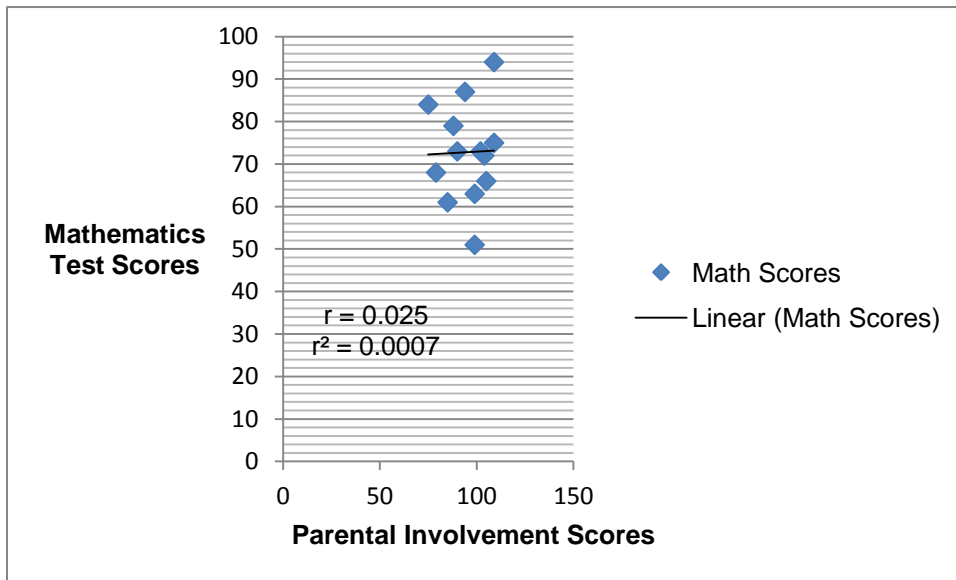
Figure 6. Correlation between Parental Involvement and Mathematics Scores. This figure illustrates the

relationship between parental involvement and mathematics scores for students of class X

4.3.2. The Multidimensionality of Parental Involvement and how it Correlates with Various Test Scores.

The effects of the multidimensionality of the variable, parental involvement, was also

investigated and the correlation between each of the six types of parental involvement according

to Epstein (2009) and students' total test scores, mathematics test scores and language arts test

scores were calculated (Table. 2) The findings were noteworthy.

Table 2 (below) shows that when the six types of parental involvement were correlated

with students' total test scores, mathematics scores and language arts scores, positive correlation

coefficients ranging from negligible (r = .00 to .20) to moderate (r = .40 to .60) in value were

reported for all except the construct known as volunteering for which negative correlation

coefficients ranging from negligible (r = .00 to .20) to low (r = .20 to .40) were recorded in

comparison with all test scores. This negative correlation indicated that for each unit increase in

parental involvement there was a proportional unit decrease in academic achievement (Best &

Kahn, 2006, p. 388).

Table 2. Correlations between the six types of parental involvement and the academic
performance of students in Class X

Variables	TTS	MS	LAS	CB	CM	DM	LH	P	V
TTS	1.00	-	-	0.357	0.338	0.178	0.419	0.195	-0.221
MS		1.00	-	0.002	0.013	0.063	0.176	0.160	-0.365
LAS			1.00	**0.582	*0.541	0.235	*0.527	0.175	-0.033

Note: N-13 students. TTS= total test scores; MS = mathematics scores;
LAS = language arts scores; CB = collaborating; CM = communicating; DM = decision
making; LH = learning at home; P = parenting; V = volunteering
** Correlation is significant at .05
 *   Correlation is significant at .10

Further examination of Table 2 also shows that the correlation between parental

involvement and total test scores varied greatly amongst the remaining five types of involvement

with the highest correlation being recorded for the construct learning at home (r=.419), which

according to Best & Kahn (2006, p. 388) is indicative of a moderate relationship and the lowest

for decision making (r=.178), a negligible correlation. Therefore according to this study activities

described as 'learning at home' accounts for 17% of the variance in the students' total test scores

whilst collaborating with the community accounts for 12% and communicating 11% .

The correlation between these five types of parental involvement and mathematics scores on the other hand showed negligible relationships across the board. Conversely the correlations between these five types of parental involvement with the exception of volunteering were exactly the opposite of the aforementioned relationships between total test scores and each individual construct.

The majority of correlations (3 out of 5) between parental involvement and language arts scores were representative of moderate relationships with values such as that of the construct collaborating with the community (r=.582) which is statistically significant at P<.05 according to the table entitled Critical Values for Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (Best & Kahn, 2006, p.482) and communicating (r=.541) and learning at home (r=.527) which were deemed statistically significant at P<.10 using the same table. The two remaining correlations represented a low and a negligible value.

Statistical significance according to Best & Kahn (2006, p.422) is simply an estimate of the probable influence of chance or sampling error in the observed coefficient of correlation. For example a correlation that is deemed statistically significant at P<.05 means that a correlation of that magnitude would have resulted from sampling error in less than 5 out 100 replications.

The highest correlation between parental involvement and language arts scores was recorded for the construct collaborating with the community (r=.582) followed closely by communicating (r=.541) and learning at home (r=.527). Once more 'learning at home' is identified as an influential correlate with the test scores and can be used to explain approximately 27% of the variance among the language arts scores whilst collaborating with the community and

communicating can be used to explain roughly 33% and 29% of the variance in language arts

scores respectively.

4.3 Findings in Relation to Research Question Three

4.3.1. Barriers to Parental Involvement in Activities that Support Children's' Academic Achievement.

When asked what were some of the things that prevented parents from being more

involved in their children's education a mere 23% felt that there were no specific barriers. For

example, Annie said "Nothing prevents me…I'm home…I work babysitting part time and when

I do work by one o'clock the child leaves so I have enough time". Mary took a similar stance

evidenced by her statement "I believe I am very involved in my child's education" and so too did

Anna who professed "I am currently pursuing my degree in Social Work. However, I make every

effort to help and be involved in their school work and activities."

The remaining (77%) of parents conceded that there were several barriers to their

involvement in their children's education ranging from activities that occur both at home and at

school. At some point even the aforementioned parents who declared upfront that there were no

barriers to their involvement alluded to some issue that prevents their involvement at times.

The greatest barrier as perceived by the respondents was a lack of information. A

mammoth 85% of parents were not aware of certain initiatives or facilities available at the school

(see Appendix I). Though the question was asked in terms of how the school utilizes resources

from the community to strengthen family practices (health, recreation, parenting etc.) it became

evident that there is also a lack of concrete information being conveyed to parents with the

exception however being children who are specifically referred for certain services as with Joan

or Denise (see Appendix J). One parent openly admitted this when she said "I don't get enough information from the school". Whether it was concerning tips on parenting, the availability of a school counselor to assist parents with issues, features of upcoming meetings there was almost a unanimous consensus regarding the quantity of information being received from the school. Some parents went as far to say "well I know there are different methods for children to use when they are studying and I think information like this would be useful because to get her attention for this SEA wasn't easy" and "issues such as bullying and others that arise should be discussed with parents so that ways and means can be developed to deal with some of these problems". The aforementioned is confirmation that parents need more than just report cards at the end of every term to maximize their involvement with their children's education.

This revelation, lack of information, goes hand in hand with the alleged lack of communication or more specifically face to face communication with teachers; the second largest barrier (54%) perceived by parents to be a hindrance to their parental involvement in their children's education. Parents were interested in accessing teachers via a parents day for face to face communication for example Sandy said, "I don't think they have 'Parent's Day' but maybe if they have a parent day once a month so you know parents can at least see for the month like what it is the child did…I want the teacher's point of view….not what I see but I want the teacher to tell me well you know Shari (pseudonym) is doing this or she's not doing this properly if she could get help in that or this I would know the areas which she is weak in" (see Appendix K). Mary conceded by saying "teachers need to meet with parents more" as did Anna who believes that "teachers should communicate with the parents in the area of homework…especially with the projects" and Nelly who lamented that there was a need to "have more meetings about students with parents". Chrissy also sounded the alarm for more face to

face communication when she said "someone should always be available to speak with you when you visit".

A fairly large percentage of the sample (46%) cited "work" as a barrier too their involvement whether it was as a result of long hours, long distances or a shift system. Sandy expounded, "where I work is in Port of Spain, right and my hours of work…when I leave work sometimes I come down and it's about five o'clock when I reach home" and Pauline stated, "I am an estate constable and I work long hours and sometimes even shifts". Erin also acknowledged "I work as a security officer in Port of Spain and the traffic as well as the hours keep me from reaching home early" whilst Chrissy maintained that her job was a barrier when she said **"**I am a nurse and work a two shift system so many evenings I am not at home to assist her with school work" (see Appendix L). Similarly, Tara also indicated that work was a barrier to her parental involvement.

The subsequent barrier, physiological reasons (30%) stems from the home as did the previous. More specifically, from the entire sample, parents cited fatigue (23%), age (7%) and ailing health (7%) as the physiological impediments to their parental involvement. Joan a grandparent/guardian said "I am a grandparent right and there are times when they come home and I am just not into it. I am tired or you know, not feeling too well". Bajnath another grandparent/guardian agrees "I am as involved as I could be at 73 years". Erin like Joan also cites fatigue as a barrier; she says "I am an estate constable and I work long hours and sometimes even shifts" in addition to Sandra who says "sometimes I am so tired".
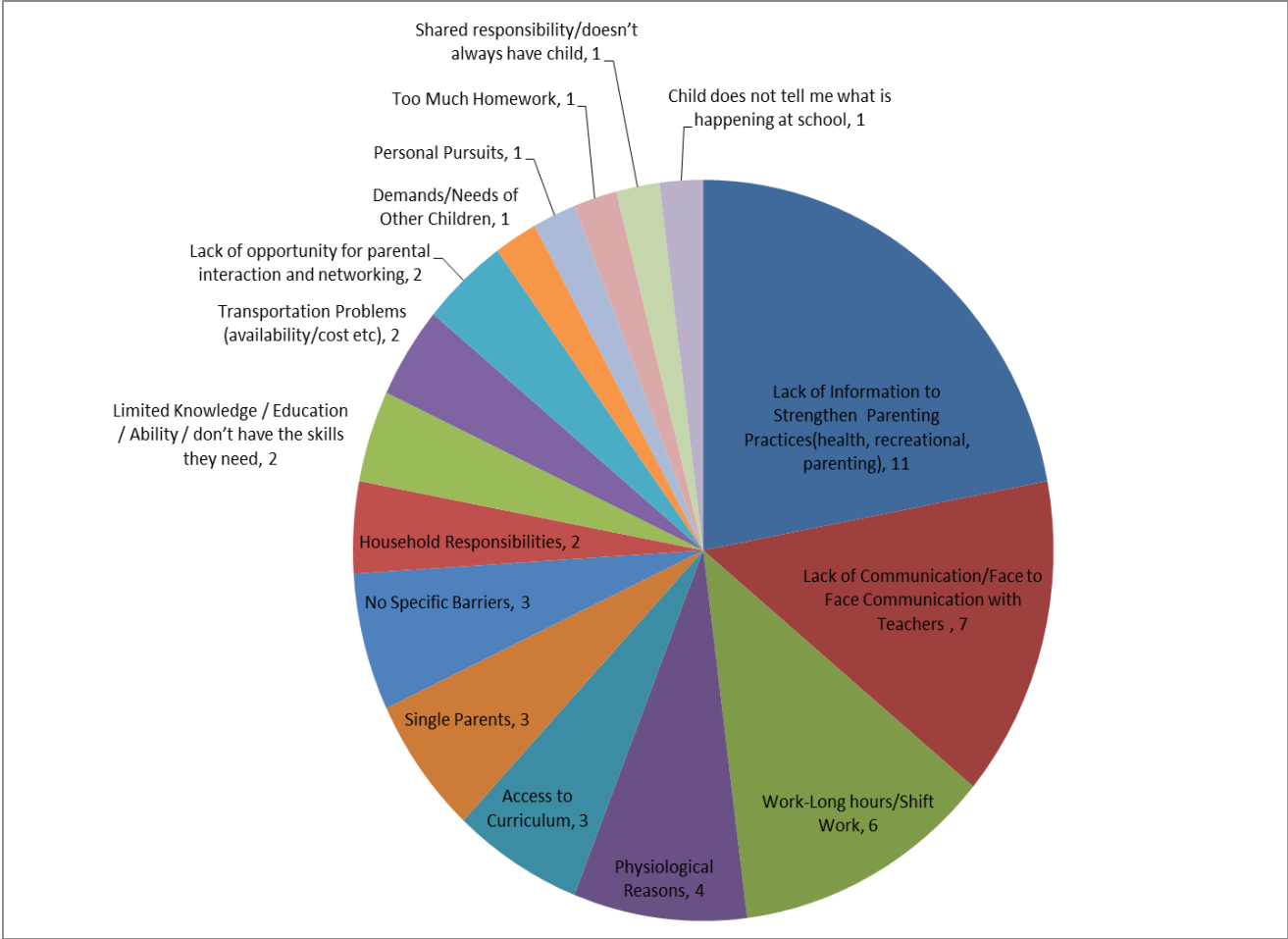
Figure 7 Barriers to Parental Involvement. This figure illustrates the frequency of the perceived barriers to parental involvement as reported by parents in this study.

A lack of access to the curriculum and single parenthood shared the same status with each being reported as a barrier by 23% of parents (see figure 7 above). These parents were interested in securing access to the curriculum for the purpose of working ahead during the vacation or just keeping abreast of changes that may occur from time to time.

Fifteen (15%) of parents named household responsibilities, limited knowledge/education, lack of opportunity for parental interaction/networking and transportation as obstacles whilst a

further (7%) identified demands of other children, personal pursuits, excess homework, shared

responsibility/does not have the child every weekend and child not telling the parent everything

that happens at school as impediments to their involvement.

When corroboration was sought by comparison of the data collected from parents and

that of administration and the class teacher it became obvious that for the most part parents were

responding with truthful responses. The only concern that arose came from the responses to the

PASS which were designed to capture and quantify parental involvement, since in some cases

parents who reported several barriers to parental involvement also reported high levels of

parental involvement.

4.4   Summary

There were several interesting findings that emerged from this study.

- Parental involvement was generally reported to be high or of an acceptable level, even in
  instances where parents reported several barriers to their involvement.

- Parents/guardians who reported lower levels of involvement did not belong to any
  established criteria.

- Generally, parental involvement scores were paralleled by students test scores.

- In some instances where parental involvement was reported to be high students
  corresponding test scores were lower.

- Conversely in other instances where parental involvement was reported as low students
  corresponding test scores were higher.

- There was a low but positive correlation (r = .352) between parental involvement and students aggregate test scores.

- There was a moderate positive correlation (r = .554) between parental involvement and students language arts scores.

- There was no correlation (r = .025) between parental involvement and students mathematics scores.

- The correlation between students test scores and the six types of parental involvement according to Epstein (2009) realized various positive correlation coefficients ranging from negligible to moderate except in the case of 'volunteering' for which negative correlation coefficients ranging from negligible to low were recorded in comparison with all test scores.

- Whilst learning at home was most positively correlated with students' total test scores (r = .352); collaborating with the community (r =.582) and communication (r = .541) revealed slightly stronger positive correlation coefficients when correlated with language arts.

- Parents reported several barriers to their involvement in their children's education both at home and school with a lack of information and communication being the most unanimous followed by work commitments among other less prevalent but nonetheless important impediments.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The findings that emerged from the study were compared and contrasted in light of the literature that was used to ground the study. Following is the discussion that resulted.

5.2 Overall Parental Involvement Levels

In this study parental involvement levels were directly inferred on the basis of the total scores returned on each PASS instrument. The result indicated mostly favourable levels of parental involvement from all participants in their children's education. With approximately 69 % reporting involvement scores in specific activities that translate to parents being very involved in their children's education and the remaining 30% reporting involvement scores levels that translate to parents being somewhat more than fairly involved in their children's education. Whilst this was a small scale study it is interesting that the findings of the Parental Involvement in Children's Education Survey (Research Report DCSF-RR034) conducted in 2007 by the DCSF, a large scale research, reported fairly similar results with a total of 92% of parents' surveyed saying that they felt at the least fairly involved in their children's education. It is important to note that this figure has grown from 86% in 2001 and 89% in 2003 thereby implying that the possibility exists that this figure may be even more than 92% at present.

Conversely, whilst in this study parents/guardians who reported lower levels of involvement did not display characteristics suggestive of any particular stereotype but were less involved as a result of a combination of factors, the DCSF survey found that lone parents

(whether single, separated or divorced) were less likely to feel very involved. Additionally, the DCSF survey found that these parents were less likely to be working, were in lower socioeconomic standing and were apt to have left full time education an earlier age. On the contrary, this study found that this is not the case since 100% of the lone parents (all mothers) in this survey were employed full time and 50% reported high levels of parental involvement. Furthermore only 50% were in a substantially lower income bracket with the remaining 50% gaining as much as or more than their married counterparts in some cases. Moreover only 25% of lone parents' left formal education at an early age whilst 25% completed secondary education and the remaining 50% completed a technical level of education. These results suggest that lone parenting was not a mediating factor in this study nor was it a stereotype for low parental involvement. However it was apparent in this study that most mothers (lone parents or not) are actually becoming increasingly educated but that this may be in order to seek employment simply to make ends meet or better their standards of living in these economically challenging times. This translates into mothers, the household figure traditionally responsible for parental involvement, having less time to be involved in all aspects of their children's education a view also held by Swap (1997).

The issue of high levels of parental involvement being associated with lower corresponding test scores in this study was also documented by Watkins (1997). In his study which surveyed one parent of 303 children from grades 2-5 he found that some parents were most likely to become involved when their children displayed low academic achievement (Watkins, 1997, p.7). He stated that the parents indicated that they helped their children more when they were struggling with schoolwork (p.9). The reverse was also substantiated in this study, where it was found that parents of students who are higher achievers did not think it

necessary to help their children as much as parents of lower achieving children do (p.7).

Therefore Watkins (1997) concluded in his study that child achievement can be a predictor of

parent involvement and not the reverse (p. 12). These findings add credence to the results of this

study which reflected a similar pattern in some cases. However, caution must be taken when

interpreting these findings since the issue of social desirability bias must be considered

especially since the administrator and class teacher perceived much lower levels of parental

involvement both generally (school wide) and specifically for this class (see Appendix M & N).

5.3 Correlations between Parental Involvement and Various Test Scores

The study established that the coefficient correlation between parental involvement as a

holistic score and students aggregate test scores was (r = .353). This finding is consistent with

previous studies (Fan & Chen, 1999; Topor et al, 2010). Fan & Chen (1999) posit that the

magnitude of the correlation reflects a medium size effect in social sciences. They cite the

guidelines of Cohen (1998, Chapter 3) to justify their claim. According to Cohen (1998, Chapter

3 cited in Fan & Chen, 1999, p.13) "a small effect: r = .10, medium effect: r = .30 and large

effect: r = .50". Fan & Chen (1999) suggest that based on (Stevens, 1990, Chapter 3) a medium

effect size is typical of a noticeable effect and therefore should be regarded as significant.

This positive trend continued with the correlation coefficient between parental

involvement and language arts test scores. According to the preceding guidelines a large effect

was reported (r = .554). Conversely when parental involvement was correlated with students'

mathematics scores the exact opposite was found (r = 0.026). This finding contradicts that of

other researchers such as Olatoye and Agbatogun (2009) who in their study found a correlation

coefficient of (r = .402), a medium effect which indicates that parental involvement accounts for 16% of the variance in mathematics achievement of primary school pupils. It is evident from this study that there are factors that may be contributing to students' mathematics achievement other than parental involvement. Darling-Hammond (2000) posits that well qualified teachers (those with full certification and a major in a specific field/subject) were "the most consistent highly significant predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics (r between .61 and .80, p <.001)". This may be a plausible explanation for the outcomes in this study since as aforementioned the class teacher was specially qualified in mathematics teaching and therefore this could have been a large contributing factor in students' mathematics achievement. However this claim warrants further research. This finding by Darling-Hammond (2000) may also help to explain the larger correlation between parental involvement and students' language arts scores since Language Arts teaching may not be a forte of this teacher.

5.4 The Multidimensionality of Parental Involvement and how it Correlates with Various Test Scores

As was found by other researchers (Fan & Chen, 1999) there were varying but positive correlation values between students tests scores (aggregate, mathematics and language arts) and most types of parental involvement with the exception of volunteering; which yielded negative correlations across the board. This finding can be explained by Okpala, Okpala & Smith (2001) who in their study found that the correlation between parental volunteer hours and mathematics achievement scores were negligible with a value of (r = .004). They posit that the reason for this finding may rest in the nature or kind of volunteering that occurred in the schools. In this study it was evident that the kind of volunteering (monetary or other contributions to fund raising

ventures) may not be the kind that is found to have any impact on academic achievement. Furthermore the researcher was led to consider that the few parents who do volunteer their time may very well be parents who are unemployed, of a lower educational level and lower socioeconomic level which may have several other implications for student performance hence the negative correlation.

The highest correlation between students various test scores and the types of parental involvement originated from the construct learning at home, except in the case of language arts for which collaborating with the community and communicating yielded slightly stronger positive correlations. Nevertheless, the literature confirms the importance of learning at home according to Desimone (1999) cited in Okpala, Okpala & Smith (2001) who reported that 'the most important school related activities were those that occur in the home'.

That finding is also corroborated by the results of the EPPE study where researchers found that the learning environment created at home is of greater significance for the intellectual, social and behavioural development of a child when compared to parents' occupational or socioeconomic status. They posit that undertaking of simple activities such as teaching songs and nursery rhymes, playing with letters and numbers, drawing and painting, visiting the library and creating regular play dates with friends amongst others with preschool children is equated with positive outcomes in all the aforementioned domains. This finding suggests that parents of a lower educational status can and do have a great positive impact on their children's educational performance.

Henderson & Mapp (2002) in their review of numerous studies also found that there were many positive academic, social and behavioural outcomes in students with involved parents

regardless of their income or background further supporting the claim that parents can positively influence their children's success regardless of their background. This assertion was sustained in yet another study which claims that "Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers" (Every Child Matters, 2003).

The issue of communicating and collaborating with the community being slightly more significant correlates to students' language arts achievement than learning at home has led the researcher to consider if social capital as a type of parental involvement was a contributor in this subject area. Research conducted in this regard is considered useful since it may bring light to the value of social capital an area of increasing popularity within the educational arena (Yan & Lin, 2005).

5.5 Barriers to Parental Involvement

The most profound barriers to parental involvement that emerged from this study originated first and foremost from the school, these were a lack of information and communication. This was corroborated by Epstein (1987) cited in (Deplanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007) who stated that "large numbers of parents are excluded from the most common forms of communication with their children's school". She concluded that more than one third of American parents did not conference with their children's teacher during the school year; more than half never spoke with a teacher via telephone and most reported that they have never been in deep or frequent discussions with teachers about their children's progress or school program. Work commitments, a barrier that originates from the home came in thereafter. Evidence

supports this finding that parents' working hours is indeed a common barrier to parental

involvement (Bauch, 1993 cited in Peña, 2000; Swap, 1997).

Several other barriers that were less prevalent but nonetheless important impediments to

parental involvement were also reported. Despite the nature of the barriers, evidence in the

literature supports the need for the inclusion and involvement of parents in various roles and

areas as partners in their children's education (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Herman & Yeh, 1983 as

cited in Peña, 2000). Researchers posit that children's educational success or failure depends

largely on parental interest and support (Berger, 1995 cited in Pena, 2000). Furthermore, several

researchers propose that well implemented school-community practices yield positive results for

the students (Epstein, 1996; Henderson, 1981, 1987; Muller, 1993), the school (Dwyer & Hecht,

1992; Epstein, 1987; Smreker, 1992; Wong, 1994) in addition to the parents (Berger, 1995;

Epstein, 1986) as cited in Peña (2000).

5.6 Conclusion

In this study, parental involvement has been proven to have a positive effect on student

achievement regardless of parental background. Administrators and teachers need to be

cognizant of this fact. They need to help parents to recognize that despite their socioeconomic

level, educational or occupational status they have the potential to help their children achieve

their full potential to some degree by spending time engaged in activities that are known to result

in increased educational outcomes.

It is postulated that to be actively involved, families need more information and guidance

from schools; however efforts by the school have not been well organized (Chavkin, 1989;

Epstein, 1992 cited in Peña, 2000). This can be confirmed by the negative association between

volunteering and students' scores; one indicator that the school has failed to create meaningful ways for parents to volunteer. Epstein (2009) suggested a parental involvement model that recognizes school, family and community as overlapping spheres of influence in the life of a child and advocates six types of parental involvement across these spheres.

The assertion that schools are in a strategic position to assist in this regard ultimately places the onus on administrators and teachers to actively explore how they can partner with the community to help parents play a more active role in their children's education, both in and out of school; thereby eliminating barriers to parental involvement in the lives of their charges.

5.7 Recommendations, Implications for Policy and Further Research

This study has highlighted several findings that have important implications for policy and further research. Whilst it is recognized that the current administrator has been making concerted efforts to increase parental involvement (see Appendix M & N) adopting a more systematic approach that includes all spheres of influence (parent, school, community) may be required. The following recommendations are proposed to assist the administrator and teachers in their efforts to maximize parental involvement in their schools.

Recognize that All Parents are Involved and Want the Best for their Children.

The first step to increasing parental involvement is for administrators and teachers to recognize based on the findings in this study, that contrary to popular belief, all parents are involved in their children's education (though some in more meaningful ways than others) and want their child to perform at their optimal level. However, some parents lack the skills

necessary to do so. The postulation that parental involvement regardless of background is a significant contributor to this end has been proven in this study and therefore must be effectively communicated to parents. Parents must therefore be made aware of their potential to make a difference by the little things that they do. These findings can initially be communicated in a parent teacher meeting and form the impetus for formation of a school based committee (principal, teachers from each level, parents from each level) charged with the task of conducting further research to facilitate development and execution of a school parental involvement policy.

Develop a School Parental Involvement Policy which Embraces a Partnership Philosophy.

The school via the school based committee should work in tandem with parents and community groups to formulate a policy to guide parental involvement efforts. Section 1118 of the U.S. Department of Education's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is a comprehensive document that can be used to aid in development of such a policy. It must be noted that though this particular policy may be helpful it does not address working with the community.

The school policy should first and foremost address the development of a formal definition of parental involvement so as to avoid any ambiguity involving the term. Additionally, this policy should include a comprehensive outline of the responsibility of each entity in relation to the kind of information required from and support and services available to each other. However, it is imperative that a needs assessment precede development of this policy to ascertain the current requirements of the parent/student body.

Establish Strong Connections between the School and Community.

By partnering with community groups, schools automatically expand their resource base (human and financial). They increase their capacity to provide improved facilities, access more financial resources, offer enhanced academic and extra-curricular activities; introduce social and health services and even offer after school programmes. For example, this school can work with companies, non-governmental organizations, churches and other youth empowerment groups to provide much needed amenities such as:

- Literacy programs during evenings, weekends or vacation periods for both parents and students to increase their reading and writing ability.

- A series of parenting workshops to enlighten parents of simple yet effective practices that contributes significantly to positive educational, social and behavioural outcomes.

- Technology and study skills workshops for both parents and students.

- Establishment of an after school homework center

- Offer after school programmes (e.g. sporting, music, arts) to all students. This type of programme will also gainfully occupy children of single working parents.

- Enlist the help of community church workers to make house calls and make personal contact with all families on a regular basis especially those who don't attend schools regularly.

- Career and health fairs (physical, mental and emotional) and seminars.

- Provide professional training for parents to be members on various boards and committees of the school and lobby for better schools.

- Provide frequent opportunity in both formal and informal setting for parents, school staff and community workers to interact thereby increasing parents' social capital and enabling

them to form meaningful connections with significant and influential members of their

community.

These amenities will address several of the barriers reported in this study such as lack of

information, low parental education levels and lack of opportunity for interaction with other

parents and others.

Increase the Quality and Quantity of Teacher-Parent Communication.

Since a lack of communication with the school was a concern of many parents in this

study much attention should be paid to addressing this issue in the parental involvement policy in

terms of making mandatory such things as an annual parents day at the beginning of each term

and weekly time slots (e.g. Friday afternoons) during which parents can make appointments to

conference with respective teachers concerning their child. This type of activity would enable

offer parents a much coveted opportunity to interact meaningfully with teachers about their

children's performance.

Professional Development for Teachers-Develop the Capability of School Staff to
Work with Families.

Moles (1993) cited in (Peña, 2000) stated that "both educators and disadvantaged parents

suffer from limited skills and knowledge for interacting effectively". Consequently the

administrator and teachers should also be formally training in effective communication practices

so as to eliminate a lack of communication skills as an impediment to parental involvement. This

type of training can also help teachers decide which method of communication is best suited for

each parent since they must consider that not all parents are of the same culture, background or

home situation. Additionally communication skills would help teachers to build collaborative

relationships with parents since effective communication can help parents feel more welcome

and thereby feel more confident amount coming to the school to ask questions or for help in dealing with their children.

It is important to note that increasing parental involvement in today's society is an ambitious feat; it is one that requires systematic, consistent and creative approaches and long term dedication from all stakeholders in order to achieve success, which most likely will not materialize overnight. Additionally, this policy would be specific to the needs of the school and therefore requires extensive consultation with parents and other stakeholders. The policy should also be reviewed annually to ensure that it is in keeping with the needs of the school and parent body as they change from time to time.

Further Research.

These findings were based on a small scale case study of one class in a primary school therefore the researcher deems it necessary to conduct more extensive research to better evaluate the impact of parental involvement on student performance.

Additionally case studies can be done on high performing schools to determine what kind of parental involvement practices they utilize and how they implement it.

The evidence suggested that 'Learning at Home' was the single most influential type of parental involvement therefore research regarding what types of at home practices are found to be most effective in increasing student performance should be carried out.

Further research is also suggested in the area of teacher quality and student achievement with emphasis on specific subject areas to determine if this is a mediating factor that has the power to supersede the influence of parental involvement and under what circumstances.

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Appendices
Appendix A

Section 1118 of the U.S. Department Of Education

A-Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

(Parental Involvement)

(a) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY POLICY-

(1) IN GENERAL- A local educational agency may receive funds under this part only if such agency implements programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents in programs assisted under this part consistent with this section. Such programs, activities, and procedures shall be planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.

(2) WRITTEN POLICY- Each local educational agency that receives funds under this part shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy. The policy shall be incorporated into the local educational agency's plan developed under section 1112, establish the agency's expectations for parent involvement, and describe how the agency will —

(A) involve parents in the joint development of the plan under section 1112, and the process of school review and improvement under section 1116;

(B) provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing

effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic

achievement and school performance;

(C) build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental

involvement as described in subsection (e);

(D) coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under this

part with parental involvement strategies under other programs, such as

the Head Start program, Reading First program, Early Reading First

program, Even Start program, Parents as Teachers program, and Home

Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and State-run preschool

programs;

(E) conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the

content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving

the academic quality of the schools served under this part, including

identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities

authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are

economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English

proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority

background), and use the findings of such evaluation to design strategies

for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, the

parental involvement policies described in this section; and

(F) involve parents in the activities of the schools served under this part.

(3) RESERVATION-

(A) IN GENERAL- Each local educational agency shall reserve not less than 1 percent of such agency's allocation under subpart 2 of this part to carry out this section, including promoting family literacy and parenting skills, except that this paragraph shall not apply if 1 percent of such agency's allocation under subpart 2 of this part for the fiscal year for which the determination is made is $5,000 or less.

(B) PARENTAL INPUT- Parents of children receiving services under this part shall be involved in the decisions regarding how funds reserved under subparagraph (A) are allotted for parental involvement activities.

(C) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS- Not less than 95 percent of the funds reserved under subparagraph (A) shall be distributed to schools served under this part.

(b) SCHOOL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY-

(1) IN GENERAL- Each school served under this part shall jointly develop with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parental involvement policy, agreed on by such parents, that shall describe the means for carrying out the requirements of subsections (c) through (f). Parents shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language the parents can understand. Such policy shall be made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.

(2) SPECIAL RULE- If the school has a parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, such school may amend that policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of this subsection.

(3) AMENDMENT- If the local educational agency involved has a school district-level parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, such agency may amend that policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of this subsection.

(4) PARENTAL COMMENTS- If the plan under section 1112 is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children; the local educational agency shall submit any parent comments with such plan when such local educational agency submits the plan to the State.

(c) POLICY INVOLVEMENT- Each school served under this part shall —

(1) convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school's participation under this part and to explain the requirements of this part, and the right of the parents to be involved;

(2) offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and may provide, with funds provided under this part, transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement;

(3) involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs under this part, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the schoolwide program plan under section 1114(b)(2), except that if a school has in place a process for involving parents in the joint planning

and design of the school's programs, the school may use that process, if such

process includes an adequate representation of parents of participating children;

(4) provide parents of participating children —

      (A) timely information about programs under this part;

      (B) a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school,

      the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and

      the proficiency levels students are expected to meet; and

      (C) if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate

      suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the

      education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as

      practicably possible; and

(5) if the schoolwide program plan under section 1114(b)(2) is not satisfactory to

the parents of participating children, submit any parent comments on the plan

when the school makes the plan available to the local educational agency.

(d) SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT- As a component of the school-level parental involvement policy

developed under subsection (b), each school served under this part shall jointly develop

with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact that outlines

how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for

improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents

will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards.

Such compact shall —

(1) describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the State's student academic achievement standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time; and

(2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum —

> (A) parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement;

> (B) frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; and

> (C) reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities.

(e) BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT- To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, each school and local educational agency assisted under this part —

> (1) shall provide assistance to parents of children served by the school or local educational agency, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the State's academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards,

State and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children;

(2) shall provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement;

(3) shall educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school;

(4) shall, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;

(5) shall ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;

(6) may involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training;

(7) may provide necessary literacy training from funds received under this part if the local educational agency has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for such training;

(8) may pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;

(9) may train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;

(10) may arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation;

(11) may adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement;

(12) may establish a districtwide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section;

(13) may develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities; and

(14) shall provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under this section as parents may request.

(f) ACCESSIBILITY– In carrying out the parental involvement requirements of this part, local educational agencies and schools, to the extent practicable, shall provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and

school reports required under section 1111 in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand.

(g) INFORMATION FROM PARENTAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCE CENTERS- In a State where a parental information and resource center is established to provide training, information, and support to parents and individuals who work with local parents, local educational agencies, and schools receiving assistance under this part, each local educational agency or school that receives assistance under this part and is located in the State shall assist parents and parental organizations by informing such parents and organizations of the existence and purpose of such centers.

(h) REVIEW- The State educational agency shall review the local educational agency's parental involvement policies and practices to determine if the policies and practices meet the requirements of this section.

Appendix B

B-Table Showing the Distribution of Teachers at School X by Gender, Class and Professional Qualifications

Teacher ID	Gender	Class Level	Professional Qualifications
1	Female	Principal	Bachelors in Education
2	Female	Infant I	Teachers' Diploma
3	Female	Infant 1	Teachers' Diploma
4	Female	Infant II	Bachelors in Education
5	Male	Infant II	Bachelors in Education**
6	Female	Standard One	Teachers' Diploma *
7	Female	Standard One	Bachelors in Education
8	Male	Standard Two	Teachers' Diploma
9	Female	Standard Two	Teachers' Diploma *
10	Female	Standard Three	Bachelors in Education
11	Male	Standard Three	Bachelors in Education
12	Female	Standard Four	Bachelors in Education
13	Female	Standard Four	Bachelors in Education**
14	Female	Standard Five	Bachelors in Education**
15	Male	Standard Five	Bachelors in Education

N.B. Those marked with * are currently pursuing their Bachelor's Degree in Education.

Those marked with ** are specialized in specific subject areas.

Appendix C

C-Table Showing Sample Demographics

Table Showing Sample Demographics N=13			
	Categories	**Number**	**Percentage**
Age:			
	20-29	1	7.7%
	30-39	6	46.2%
	40-49	4	30.8%
	50-59	1	7.7%
	Over 60	1	7.7%
Gender:			
	Male	1	7.7%
	Female	12	92.3%
Ethnicity:			
	East Indian	7	53.8%
	African	2	15.4%
	East Indian & African	2	15.4%
	East Indian, African & Carib	2	15.4%
Marital Status:			
	Married	7	53.8%
	Common Law	2	15.4%
	Single	1	7.7%
	Separated	2	15.4%
	Divorced	1	7.7%
Parental Status:			
	Parent	11	84.6%
	Guardian	2	15.4%
Parental Education Level:			
	Primary	3	23.1%
	Secondary	8	61.5%
	Technical/Associate	2	15.4%
	Bachelor's Degree	0	0.0%
Monthly Family Income:			
	less than 3000	1	7.7%
	3001-4000	3	23.1%
	4001-5000	1	7.7%
	5001-6000	1	7.7%
	6001-7000	2	15.4%
	7001-8000	0	0.0%
	8001-9000	1	7.7%
	9001-10,000	2	15.4%
	Over 10,000	2	15.4%
No. of Children Under 18 in Household			
	1	2	15.4%
	2	7	53.8%
	3	1	7.7%
	4	3	23.1%

Appendix D

D-Parents And School Survey (Primary)

Questionnaire ID: _____   **Date:** _____

Part A- Demographics (Bio-Data)

Factors such as parental educational attainment and socioeconomic level have been identified by researchers as factors that impact on student achievement, hence the need to collect data on these factors. It is most helpful if you answer all questions honestly and accurately. Your responses will remain highly confidential.

This information will assist the school in planning activities and programs that are as helpful to parents as possible.

Please check the answer that best describes you or your current situation.

Q1. Gender: Male ___   Female ___

Q2. Age: Under 20 ___ 20-29 ___ 30-39 ___ 40-49 ___ 50-59___

Q3. Marital Status: Married ___ Common Law ___ Separated ___ Divorced ___ Widowed ___

Single ___

Q4. Ethnicity: African ___ East Indian ___ Chinese ___ Mixed (please specify) _____

Other (please specify) _____

Q5. Employment Status: Employed Full Time ___ Employed Part Time ___   Self Employed___

Unemployed ___ Retired ___

Q6. Occupation: _____

Q7. What is your level of Education? (Please check the highest level you attained from the choices below)

Primary _____	Bachelor's Degree ___
Secondary _____	Master's Degree _____
Technical/Vocational _____	Doctoral Degree _____
Associate Degree _____	Other (please specify) _____

Q8. What is your average monthly income?

Less than 3000 ___	7001-8000 ___
3001 – 4000 ___	8001 – 9000 ___
4001 – 5000 ___	9001 – 10,000 ___
5001 – 6000 ___	Over 10,000 ___
6001 – 7000 ___	

NB. If you are a single parent please go to Question 12

Q9.What is the occupation of your spouse/partner? _____

Q10. What is your spouse's/partner's level of Formal Education? (Please check the highest level you attained from the choices below)

Primary _____	Bachelor's Degree ___
Secondary _____	Master's Degree _____
Technical/Vocational _____	Doctoral Degree _____
Associate Degree _____	Other (please specify) _____
Don't Know ___	

Q11. What is your spouse's/partner's average monthly income?

Less than 3000 ___   7001-8000 ___

3001 – 4000 ___   8001 – 9000 ___

4001 – 5000 ___   9001 – 10,000 ___

5001 – 6000 ___   Over 10,000 ___

6001 – 7000 ___

Q12. What is your total family income? _____

Q13. How many children under the age of eighteen live in your household? (Fill in the details for each)

    1 ____ Age ____Class _____   2 ___ Age ___ Class ____

    3 ____ Age ____ Class _____   4 ___ Age ___ Class ____

    5 ____ Age ____ Class _____   6 ___ Age ___ Class ____

Part B- Parents and School Survey

Below are several statements followed by a range of answers, please read them carefully and check the answer that best describes how much you agree with the statement.

It is most helpful if you answer honestly and accurately. Your responses will remain highly confidential.

This information will assist the school in planning activities and programs that are as helpful to parents as possible.

		Strongly Agree	*Agree*	*Partially Agree Partially Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*
1	I feel very comfortable visiting my child's school.					
2	My child's schoolwork is always displayed in our home (e.g. on the refrigerator)					
3	If my child misbehaved at school, I would know about it soon afterward.					
4	I frequently explain difficult ideas to my child when he/she doesn't understand.					
5	Every time my child does something well at school I compliment him/her.					
6	Talking with my child's principal makes me **un**comfortable.					
7	I always know how well my child is doing in school.					
8	I am **confused** about my legal rights as a parent of a student.					
9	I read to/with my child every day.					
10	I talk with other parents frequently about educational issues.					
11	My child attends community programs (e.g. sport camps/ community pool/recreation grounds) regularly.					

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12	I have visited my child's classroom several times in the past year.					
13	I have made suggestions to my child's teachers about how to help my child learn.					
14	There are many children's books in our house.					
15	In the past 12 months I have attended activities at my child's school several times (Christmas concert, Sport's Day etc)					
16	My child stays away from school several days each term.					
17	Talking with my child's teacher makes me somewhat **un**comfortable.					
18	I don't understand the assignments my child brings home.					
19	Reading books is a regular activity in our home.					
20	If my child was having trouble in school I would not know how to get extra help for him/her.					
21	I know the laws governing schools well					
22	In the past 12 months I attended several PTA meetings.					
23	In the past 12 months I volunteered at my child's school at least three times.					
24	I know about many programs for youth in my community.					

Part C (Open ended questions)

Q1. Do you ever want to be more involved in your child's education but for some reason you cannot be?

_____

Q2. What are some of the things that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at home?

_____

_____

_____

Q3. What about at school? Are there any factors that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at school?

_____

_____

_____

Q4. What opportunities exist at the school for parents to be involved in decision making?

_____

_____

_____

Q5. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen school programs? (sports etc)

_____

_____

_____

Q6. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen family practices? (information on health, recreational activities, parenting etc)

_____

_____

_____

Q7. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen student learning and development? (volunteer tutors, counseling services)

_____

_____

_____

Q8. What do you think can be done at the school to help parents become more involved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q9. Do you think a parental involvement programme at the school would be of benefit to you as a parent?

_____

If yes, what kind of information, assistance, opportunities would you like to see available to parents in this programme?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please feel free to share any additional comments/suggestions/concerns…

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix E

E-Permission to Use the PASS Survey

From: **Matthew Ringenberg** (matthew.ringenberg@valpo.edu)
Sent: Sunday, March 03, 2013 7:18:37 PM
To: Sharlene Dookie (sharlenestcy@hotmail.com)

Hello Sharlene

Permission granted. I wish you the best in your research. I only ask that you send me a note informing me how it went.

Matt Ringenberg

On Fri, Mar 1, 2013 at 5:09 PM, Sharlene Dookie <sharlenestcy@hotmail.com> wrote:
Dear Mr. Ringenberg,

My name is Sharlene Dookie, I am a post graduate student of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad, West Indies.

I am currently engaged in preparing my research proposal in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Education Degree.

My topic is entitled "An Evaluation of the Levels of Parental Involvement in Activities at Home and School the Support Children's Learning and How it Impacts on Academic Achievement".

In an effort to measure parental involvement I developed an instrument using Epstein's Six Types Framework as a guide. After much discussion with my Supervisor it was decided that I should use an instrument for which validity and reliability was established given the time frame for the thesis to be completed (due date May 31st) and my resultant inabilty to establish same given the time.

Consequently, I came upon your article entitled "The Test-Retest Reliabilty of the (PASS)" and the attached survey which I forwarded to my supervisor for review. She advised that since the instrument was developed using the framework that my thesis was grounded in, I should seek permission to use it to carry out my study.

Therefore I am humbly seeking your permission to use a gently modified version of the Parent and School Survey (PASS) to carry out my investigation. The survey will be used with a small group of seventeen parents and will only be utilized for this purpose.

I have attached a copy of the instrument I developed for this purpose for your perusal.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to your most valued response.

Respectfully
Sharlene S. Dookie
Post Graduate Student
University of the West Indies

Appendix F

F-Informed Consent- Principal

#53 Bhagna Trace,

Chase Village,

Carapichaima

Tuesday, January 29, 2013

RE: Permission to Conduct a Parental Involvement Study

The Principal

██████████████████████

██████████████████████ Primary School

███████████

███████ Village

Chaguanas

Dear ████████████████████,

Permission is being sought for your school to participate in a research study conducted by *Sharlene S. Dookie* a post graduate student of the University of the West Indies. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the levels of parental involvement in activities that support their child's learning and ascertain how the differences in parental involvement impact on the student's performance.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to allow subjects from your school to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a two part survey, which will be administered in a group setting to one parent of each student. These surveys will however need to be conducted at your school. All participants will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to parental involvement. Performance data such as End of Term test data or any other formal test data that are available will also be required for each participating parent's child.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require a total of no more than two contact hours of each participant's time. These two hours may span at least two but no more than three individual sessions as required for clarification of data. Student surveys will not be taken during class time. The surveys will be done in March 2013.

Risks

The researcher does not perceive any risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include an idea of the extent to which parental involvement may be a factor in the performance of some students and some idea as to what parents perceive to be the barriers to parental involvement. This knowledge can inform parental involvement efforts from the perspective of the school.

Confidentiality

A high level of confidentiality will be maintained at all times and pseudonyms will be utilized. The results of this research will be presented in a thesis format and will be carefully coded in such a way that respondent's identities will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your school's participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to choose not to participate. Should you give permission for your school to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your school's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name: Sharlene Dookie	**Supervisor's Name**: Ms. Juliana Alexander
Department: School of Education	**Department**: School of Education
University of the West Indies	University of the West Indies
Telephone: 773-4835	**Telephone**: 761-1855
Email Address: sharlenestcy@hotmail.com	**Email Address**: juliana.alexander@sta.uwi.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me and my school as participants in this study. I freely consent for my school to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The researcher has provided me with a copy of this form.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Principal   (Signed)   Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of Cooperating Teacher   (Signed)   Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   (Signed)   Date

Appendix G

G-Informed Consent- Parents

#53 Bhagna Trace,

Chase Village,

Carapichaima

Monday, March 11, 2013

RE: Permission for your participation in a Parental Involvement Study

To Whom It May Concern

██████████████████████ Primary School

██████████

███████ Village

Chaguanas

Dear Sir/Madam,

Permission is being sought for you and your child to participate in a research study conducted by *Sharlene S. Dookie* a teacher and post graduate student of the University of the West Indies. The Government of Trinidad & Tobago suggested that parental involvement is one of the major challenges facing the educational arena today. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the levels of parental involvement in activities that support your child's learning and determine how the differences in the levels of parental involvement impact on the child's academic performance.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a bio data form which will be sent home for completion and a two part survey, which will be administered in a group setting to one parent of each student. These surveys however will be conducted at the school and I am asking that the most involved parent participate in this exercise. All participants will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to parental

involvement. Performance data such as End of Term test data or any other formal test data that are available will also be required for each participating student.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require a total of no more than two contact hours of each participant's time. These two hours will span at least one but no more than two individual sessions as required for clarification of data. The surveys will be conducted in March 2013.

Risks

The researcher does not perceive any risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include an idea of the extent to which parental involvement may be a factor in the performance of some students, an increased awareness as to what constitutes parental involvement and the importance of being involved. Parents will be also asked to anonymously list the perceived barriers to their involvement in activities that support their child's learning. This knowledge can inform parental involvement efforts from the perspective of the school.

Anonymity & Confidentiality

A high level of confidentiality will be maintained at all times and pseudonyms will be utilized. The results of this research will be presented in a thesis format. The results of this research endeavour will be carefully coded in such a way that all respondent's identities will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to choose not to participate. Should you give permission for you and your child to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name: Sharlene Dookie   **Supervisor's Name**: Ms. Juliana Alexander

Department: School of Education   **Department**: School of Education

University of the West Indies   University of the West Indies

Telephone: 773-4835   **Telephone**: 761-1855

Email Address: sharlenestcy@hotmail.com **Email Address**: juliana.alexander@sta.uwi.edu

---

Return this portion of the letter along with the completed Bio-Data form

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me and my child as participants in this study. I freely consent for me and my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Parent   (Signed)   Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   (Signed)   Date

NB. The survey will be administered in three group sessions with five or six parents in each session. The tentative dates for conducting the survey are Friday March 15th and 22nd at 9.00a.m. and/or 1.00 p.m. in the school's library once all the Bio Data forms are completed and returned. Please indicate when you would be able to attend by circling the relevant date and time.

March 15th   a.m.   p.m.   March 22nd   a.m.   p.m.

Please contact me at telephone number _____ to confirm the details of the meeting.

PARENT CONTACT NO. HERE

Appendix H

H-Summary of Data Collected

Survey No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Parent/Guardian	Ethnicity	Employment Status	Occupation	Educational Level	Total Monthly Income	Children In Household	Collaborating	Communicating	Decision Making	Learning at Home	Parenting	Volunteering	Total PI	Math Scores	Language Arts Scores	Total Test Scores
1	Nelly	F	30-39	Separated	P	EI	Full Time	Cleaner	P	3000	2	11	17	14	14	11	18	85	61	75	136
2	Pauline	F	40-49	Married	P	M	Full Time	Est. Constable	S	>10,000	2	15	20	19	18	20	17	109	94	92	186
3	Tara	F	30-39	Married	P	EI	Part Time	Kitchen Asst	S	3001-4000	1	8	16	12	11	16	12	75	84	70	154
4	Erin	F	30-39	Separated	P	M	Full Time	Security Off	S	3001-4000	3	18	18	16	18	20	14	104	72	80	152
5	Chrissy	F	30-39	Single	P	M	Full Time	Nurse	T	6001-7000	2	13	15	11	15	19	15	88	79	93	172
6	Joan	F	50-59	Married	G	A	Unemployed	Retired	S	5000	2	11	20	15	19	20	17	102	73	83	156
7	Mary	F	30-39	Married	P	M	Full Time	Marketing Co.	S	>10,000	2	13	17	15	17	17	15	94	87	92	179
8	Annie	F	20-29	Common Law	P	EI	Part Time	BabySitter	S	8000	2	13	18	16	16	18	18	99	63	90	153
9	Sandy	F	40-49	Divorced	P	EI	Full Time	Clerk	T	5001-6000	1	15	19	17	17	20	17	105	66	82	148
10	Bajnath	M	73	Married	G	EI	Unemployed	Retired	P	6001-7000	4	10	20	11	9	20	20	90	73	83	156
11	Denise	F	40-49	Married	P	A	Full Time	PrisonOfficer	S	9000-10000	4	15	19	15	14	19	17	99	51	64	115
12	Shan	F	30-39	Married	P	EI	Unemployed	Housewife	P	<3000	4	5	12	13	12	18	19	79	68	50	118
13	Anna	F	40-49	Married	P	EI	Unemployed	Housewife	S	9,000-10000	2	20	20	14	18	17	20	109	75	91	166
N												13	13	13	3	13	13	13	13	13	13
Average												12.846	17.769	14.462	15.231	18.077	16.846	95.231	72.769	80.385	153.154
Std Deviation												3.997	2.386	2.332	3.086	2.532	2.340	11.122	11.548	12.842	21.011

Correlations

	Collaborating	Communicating	Decision Making	Learning at Home	Parenting	Volunteering	Total PI	Math Scores	Language Arts Scores	Total Test Scores
Total PI	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.026	0.554	0.353
Mathematics	0.003	0.013	0.063	0.177	0.160	-0.365	0.026	1	-	-
Language Arts	0.582	0.542	0.236	0.527	0.176	-0.034	0.554	-	1	-
Total Test Scores	0.358	0.338	0.179	0.420	0.196	-0.222	0.353	-	-	1

Appendix I

I-Table Showing Barriers to Parental Involvement

Emerging Themes/Colour Codes	Supporting Codes	Frequency
Lack of Information to Strengthen Parenting Practices (health, recreational, parenting)	**Denise:** I never hear my husband come home with nothing like that. **Joan:** Sometimes somebody may come and speak on something but that is about it. But is a long time… **Shan:** Yeah they never really talk about them things. **Bajnath:** I never hear about that. **Sandy:** I know nothing about that. I think my daughter came home one day and said she did some eye test or something. **Annie:** They don't. (provide supplemental information) **Tara:** I don't get enough information from the school. **Nelly:** Do not know **Erin:** No response **Chrissy:** I have heard that they have a counselor but I not sure what she does. **Joan:** parenting classes (would help)…we can all learn a thing or two….like the tips I got from the guidance counselor. **Denise:** (I would like to get) Information on FREE activities …if available for children in the community…to keep them occupied…in a positive way not no set a video game and TV and internet. **Sandy**: Well I know there are different methods for children to use when they are studying and I think information like this would be useful because to get her attention for this SEA wasn't easy. **Anna:** Issues such as bullying and others that arise	11

	should be discussed with parents so that ways and means can be developed to deal with some of these problems.	
Lack of Communication/Face to Face Communication with Teachers	**Sandy-** Well I know or I don't think they have parent's day but maybe if they have a parent day once a month so you know parents can at least see for the month like what it is the child did… **Sandy**- I want the teacher's point of view….not what I see but I want the teacher to tell me well you know Sharda is doing this or she's not doing this properly if she could get help in that or this I would know the areas which she is weak in. **Annie**- I agree with that.(need for parents day) **Tara**- Nothing really just the parent's day **Nelly:** Have more meetings about students with parents. **Mary:** Teachers need to meet with parents more. **Anna:** Teachers should communicate with the parents in the area of homework…especially with the projects. **Chrissy**- someone should always be available to speak with you when you visit.	7
Work-Long hours/Shift Work	**Sandy**- where I work is in Port of Spain, right and my hours of work…when I leave work sometimes I come down and it's about five o'clock when I reach home… **Sandy-** Sometimes like…when I take a day off or something sometimes I come in school just to check in. I won't say I do it all the time but sometimes I take that little ten minutes just to check in and make sure. **Tara**: Same thing timing with work. Timing is very difficult. During the day sometimes at night that sort of thing I try my best	5

	Sandy- Because of my job it's my mother who takes care of her during the day when I'm at work **Pauline:** House work and fatigue…I am an estate constable and I work long hours and sometimes even shifts. **Erin:** Coming home late from work. I work as a security officer in Port of Spain and the traffic as well as the hours keep me from reaching home early. **Chrissy:** My job. I am a nurse and work a two shift system so many evenings I am not at home to assist her with school work. I am also a single parent. **Erin:** Work and hours (time frame) **Chrissy:** Same as above (works shift, single parent) but I try to visit as much as I could.	
Physiological Reasons	**Joan**-I am a grandparent right and there are times when they come home and I am just not into it. I am tired or you know, not feeling too well **Bajnath**-I am as involved as I could be at 73 years **Joan**- volunteering for certain things is out for me because health wise and what not **Joan**- I can't sell or do things but I donate whatever… **Erin**-fatigue…I am an estate constable and I work long hours and sometimes even shifts **Sandra**- Sometimes I am so tired	4
Lack of Access to the Curriculum	**Joan**-One of the things I think is that if we know exactly what the children are supposed to be doing you know something like a syllabus so that if you know what they supposed to do you'd be able to work with them… **Denise**- When I'm home on Saturday I does pick them up on a Saturday and try and go through the whole week	3

	because remember during the week I am not with them. So when I have the syllabus it will be better. So, by providing the syllabus for parents too in addition to teachers; that will be good. **Anna:** Informed of all the school's curriculum and changes that may occur.	
Marital Status/Single Parents	Sandy- presently I am a single parent and where I work is in Port of Spain… **Nelly:** Not enough help…I am a single parent **Chrissy**- My job. I am a nurse and work a two shift system so many evenings I am not at home to assist her with school work. I am also a single parent.	3
Household Responsibilities	**Shan**- well I have animals and thing that I does have to see about them too…where we living don't have much grass and thing so I have to see about them both morning and evening. **Erin**- House work and fatigue…I am an estate constable and I work long hours and sometimes even shifts.	2
Limited Knowledge/Education/ Ability/don't have the skills they need	**Bajnath**- I does depend on my daughters to help them with school work because I don't know much. **Bajnath**-with school work and thing what I could do I does do but when I can't do I does get the necessary help **Nelly**- How to do some of the school work (maths) **Bajnath**: Yeah that (syllabus and parenting classes) would help…not me but Ana and she could help the children. I present and will buy what they need, is the most I could do.	2
Transportation Problems (availability/cost etc)	**Joan-** It's far you know because I have to make arrangements for she to go but em I think it pays of in the end. (in relation to extra lessons to support class work) **Bajnath-** every evening when school break off she pack them up in a van and go and who could go that's	2

	it….you have to fight your own way… you have no vehicle you ent know whey they is (in relation to extra lessons to support class work)	
Lack of opportunity for parental interaction and networking	**Pauline:** The school can have a different group of parents volunteer every month to give the school a general cleaning. The parents could come together to plant a school garden.	2
	Pauline: You would be able to interact with other parents, you may even be able to sell the products (from the school garden) which the income would be of great benefit and persons who know about agriculture would be able to tutor the parents, the parents would be able to learn a new skill.	
	Pauline: At my son's school one thing I would like to see is that the less fortunate children at the school, become more focused upon, more could be done to assist those children and their families. (One child saved, could save a village)	
	Anna- Broken homes, abuse, neglect-issues that children are faced with and maybe other parents are able to contribute positively in this way.	
Demands/Needs of Other Children	**Shan**- If I could attend I would attend but it have four of them so sometimes I does have to be in she school (points at one daughter) sometimes in she school (points at another daughter)	1
Personal Pursuits	**Denise**- Ok…well just like you I am doing my degree. So I am working and I normally reach home bout half past ten, eleven at night and that is the time when everybody is sleeping.	1
	Denise- As you know I'm in school (after work) so if I cannot make it my husband is there, so he is there for all the meetings, all the walkathons, all the concerts, everything else and he will just fill me in on what happened.	
Too Much Homework	**Sandy**-I would take that time and I would spend with her but then with the homework that she's having now sometimes til ten o'clock we are still awake right…and I	1

	mean I try as much as I could I stay up with her and do the homework **Sandy**-I mean I'm not disagreeing with the fact that she has plenty homework, she has real homework sometimes eh and then sometimes she's so tired I mean you can't do anything again….because by the time I done with she I'm drained!	
No Specific Barriers	**Annie-** Nothing prevents me…I'm home…I work babysitting part time and when I do work by one o'clock the child leaves so I have enough time. **Mary:** No. I believe I am very involved in my child's education. **Anna:** I am currently pursuing my degree in Social Work. However, I make every effort to help and be involved in their school work and activities.	3
Shared responsibility/doesn't always have child	**Sandy-**I don't have her every weekend because her father takes her one weekend and I have her the other weekend	1
Child does not tell me what is happening at school	**Tara-** I'm not familiar with it (programs to strengthen student learning and development)…I don't know if my son does not bring home messages but I am not aware if anything like this occurs.	1

Appendix J   **Coding Key**

Coding Key
Lack of Information to Strengthen Parenting Practices (health, recreational, parenting)
Lack of Communication/Face to Face Communication with Teachers
Work-Long hours/Shift Work
Physiological Reasons
Lack of Access to the Curriculum
Marital Status/Single Parents
Household Responsibilities
Limited Knowledge/Education/ Ability/don't have the skills they need
Transportation Problems (availability/cost etc)
Lack of opportunity for parental interaction and networking
Demands/Needs of Other Children
Personal Pursuits
Too Much Homework
No Specific Barriers
Shared responsibility/doesn't always have child
Child does not tell me what is happening at school

J-Focus Group - Session One
March 22nd, 2013. 9.00 a.m.

Q1: Do you ever want to be more involved in your child's education but for some reason you cannot be?

Joan: Yes

Shan: Yes

Bajnath: Yes

Denise: Yes

Q2. What are some of the things you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at home?

Joan: Well I am a grandparent right and there are times when they come home and I am just not into it. I am tired or you know, not feeling too well …so those are some of the things.

Shan: If I could attend I would attend but it have four of them so sometimes I does have to be in she school (points at one daughter) sometimes in she school (points at another daughter), sometimes I will be…well I have animals and thing that I does have to see about them too…where we living don't have much grass and thing so I have to see about them both morning and evening. That is the things that does kinda hold you back from reaching where you want to reach sometimes.

Bajnath: Well I am a grandparent and while I am as involved as I could be at 73 years I does depend on my daughters to help them with school work because I don't know much.

Denise: Ok…well just like you I am doing my degree. So I am working and I normally reach home bout half past ten, eleven at night and that is the time when everybody is sleeping. So you know I still go through their books while I'm eating something but it's really hard, really hard. That's why I'm looking sleepy right now…I went to bed half past twelve because I had to do an assignment and I stayed up late so all that does prevent me from being more involved with them.

Q3. What about at school? Are there any factors that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at school?

Joan: Well most of the things I am involved in school with but volunteering for certain things is out for me because health wise and what not there are certain things I don't volunteer for. I try to take part in as much…for instance walkathon…I wouldn't be walking and if they don't get somebody from home to go with them in the walkathon they wouldn't go in the walkathon.

Shan: Well most of the activities in school I does be with them, sometimes I can't make it and I might send one of them (motions to daughters) if they dey home one of the bigger sisters go come well most of the times I does be with them….and like things like when they having gatherings like bazaar and whatever, whatever stuff they need and they ask for I will send…I don't come and help them but I will send whatever they ask for …I help in that way…

Bajnath: well…as the lady say everybody does help..if I cyah come you know by me Ana(his daughter) and them does come and like how the em.. the lady say that em…walkathon and thing… Ana does be dey…remember she have two boy and these four girls (his granddaughters for whom he was granted sole custody by the courts and therefore the responsibility for taking care of them-their father is incarcerated and mother left them), that's six of them they born and grow in one house so they like brother and sister they consider themselves so. But we family involved in everything all my children come here and we live close by and now my grandchildren coming here.

Denise: As you know I'm in school so if I cannot make it my husband is there, so he is there for all the meetings, all the walkathons, all the concerts, everything else and he will just fill me in on what happened.

Q4. What opportunities exist at the school for parents to be involved in decision making?

Jaon: I think am…well I comes to all the PTA meetings and in the PTA meeting there is…there is the opportunity for parents to have their input…cause they ask us…they do ask…and I think the teachers in the school, you can come and talk to them anytime…anytime concerning your child's anything…at least I find that you could come to them…that is my experience

Shan: …is the same thing she say because any problem I have I is come in school. If my daughter have a problem with whatever in school the Miss will send and call me or I will come in and talk to them…talk to she Miss directly and she will tell me if she have a problem or whatever. PTA meeting you could get to speak out whatever problems your child have or whatever because they does ask questions and they does ask what problems you have to come and discuss it with them (home and in school).

Bajnath: What she saying is correct.

Denise: I am not sure about that. But I give them my number and we communicate. I will call them if anything if the child sick I call them, if is any extra homework she calls me and tells me so we have a good communication.

Joan: That is good in this school, is the same thing they will call me at home and say well so and so is the case.

Denise: If nothing else the teachers them are really, really good when it comes to that.

Q5. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen school programs? (sports etc)

Joan: During the walkathon parents donate things for the breakfast afterwards, for the school concert you know you donate things…

Shan: During sports time…some parents does help by selling stuff, by being dey, taking part in sports…

Joan: I can't sell or do things but I donate whatever…

Shan: …well I don't be selling or whatever and but I does be dey and donate whatever I could

Joan: from my home…my daughter-in-law, she is a nurse and anything they want… you know for instance the teacher does send for her and she comes and helps when they have projects and what not as long as she is home…she does not have children here but she comes and helps.

Denise: Like the boy scouts and thing; they have that, but they have nothing for girls…

Shan: …they have golf for girls my daughter does play golf

Joan: …and they have Red Cross

Denise: Ok…and then they have the tennis…a coach comes from outside…today is tennis in fact.

Bajnath: Is true they have all them thing

Do you think those programs (tennis and golf) are accessible to all?

All Parents: No

Denise: No because you have to pay for it…nothing is free again you know…NOTHING IS FREE! Everything you have to pay for…

Joan: The groups are small...and they also have Red Cross but only in certain classes I think 2 and 3.

Denise: it might not be like all of that amount of money, it might be just a stipend or something they want, but nothing is for free!

Joan: Look even Red Cross, Red Cross is free but is a hundred dollars for the uniform and if there is a parent who have a child that really want to be in it and can't afford the uniform then what happens? They just can't be in it!

Shan: Look even Golf I does have to pay fifty dollars a term and my daughter wanted to join tennis too but I tell she at that time I can't afford for she to join the tennis. I say you done in golf already so I can't join you in tennis right now. But also you in sports but you need to focus on your book. I mean they is not so bright reader but they need to focus on they work too.

Q6. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen family practices? (Information on health, recreational activities, parenting etc)

All Parents: They don't.

Denise: I never hear my husband come home with nothing like that.

Joan: Sometimes somebody may come and speak on something but that is about it. But is a long time…

Shan: Yeah they never really talk about them things.

Bajnath: I never hear about that.

Q7. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen student learning and development? (volunteer tutors, counseling services)

Denise: Well I think they have the guidance counselor…

Joan: Yes and she deals with troubled cases and the classes

Denise: Yes because the last time I was here my daughter writing SEA exam and she called everybody and she was speaking about the way how parents like to put 'high' schools for the children; and not to do that because if they choose the 'high' schools they would zone them (the children) so try to put realistic choices for the children and them.

Joan: She also taught them about good touch and bad touch and my granddaughter the smaller one she is a bit troubled and bit hyper… and I and the guidance officer interact and she put me on to certain services…I went to a seminar that she directed me to and I got some pointers she has some attention deficit something…some long name….

Shan: Yes they have the school counselor.

Bajnath: Well I eh know much about that.

Q8. What do you think can be done at the school to help parents become more involved?

Joan: One of the things I think is that if we know exactly what the children are supposed to be doing you know something like a syllabus so that if you know what they supposed to do you'd be able to work with them…not sometimes you wait until they come home with something and then you know…but then if you know like they are in standard two and this is what they supposed to cover we'd be able to assist more.

Denise: Yeah because I ask a teacher if I could get the syllabus because I know somebody who had one and they were a teacher too but they told me that they couldn't give it to me. The teacher said I cannot get it because of the Ministry instructions. But I said well it's just a syllabus. When I'm home on Saturday I does pick them up on a Saturday and try and go through the whole week because remember during the week I am not with them. So when I have the syllabus it will be better. So, by providing the syllabus for parents too in addition to teachers; that will be good.

Joan: and a timetable! So that they know exactly what they going to do when. Something that I notice happening is that sometimes they slow down they take long on a certain topic then all of a sudden there is two to three subjects one behind the other.

Denise: Yeah because they have to finish the syllabus you must finish a certain amount of work for the semester.

Joan: But if we have it (the syllabus) we can work ahead.

Denise: Even too for the vacation, for the July and August you know they going in standard one send the standard one syllabus so that by the time they home doing nothing…it would help. So from the time they go in (the new term) you know they could be like Miss ok we know what you talking about.

Shan: Yeah you know that would give them a head start.

Bajnath: As I say I have the time so I does be involved in everything and if not me Ana does be here but with school work and thing what I could do I does do but when I can't do I does get the necessary help.

Q9. Do you think a parental involvement programme at the school would be of benefit to you as a parent?

All Parents: Yes

If yes, what kind of information, assistance, opportunities would you like to see available to parents in this programme?

Joan: A syllabus, parenting classes…we can all learn a thing or two….like the tips I got from the guidance counselor.

Shan: I agree the syllabus will help and the parenting classes too.

Bajnath: Yeah that (syllabus and parenting classes) would help…not me but Ana and she could help the children. I present and will buy what they need, is the most I could do. I does try is gyul children and they bright so the teacher does tell mih so I have to try they parents doh care.

Denise: Information on FREE activities …if available (laughs) for children in the community…to keep them occupied…in a positive way not no set a video game and TV and internet.

Please feel free to share any additional comments/suggestions/concerns…

Bajnath: Well I don't know why they need this set of lessons when they reach Standard four and five…the school day is long enough to get all they work done.

Denise: well when my daughter came here things that she didn't know before this teacher was teaching her…so you know she now started to pick up so now she's settled so now she's doing really good….so Saturday classes really helped her.

Joan: Saturday helped my granddaughter because am usually on a Saturday morning she would sleep late get up decides that she not doing anything, you understand…but when she knows she has to get up to reach by Miss for a certain time and she has to do the work it gets done. Now Saturday evening is relaxing time they do certain things in the community. They attend church where they have all types of activities for them to do. But on Saturday morning is lessons and I don't mind paying for it.

Bajnath: No the paying eh nothing, the paying eh nothing.

Joan: It's far you know because I have to make arrangements for she to go but em I think it pays of in the end.

Denise: (Agrees that it is of benefit) …and two she has patience, the teacher is really good, really good she takes her time…she will put her aside and work with her but only on a Saturday because she can't do that during the week. But on a Saturday it don't have as much children so she gets that extra attention.

Joan: She would call me and say "Granny, Anika didn't do so and so, do you know that?" She's very concerned. I wish other teachers could be like that.

Denise: Yeah I was just going to say that.

Bajnath: Yes she is excellent the other one the year before whey Lily-Ann (another granddaughter) was with… every evening when school break off she pack them up in a van and go and who could go that's it….you have to fight your own way… you have no vehicle you ent know whey they is and ..they make you buy some books and who going by she using the book who eh going the book pack down they. But this teacher she have the type of patience, you understand… not to say well you are the one whey forwarding so she seeing about you.

Shan: Nah all the children equal in she class.

Joan: and she don't have to get loud and slap them around.

Bajnath: She have the one and them whey slow she does bring them closer to she, you have to come up.

End of Session

Appendix K

K-Focus Group – Session Two
March 22nd, 2013. 1.00 p.m.

Q1: Do you ever want to be more involved in your child's education but for some reason you cannot be?

Sandy: Yes

Annie: Yes

Tara: Yes

Q2. What are some of the things that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at home?

Sandy: What happens…am…presently I am a single parent and where I work is in Port of Spain, right and my hours of work…when I leave work sometimes I come down and it's about five o'clock when I reach home…but still I would take that time and I would spend with her but then with the homework that she's having now sometimes til ten o'clock we are still awake right…and I mean I try as much as I could I stay up with her and do the homework because we have to go through each one you know… not that I want to just go through it with her but I want her to understand because I know just now she has to write SEA and one thing I always tell her to do is read properly…read the questions to understand and know step by step what to do and remember sometimes well when I go to bed at half past ten I have to get up again half past three again to prepare to go to work the next day. So I look at it like…basically its some of my job a little bit but as I say I still try to spend that time with her and even like on weekends when I'm at home remember on a Saturday she has lessons so she would go to her lessons and when she comes back I still have to give her a little break I don't want to just start to give her something to do and whatever and then sometimes on evenings because of the school work and everything I take her out but I don't have her every weekend because her father takes her one weekend and I have her the other weekend and on Sunday mornings we go to church and after that we go back again but not until eight or nine we finish at about six. So I try as much as I can. Sometimes I am so tired and I am being honest eh but sometimes when I spend a lot of time with her and when she just not picking up it gets me really upset. Until sometimes I does have to buff her up I try not to but sometimes I have to go that way.

Annie: Nothing prevents me…I'm home…I work babysitting part time and when I do work by one o'clock the child leaves so I have enough time.

Tara: Same thing timing with work. Timing is very difficult. During the day sometimes at night that sort of thing I try my best.

I am guessing that because of the time you all also can't always attend PTA meetings and stuff like that?

Sandy: What happens is that I do attend sometimes but her father comes most of the time because he works shift…I have an eight to four job and I have to be there so most of the time he comes.

Q3. What about at school? Are there any factors that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at school?

Sandy: Sometimes like when I have when I take like a day off or something sometimes I come in school just to check in. I won't say I do it all the time but sometimes I take that little ten minutes just to check in and make sure.

Annie: No

Tara: Not Really

Q4. What opportunities exist at the school for parents to be involved in decision making?

Sandy: Well they have PTA meetings but some of the times you just hear about the PTA representatives…just hear that's it full stop. You just hear they're having so and so and so and after that I ain't see nothing materialize. Because last year…it had a time I came to a PTA meeting and they were discussing somewhere they wanted to take the children and well I had volunteered to accompany them but after that I never heard anything and since then I am no longer in that department so I can't help if they were to have that again. So sometimes things don't materialize they just say things. But I think to some extent they try to address problems and concerns.

Annie: No comment

Tara: No comment

Q5. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen school programs? (sports etc)

Sandy: I know they have the annual walkathon but that's all I am aware of really. Because of my job it's my mother who takes care of her during the day when I'm at work…and she came with her to the last walkathon…but she was involved in Golf at one point but I think she has stopped playing Golf and then she started with cricket after that but now with SEA and thing she doesn't play the cricket. I mean I'm not disagreeing with the fact that she has plenty homework, she has real homework sometimes eh and then sometimes she's so tired I mean you can't do anything again….because by the time I done with she I'm drained! But I'm saying that the homework is there to help them along eh but sometimes she's so tired and needs a break that she says come mommy let's just go for a walk right out the road. Sometimes she gets a whole exercise…46 questions…and we go way into the night.

Annie: I don't know.

Tara: I don't know.

Q6. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen family practices? (information on health, recreational activities, parenting etc)

Sandy: I know nothing about that. I think my daughter came home one day and said she did some eye test or something.

Annie: They don't.

Tara: They don't, not really…more can be done. I don't get enough information from the school.

Q7. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen student learning and development? (volunteer tutors, counseling services)

Sandy: I'm not aware of that.

Annie: I don't know.

Tara: I'm not familiar with it…I don't know if my son does not bring home messages but I am not aware if anything like this occurs.

Q8. What do you think can be done at the school to help parents become more involved?

Sandy: Well I know or I don't think they have parent's day but maybe if they have a parent day once a month so you know parents can at least see for the month like what it is the child did…what I know is when I went to her class her teacher showed me her creative writing and what she did and I read it and thing…you see like things like that I want to see in school what she did I mean I see it home when I have to sign her book but I want to see what she does in school other than the homework and corrections. I want the teacher's point of view then tell me where the child is going...not what I see but I want the teacher to tell me well you know Sharda is doing this or she's not doing this properly if she could get help in that or this I would know the areas which she is weak in.

Annie: I agree with that.

Tara: Nothing really just the parent's day

Q9. Do you think a parental involvement programme at the school would be of benefit to you as a parent?

Sandy: Yes

Annie: Yes

Tara: Yes

If yes, what kind of information, assistance, opportunities would you like to see available to parents in this programme?

Sandy: Well I know there are different methods for children to use when they are studying and I think information like this would be useful because to get her attention for this SEA wasn't easy. I have had to tell her that she has to make sure she passes for a good school otherwise we go nowhere since we were planning to make a trip and I told her she has to work towards that and if you don't do it then we stay here! I see that she has been kind of bucking up in her studies and that will give her the incentive to study more and that kind of thing and I don't allow her to watch TV because I have cable home and I realize that when I'm not at home …she watching TV…so I cut the cable in an effort to curb her behaviour.

Annie: Studying skills

Tara: Nothing comes to mind right now.

Please feel free to share any additional comments/suggestions/concerns…End of Session

Appendix L

L-Transcribed Individual Survey Responses

Q1. Do you ever want to be more involved in your child's education but for some reason you cannot be?

All parents: YES

Q2. What are some of the things that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at home?

Nelly: Not enough help…I am a single parent

Pauline: House work and fatigue…I am an estate constable and I work long hours and sometimes even shifts.

Erin: Coming home late from work. I work as a security officer in Port of Spain and the traffic as well as the hours keep me from reaching home early.

Chrissy: My job. I am a nurse and work a two shift system so many evenings I am not at home to assist her with school work. I am also a single parent.

Mary: No. I believe I am very involved in my child's education.

Anna: I am currently pursuing my degree in Social Work. However, I make every effort to help and be involved in their school work and activities.

Q3. What about at school? Are there any factors that you feel prevent you from being more involved in your child's education at school?

Nelly: No Not really.

Pauline: No. I try my best

Erin: Work and hours (time frame)

Chrissy: Same as above (works shift, single parent) but I try to visit as much as I could.

Mary: No. I believe the teacher does a great job.

Anna: No, as I said I make every effort and I am confident in the teachers. I have developed relationships/communication with every teacher that my sons are under.

Q4. What opportunities exist at the school for parents to be involved in decision making?

Nelly: Monthly visit to the teachers.

Pauline: In my child's school parents are given the opportunity to be involved in all major activities, through the PTA.

Erin: Yes, through the PTA.

Chrissy: The PTA meetings.

Mary: PTA meetings.

Anna: The PTA is an active forum for parents. The Scouts are another avenue that I get to interact with the teachers in terms of decisions.

Q5. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen school programs? (sports etc)

Nelly: They bring performers such as Neval Chaitlal, a past student, for the Christmas concert.

Pauline: The Scout group raises funds by doing car wash, hotdog sale etc. Everyone participates/donates. They also have military personnel (Police/Army officials) from the community to train the students for sports day at the school. They also train the Scouts and loaned their cots for the Scout sleep over…and their buses for the Scout trip to Matura on a turtle watching outing.

Erin: I remember they had the "Extreme Breakers' a break dance group form the area perform for the concert.

Chrissy: Miss Ferosa and Miss Beharry's daughters' usually sing for special functions they are not students they are teenagers or even older.

Mary: They take part in sports outside of the school and sometimes they enter the Chaguanas Borough Easter Bonnet parade for example.

Anna: The school participates in a lot of educational and extra-curricular activities that motivates students. They seek the assistance of community members such as the Police, Fire Officers etc.

Q6. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen family practices? (information on health, recreational activities, parenting etc)

Nelly: Do not know.

Pauline: The school has nurses from the health sector, come into the school to give lectures.

Erin: No response.

Chrissy: No response.

Mary: They usually bring in speakers to educate the parents on such matters.

Anna: There have been some events such as Family Day, Sports, Walkathon, Christmas Concerts, Health Fairs held in the school…all are invited to participate or attend.

Q7. How does the school use resources from the community to strengthen student learning and development? (volunteer tutors, counseling services)

Nelly: Not sure.

Pauline: The school invites volunteers from the community to give lectures to the students on how to stay away from trouble (policeman).

Erin: No response.

Chrissy: I have heard that they have a counselor but I not sure what she does.

Mary: They have a counselor at the school which is very helpful.

Anna: The school is involved in counseling services that aids some students.

Q8. What do you think can be done at the school to help parents become more involved?

Nelly: Have more meetings about students with parents.

Pauline: The school can have a different group of parents volunteer every month to give the school a general cleaning. The parents could come together to plant a school garden.

Erin: No response.

Chrissy: No response.

Mary: Teachers need to meet with parents more.

Anna: Teachers should communicate with the parents in the area of homework…especially with the projects.

Q9. Do you think a parental involvement programme at the school would be of benefit to you as a parent?

All Parents: YES

If yes, what kind of information, assistance, opportunities would you like to see available to parents in this programme?

Nelly: How to do some of the school work (maths).

Pauline: You would be able to interact with other parents, you may even be able to sell the products (from the school garden) which the income would be of great benefit and persons who know about agriculture would be able to tutor the parents, the parents would be able to learn a new skill.

Erin: No response.

Chrissy: Opportunity to sit in on some teaching sessions, someone to always be available to speak with you when you visit. This way you will be able to experience the classroom and see first-hand your child's reaction in the classroom.

Mary: Not sure

Anna: Informed of all the school's curriculum and changes that may occur.

Please feel free to share any additional comments/suggestions/concerns…

Nelly: No Response

Pauline: At my son's school one thing I would like to see is that the less fortunate children at the school, become more focused upon, more could be done to assist those children and their families. (One child saved, could save a village)

Erin: No Response

Chrissy: No Response

Mary: No Response

Anna: Issues such as bullying and others that arise and should be discussed with parents so that ways and means can be developed to deal with some of these problems.

Broken homes, abuse, neglect-issues that children are faced with and maybe other parents are able to contribute positively in this way.

Appendix M

M-Parental Involvement Principal Interview

Q1. How long have you been the Principal at this school?

A. Three years

Q2. What do you understand by the term "parental involvement"?

A. Parents actively involved in the lives of their children, which includes the social and academic aspects of school in addition to the religious aspect.

Q3. How would you describe the current level of parental involvement in your school?

A. It is not where I would like it to be. There are approximately 35% who really take an active part, 15% who are involved to an extent and 50% who are not involved.

Why do you think that the latter 50% are not involved?

I believe that this is because of their lifestyle; they don't see school as important aspect of life but more like a babysitting center. This is evident in various matters for example they leave school infractions/incidences strictly for school personnel to deal with there is no partnership, they could not care less.

Q4. What are your school's current parental involvement practices/policies?

A. Our current practices are aimed at helping parents to help themselves. For example we have Ms. Agnes Boodansingh, a Special Education expert, Ms. Kimberly Salvary, a Social Worker and Ms. Yip a Guidance Officer, all school support personnel coming in from time

to time to attend to the needs of the school population. They occasionally address the

parent body and give valuable advice on parenting practices. But often times the ones that

do not need this type of advice are the ones that attend these sessions whilst the ones that

need it are never in attendance. We also invite parents to observe extracurricular activities

such as Snag Golf, Tennis and Scouts to name a few and to be actively involved in other

events such as Sports Day. Parents are also invited to our monthly prayer services and all

religious celebrations such as Eid, Divali and the Annual Christmas Concert. There is also

the Parent Teacher Meeting that takes place every term.

Why do you think that the ones who need it most are not the ones who attend?

Their priorities seem not properly set. I think that to some of them their children are a

burden and not a blessing. There is also a minute percentage of parents who believe that

participation in school related activities is about financial obligation and they keep away

because they do not feel financially fit.

Q5. Do you think the current parental involvement practices/policies at your school are successful? Please explain.

A. To some extent I think they are because I am seeing an increase in the number of

parents/representatives at each event. But there is always room for improvement.

Q6. How adequate do you think the current parental involvement practices/policies at your school are? Please explain.

A. I don't think it is inadequate, yet we have not yet reached the point where I would like it

to be. However, the wheels are in motion since as I mentioned I have been seeing more

parents making an effort to make their presence known by at least attending the various

activities that they are invited to evidence that we are reaching more parents than before

Our academic performance is also on the rise an indicator that parents are trying.

Q7. What do you do to promote/encourage/increase parental involvement in your school?

A. In addition to extending an invitation to almost all events at the school I recently started

calling parents after sending out PTM notices to ask them to come out to these meetings.

I try to remove barriers such as unavailability and thus make myself available to parents

as much as possible.

Q8. How are parents made to feel welcome at your school?

A. I treat all parents equally regardless of race, religion, socioeconomic status etc. I also try

to remove hostility from all situations no matter how wrong a child may be I assure

parents of both the victim and perpetrator that hostility is not the answer.

I also greet parents at the gate on evenings where I keep watch as they pick their children

up from school. Parents are also not given stipulations as to when they can meet and

speak with a teacher or the principal; we all try our best to accommodate them at all times

in consideration of their schedules etc. to discuss matters of concern.

Q9. How do you communicate with parents of students from your school?

A. I communicate via several methods which are dependent on the circumstance. The most

frequent methods are face to face, via telephone and notes to parents.

Q10. Do you communicate regularly with parents? What are some of the reasons?

A. Yes, every day I speak with parents not only about problems but also to relay to them

things that may have happened during the day. For example I sometimes tell the children

when they are behaving naughtily that they will send my blood pressure up and one

afternoon a child came up to me and asked "Miss, did your blood pressure go up today?" I

found it so touching, his manner of concern and the fact that he was paying attention that I

had to share it with his parents. So I don't always communicate with parents about

problems or negative things but also about funny things, outstanding things, things that

have an impact, whether bad or good.

Q11. How responsive is your school to parent concerns? Can you give me an example?

A. We rise to the occasion. For example we understand and accept our social responsibility

and work together to source handouts for the impoverished such as food, clothing, shoes

etc. There is no set policy but once we become aware of a situation/concern we make

every attempt to alleviate it if possible.

Q12. Are parents included in the decision making process at your school? If not, why not?
   If so, how is this done?

A. Yes they are to an extent. We try to involve them in the decision making process via the

Parent Teacher Meetings (PTM) a forum where their voices can be heard on various matters.

I must admit though that the general trend in the past at the PTM's has been to discuss

fundraising activities which may be a deterrent to some. I am in the process of changing that

by inviting speakers to impart useful information in addition to all other school matters which are discussed at the PTM's.

Q13. Does your school integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs? If so, how is this done?

A. Yes. For example we invite the community police to come in to speak with the children as well as the parents as a part of a discipline program. We also ask them to visit the homes of children who are not coming to school for a substantial period of time. We also invite other persons from the community to do presentations on various topics such as safety, and discipline in addition to motivational speakers.

Q14. Does your school integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen family practices, for example information on health, recreational activities, parenting etc? If so, how is this done?

A. As mentioned earlier we have guest speakers of all professions that convey useful information to our parent body but mainly on health and parenting practices. I may have to look into getting persons who can enlighten us as to the types of recreational activities that may available in the community to our students. However we work with community members to provide some recreational activities after school hours at a low cost to interested students (tennis).

Q15. Does your school integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen student learning and development? If so, how is this done?

A. I would have to say yes, since our speakers impart information on discipline, education and health related issues which all contribute to student learning and all round development.

Q16. How would you feel about working with your staff, the parents and members of the community to formulate a written parental involvement policy to guide parental involvement practices at your school?

A. I think it's a fantastic idea since all our teachers become heavily involved in activities of the school. Although, there are those that do just enough because they have personal commitments (few of our teachers are currently pursuing their B.Ed), most teachers and other staff members give 110% all of the time.

Q17. What challenges do you anticipate in formulating such a policy?

A. It may be quite a time consuming venture

Q18. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for improvement of your school's existing parent involvement efforts?

A. Not at this time. I think we are on the right track but as you know change comes about gradually. However I am beginning to see some changes already in addition to increased attendance at events such as in our National Test Results for the last academic year which was at the highest point since I first came here.

Appendix N

N-Parental Involvement Teacher Interview

Q1. How long have you been a teacher at this school?

A. Twenty years

Q2. What do you understand by the term "parental involvement"?

A. Parents taking care of their children by ensuring that they are in good health, assisting with homework, sending them to school every day and ensuring that they have a study routine.

Q3. How would you describe the current level of parental involvement in your class?

A. Less than 50% of parents are actively involved in their children's education as a matter of fact I would say approximately 40% are involved.

Why do you think that the latter 60% are not involved?
These parents are not really concerned; they do not understand the importance of education. Money is not an issue as it used to be since the materials such as textbooks are available from the Ministry it's just to get them to school regularly and to teach discipline such as sacrificing watching television for doing their homework and reviewing/practicing their work. My class has several single-parents and these I believe should be even more interested in their child/children getting a sound education but these parents are selfish some of them are more concerned about improving themselves and work during the day and study by night leaving even less time for dealing with their own children who are often left in the care of elderly grandparents.

Q4. What are your school's current parental involvement practices/policies?

A. Parents are invited to attend all school events/functions and to participate in whatever way they can in fundraising ventures…cash or kind.

Q5. Do you think the current parental involvement practices/policies at your school are successful? Please explain.

A. I think that they are very successful; we get a good turnout at most school related events.

Q6. How adequate do you think the current parental involvement practices/policies at your school are? Please explain.

A. It is adequate in the sense that we have an open door policy but we may need to expand our efforts by providing more information to parents about parenting practices and enlisting more informational and motivational speakers at Parent Teacher Meetings.

Q7. What do you do to promote/encourage/increase parental involvement of parents from your class?

A. I talk and talk and talk. I call parents repeatedly and literally beg/ try to persuade them to assist their children or in some instances just to send them out to school regularly. I even went as far as to advise a parent to put off her own studying to be able to be there for her daughter at this critical point since she works by day and attends school by night.

Q8. How are parents made to feel welcome at your school site/class?

A. I make myself very accessible to my parents and give them a direct line of access to me. This way they know that there are no barriers and I have no problems when it comes to discussing with them any issues/challenges/concerns that may be affecting their children's education.

Q9. How do you communicate with parents from your school?

A. They all have my personal telephone number and they can call or visit me at the school anytime.

Q10. Do you communicate regularly with parents? What are some of the reasons?

A. Yes. I do. I usually communicate with them about low performance, the importance of homework, work assigned and not being done, discussions about arrangements for

lessons (which I give at my home at no cost). I rarely communicate with them about disciplinary problems.

Q11. How responsive are you/is your school to parent concerns? Can you give me an example?

A. We are very responsive and try as much as possible to deal with parent concerns as promptly and as best as we can. For example I am currently giving free lessons to my class and shifted the time and place so as to accommodate the schedules of all my parents to ensure that no child would have to miss this opportunity.

Q12. How are parents included in the decision making process at your school/class? If not, why not? If so, how is this done?

A. Parents are allowed to voice their concerns in the termly Parent Teacher Meetings (PTM's) and the principal and teachers are always open to suggestions/parent input.

Q13. How does your school integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs? If so, how is this done?

A. We recently reintroduced the Cub Scout program and utilize parents who are employed in the protective services to aid in formulating this program. We are also currently in the process of formulating a Brownie/Girl Guide group in the same manner.

Q14. Does your school integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen family practices, for example information on health, recreational activities, parenting etc? If so, how is this done?

A. We invite guest speakers to give lectures on health and parenting practices. We also utilize the services of the social worker and guidance counselor assigned to the school. We also collaborate with skilled personnel to provide a snag golf and tennis program at a low cost

to interested students. The snag golf began as a Government program but when it was cancelled we offered the opportunity for the trainer to continue a snag golf program outside of school hours and at a low cost for interested students.

Q15. How does your school integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen student learning and development?

A. In this area we capitalize on the school support personnel to deliver information to both students and parents on topics that would strengthen student learning and development. We also have monthly services at the school for spiritual development and enrichment.

Q16. How would you feel about working with the principal, other members of staff, the parents and members of the community to formulate a written parental involvement policy to guide parental involvement practices at your school?

A. That would be perfect since I currently try my best to get the parents of the students in my class involved in their children's education.

Q17. What challenges do you anticipate in formulating such a policy?

A. Time will definitely be a challenge since many stakeholders may have other responsibilities. Also getting all stakeholders on board may prove to be another challenge since some may be interested in expending efforts in developing such a program and others may not be.

Q18. Please list any suggestions, ideas, or improvements that you think would benefit your school's existing parent involvement efforts.

A. Inviting more informational and motivational speakers to make presentations to the parent body.