

**PERCEPTION OF DAVEYTON PARENTS ON THEIR
ROLE IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR
FOUNDATION PHASE CHILDREN**

by

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ABSTRACT

The research essay is an attempt to attend to the role of parents in the education of foundation phase children. Through the combination of in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with parents and teachers of the foundation phase the purpose was to find out what their views and opinions are about the issue under investigation. The study focuses on the Daveyton parents' perception of their role in the education of foundation phase children.

New insights were gained into parents' perception of their role in education and teachers' perception of the role of parents in education. Findings reveal that parents view their role in terms of financial contributions, collection of quarterly reports and meeting attendance. Data revealed that the majority of concerned parents are mothers. They started to realise that teachers cannot do everything on their own. Some mothers were willing to volunteer to help clean the classrooms and toilets. Their help was however not sought about academic matters. They suggested that given training, they will be able to help the teacher to help with other classroom chores such as the invigilation of tests or observation of teacher-child intervention. Evidence from the study suggest that parents and teachers need to co-operate for the effectiveness of education. There is a need for the school to be decentralized so that parents might be actively involved in the school. Most parents cannot express themselves in meetings, and as such they suggested that meetings be held in classrooms, with class teachers.

Furthermore, parents need to be empowered in education. Responsibility will be transferred and shared amongst parents and teachers. Parents could take on roles as supporters, learners, service-givers and teachers.

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SECTION I

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, the context in which the study takes place will be discussed. The statement of the problem and motivation for the study, background to the study, the aims and objectives, the research methodology and the clarification of key concepts of the study, as well as the general overview of the sections to follow, will be stated. The research questions will also be proposed.

1.2 CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

Under apartheid, education in South Africa was divisional, racially biased and ethnically based. Inequalities in education damaged education for blacks and vast disparities were in existence. Teachers alone were responsible for the motivation of the learning process, and for encouraging a love of learning. This placed great stress on the teachers and what they wanted to achieve. The community at large was not encouraged to contribute to educational matters. In *Speak Out* newsletter (1998:4) it is stated that schools were regarded as 'closed' institutions where only teachers, principals and department officials made decisions. The parents were excluded. Parental involvement in education was perceived in the light of financial contributions towards building the schools. Parents thus had roles that were non-academic and did not translate into active participation in school management.

The South African School Act which came into effect in 1997 created a single school system in which people can work together to improve the quality of education. The effectiveness of education in schools is to be determined by active

involvement of members of the community namely teachers, learners and parents from the foundation phase level. Sergiovanni (1994:1-4) describes a community as consisting of committed members who form relationships. Through integration with the community, the school can change its status from being only a learning institution to also becoming a community resource centre.

There is a need to address the perception of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase. This study will investigate perceptions of parents on their educational role. It also hopes to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the parents of children in foundations phase. For the purpose of the research, two foundation phase schools in Daveyton were selected, namely Kgalema Primary School and Madingoane Primary School.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION OF STUDY

1.3.1 Background to the problem

Daveyton is an African urban area in the eastern part of Gauteng and is situated +/-10 km from Benoni. The community is made up by different ethnic groups such as the Zulu, Northern Sotho, Tswana, Swazi, Xhosa, Tsonga and Venda groups. Due to the background of apartheid, schools are ethnically defined. The two schools selected for inquiry purposes serve the Northern Sotho ethnic group. Most of the children in these schools live in informal settlements, and most parents are illiterate.

Dekker (1995:484) states that much has been said about parents' involvement but nothing has been done. It seems that in African schools, parent involvement includes paperwork for administration purposes only. Even if parents-teachers associations are formed, they are short lived. Low turn-outs at parents meetings and class visits are

common. In most cases parents who attend meetings are women. It seems that educational responsibility is shifted to mothers and teachers alone. As a result, parents are assumed to be uninterested in their children's education. In white schools however, parents seem to contribute considerably to the running of the school. The partnership between parents and the school is based on commitment. Parents in these schools are involved in decision making, on admission policies, school fees and the appointment of teachers. Furthermore, parents also contribute to the building of a culture of learning and teaching in the schools.

The problem investigated in this research is perceptions of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase. This study is an effort to redress the situation by conducting qualitative research with parents of foundation phase children, on their perceptions on their role in education. The research is therefore motivated by the assumption that a valid needs assessment will be forthcoming, which could contribute to the body of research on parental involvement in education.



1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to:

- ascertain perceptions of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase

- ascertain perceptions of teachers on parents' role in the education of their children in the foundation phase.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

According to Pamela (1994:64)

the design of a research study includes the overall approach to be taken and detailed information about how the study will be carried out with whom and where.

In this study a qualitative research design is proposed. A detailed description of perceptions of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase will be given. Patton (1987:9) states that a qualitative design is much more flexible in accomplishing the set goal. The researcher's aim in qualitative design is to analyse the natural setting critically, to avoid bias and to obtain valid and reliable data. Strausse (1990:19) recommends qualitative research design on the basis that the conviction of the researcher is based on research experience.

As the research is much more interactive and iterative, a detailed description of perceptions of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase, will be given. To uncover and understand parents' perceptions on their role in education, qualitative research methods will be used. In-depth interviews and focus group interviews will be used to collect data.

Pamela (1994:79) describes an interview as a conversation with a purpose. An in-depth interview is a structured one to one conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer will ask open-ended questions in order to discover the interviewees perspective. I am going to interview four foundation phase teachers to get their perceptions about the parents role in the education of their children. The key informants of the study will be teachers in the higher grades in the selected schools.

The other method to be used is the focus group interview. Patton (1987:135) says, "a focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic". Three focus group interviews will be conducted. The first two will be conducted with twelve foundation phase, parents and the third, with six grade four - seven parents. This will contribute to the validity of the information.

A tape recorder will be used to record the data gathered in all the interviews. The data will be transcribed immediately after each interview session. The transcribed data will then be coded, categorised and analysed before proceeding with the next interview Strausse (1990). In this study the following questions will be investigated and answered.

1.6 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions will guide my research:

- What are the perceptions of parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase?
- What are the teachers' perceptions of the role of parents in the foundation phase?

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.7.1 Education

Education is the process in which one learns intentionally or unintentionally, hence, the existence of different kinds of education, such as formal education, non-formal

education and informal education. Formal education takes place in schools. This involves the deliberate transmission of the knowledge we receive in schools. Informal education refers to incidental transmission of knowledge throughout one's life. One can learn a skill, gain knowledge from a friend, media and or family member. Non-formal education is the systematic transfer of communication skills, knowledge and attitude provided outside the limits of the school.

1.7.2 Foundation phase

Foundation phase is a new term which refers to junior primary school. It is the first three years of school from grade one to grade three.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study consists of the following sections:

- In section one I provided an orientation of the study.
- Section two will involve the literature review.
- Section three deals with data collection and data analysis.
- Finally, in section four I will present the findings and make recommendations based on the study's findings.

SECTION II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, I am going to create a theoretical framework within which the research questions about the parents perception on their role in the education of their children will be phrased. Evidence from theory and other literature will be used to rebut or support the assumptions I hold about the issue under investigation. It will also serve to justify my argument. Concepts used will be construed to help the reader to understand the context of the study.

2.2 THE SCHOOL AS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

The school is a place of formal teaching and learning. It is an institution established to meet the academic needs of the community. Barnard, in Van der Westhuizen (1991:405) says:

A school is not an independent or isolated entity, it operates in a social context an important element of which is the local community.

The constituents in the school are teachers, parents and learners. Schools were established to provide children with specialised knowledge and skills which some parents lacked.

Put differently, a school can be regarded as a formal, professional organisation.

Sergiovanni, in Van der Westhuizen (1991) describes organization as the arrangement of activities and resources of the institution by allocating duties, responsibilities and authority to people to promote collaboration, and to achieve objectives. Traditionally, the concept school was, misinterpreted as parents were only involved in financial matters, and excluded from decision making.

Even though Sergiovanni and Barnard seem to differ in opinion, it seems that there is concession between the two. Barnard seems to be answering Sergiovanni's question of school as an organization or community. He states that a school operates in a social context. We can therefore refer to a school that exists within the organization.

2.3 THE COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT

A community is a group of people who are brought together by their usage of norms and values that are similar. Cohen (1985:245) defines a community as:

being symbolically constructed. It contains a system of values, norms and moral codes which provide a sense of identity to with a united entity. A community operates within boundaries which are set by norms, values and culture. A boundary marks the beginning the end of the community.

Culture is what people in a community do everyday, how they behave, talk and relate to one another. Therefore the school can be referred to as a community consisting of pupils, teachers, parents and administrative staff who are all bound together by the rules and regulations of the school.

Sergiovanni (1994:218) says:

Communities are collections of individuals who are bounded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of

shared ideas and ideals.

The bond that exists among members of a community transform them from the I-attitude to a collective, we-attitude. In communities, connections among people are not based on contracts, but on commitment.

Seemingly, Cohen and Sergiovanni concede in their definition of community as a group of people bound together by a sense of commitment . The partners in the community are inter-dependent on one another. They depend on each other. In my study, the focus is on the parents' role in education. I make the assumption that the community in which parents find themselves, influences how they perceive their role in education.

2.4 THE PARENTS ROLE IN EDUCATION

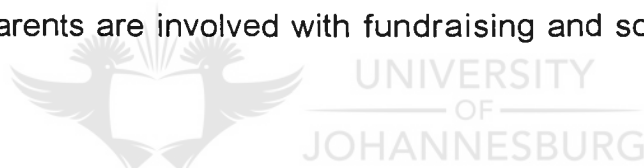
Education takes place everywhere, throughout life, through the mediating assistance of people and artefacts. For example mediation takes place when a person helps, explains and facilitates in the life of another person. Jacobs, in Louw (1993:119-120) stipulates that a child's first experience of community life begins at home. The family is the primary institution in the socialization process of the child. Parents, as primary educators, play a decisive role in the education of their children. They provide cultural mediation in the life of the child. The child imitates parents' examples and adopts a culture through social interaction with parents. The child acquires communication skills and social skills informally from home. As such, parents as the natural, and first educators, should be incorporated in the decision-making process in the schools their children attend.

There are many decisions taken by schools without parental consultation but which affects their childrens' participation in school. Parents should ensure that their school going children attends school regularly. Parents who fail, without just cause, to comply with this will be guilty of an offence and can be fined. They also make financial contributions to the school and have the right to demand accountability regarding the spending of the

school funds. Parents have the right to explore options regarding religion for their children. If for example there are children following different religions such as Islam, Buddhist, Christianity and Judaism in the school, parents are given the option of whether their children attend classes in religious instruction or not.

Dekker (1995:484) states that in South Africa parents involvement in education has long been acknowledged, but nothing has been done to prove its feasibility. In the newsletter, *Speak Out* (1998:14) it is stated that traditionally parents' role in education revolved around the establishment and construction of schools. The school was perceived as a institution that served to complete the education of the child, which was initiated in the home. Schools had no welcoming attitude towards parents. That is why parents were excluded from the decision making process in the school.

The opening up of model C schools to black children increased challenges and parental involvement. Parents started to realize that teachers cannot do everything on their own. In model C schools parents are involved with fundraising and school functions. Steyn (1994:188) recalls:



One principal said that parent bodies should be structured in such a way as to hold up the arms of the teachers. Their role should be supportive and not interfering.

Parents in Daveyton need to become involved in education in order to protect the school's property and buildings against vandalism, and support the work of the teachers and the principal, and consequently improve the quality of education their children receive.

In the foundation phase, black parents are mostly needed to help teachers clean the classrooms and toilets. This role has to be expanded as this period is during the first years of the child's formal learning. Parents need to know how teaching in the school occurs, to be able to help the child at home.

Even though in model C schools parental involvement increased, the same pattern was not identified in other predominantly black schools. In black schools it seems parents still do not feel that they have any contribution to make in their children's education. Parents-teachers associations exist to no avail. Most parents do not make themselves available for school governance elections, because of their educational background. Those who do serve on the parent-teacher association stay on as members, even those whose children are no longer attending that particular school.

The socio-economic background of families also affects the parents availability to the school. Some parents fail to turn up at the meetings because of their working conditions. Some are employed as contract labourers. They work from Sunday to Sunday, and are thus denied their right of living with their families permanently. Some are employed in night-shift jobs, and are thus denied the chance to engage in evening activities of schools. Parents' educational background also affects their involvement in education. Illiterate people are characterised by a low morale, are demotivated, and do not take things seriously (Louw 1993).

Dekker (1995:35) maintains that the success of a child's education is based on the support of mothers. In Japan for example, mothers are more supportive of their children's education because the success of each mother is determined by her children's achievement. It is suggested that this example be adopted in the foundation phase, so that a good foundation in education can be laid. This would promote effective teaching and learning in Daveyton schools. The existing relationship between parents and teachers can be improved.

2.5 EDUCATION AND CHANGE

Education in South Africa is undergoing change. There is a paradigm shift in the culture of teaching and learning from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. The aim

of this change is to empower South Africans to be more competitive and competent in relation to other countries. Change can only be effective if our perceptions of education can be changed. Freire's critical theory (1987:19) believes that education is what people do and not what is done to them. The emphasis is on the active involvement of all members of the community, including learners, teachers and parents. This study focuses on the perceptions of parents and their role in education. I will investigate how schools can become welcoming and accessible places to the community, in particular parents of children attending these Daveyton schools.

2.6 LINKAGE STRUCTURES BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE FAMILY

The lack of communication between the school and the family is the main reason for parents not getting involved in the school. Many parents are ignorant about the nature, purpose, and the general way in which schools are run. It must however be stated that there are also parents who are willing to contribute constructively to the school activities. The question of communication needs to be attended to. The principal could ensure reciprocal communication between the school and the home. He should determine what the community and school expect of each other for the sake of effective teaching and learning, and consequently, community development.

The development of the child rests with the educative teaching partnership between parents and teachers. Barnard(1991:425) maintains that regular and effective two-way communication between the school and home is needed to bind the various components of this partnership into a closely knit unit, for the mutual exchange of information regarding the child. The principal can communicate with parents about the child's scholastic, behavioural, or financial matters, as well as important dates with regard to meetings, school functions, sports and cultural matters, and the learners attendance.

As some of the parents in Daveyton are illiterate, it might be a problem for them to respond

to letters sent by the principals. The letters might not be read. Due to the ignorant attitude and a lack of motivation the important dates might not be recorded. Meetings and other functions in the school would then be forgotten about. In addition when the essential written communications are in English, they may lose their effectiveness when parents themselves have difficulty understanding English. Parents need to be empowered to take on their full responsibility in the school. This leads to a need for the introduction of non-formal education for parents, about their value as partners in the education of their children.

2.7 CHANGING SCHOOLS INTO COMMUNITIES

Sergiovanni (1994:215-225) maintains that schools should be seen as communities consisting of learners, parents and teachers who share the same ideas and ideals on education. When schools change into communities, they become assets of the community. Parents in these school communities will thus be inventors, organisers, initiators and core educators and will benefit their community. School community members then are bound together by commitment and are likely to work as a team.

The members of the school community as a team, have to make decisions as to how they will orient themselves with each other. Sergiovanni (1994:220-221) explains Parson's pattern of relationship as follows: In schools for example, principal, teachers, students and parents have to make decisions as to how they will perform their respective roles in their relationship to others. The teacher has to decide if the relationship with the students is to be professional, or if relationship is to be more affective, where the students are treated as if they were family members. Other questions such as whether students will be given equal treatment in accordance with uniform standards, rules and regulations (universalism), will be treated more preferentially and individually, will also be addressed.

Adding to Parson's pattern of relationships, Wickstom (1994:6) proposed a number of

metaphors that describe what schools should be. These were a factory, department store, family, garden and the Olympics. A school should be a factory where there is participation, production and quality control. Secondly, a school should be seen as a department store where everyone has the right to choose. Parents may choose the schools their children may attend or the subjects their children should do. Thirdly, a school should be seen as a garden; a place where beautiful things grow at their own rate, and in their own manner, under the educator's mediation. The school should be characterised by growth, beauty, diversity and interest. Schools as the Olympics is characterised by competition and excellence. The emphasis on the school is not on winning, but rather on the production of competent people. If schools can be changed into communities, then the perception of parents on their role in education will also change.

2.8 THE PARENTS EMPOWERMENT IN EDUCATION

The relationships within the school community should encourage active involvement of parents in education. Atmore, in Le Roux (1993:139) states that parental involvement in the education of their children increases benefits to the parents through skill acquisition, heightened self esteem and empowerment. Parents will know their children's strengths and weaknesses, and parents and teachers will take co-responsibility for the child's development. They will be partners in the education of the children.

The envisaged role of parents in school communities in the foundation phase will include the parents as supporters. They will be in roles such as service givers and fund-raisers. Parents could also become learners in the process of observing their children and teachers in the educational environment. They will also be part of the decision-making and policy making process at the school. As partners in the school, they will be involved in teachers-parents bodies and activities.

2.9 DEVELOPING THE CORE-PLUS SCHOOL

Townsend (1994:105) describes the core-plus framework as a framework in which the effectiveness of a school is determined by the achievement of its goal. The government determines general goals for all schools, which is the part referred to as the core of the core-plus. This, for example, can refer to the curriculum and methodology that ensures effective teaching. The plus-part of the core-plus will be that which the community will do to ensure effective teaching. This study's focus will be on the plus-part, as the perception of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase will be determined. Ways of promoting parents involvement in schools have been forwarded. Parents opinions and contributions in terms of active participation should be encouraged. They should also identify and articulate the values and beliefs of those who share the learning site, and help to develop the mission of the school. Parents should also help create a culturally encouraging and learner friendly climate. They should also assist managers and educators in improving their professional tasks.

The school community will then help in rebuilding the culture of learning and teaching. The partnership among teachers, parents and learners will become one force in shaping the curriculum of the school. The effectiveness of a core-plus school will introduce community education as a necessary approach in addressing parents apathy in the education of their foundation phase children.

2.10 CONCLUSION

This section focused on the parents' role in education. The school as a community was proposed to make schools accessible to the community, and to involve the whole community in the education process. This led to the proposal of the core-plus framework.

SECTION III

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the methodology used in the collection of data. Processes that were involved in the collection of data, were focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with subjects, as well as interviews with key informants to the study. The perceptions of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase, as well teachers perceptions on parents' role in education were recorded. Data was then transcribed and sequentially analyzed through a combination of different analytical methods.

3.2 PROCESSES OF DATA COLLECTION

In gathering data, qualitative research methods were used. These included focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with participants and key informants. Qualitative research methods lead to the understanding of peoples' perceptions. In addition to that each qualitative method attempted to capture the parents' and educators' words and actions (Pamela 1994: 69). The interviewing process was not seen as a natural interaction, thus entry to the school, roles and frames of reference were first negotiated.

Pamela (1994 :70) describes gaining access as a process whereby the researcher approaches the key individuals of the setting who are willing to share the focus of inquiry. In my case, to gain access into Madingoane intermediate school I personally visited the school in August 1998. I introduced myself as a student from Rand

Afrikaans University who is doing research in the field of community education . I presented my written research proposal to the principal . He then recommended the head of department in the foundation phase as the person whom I had to contact for further arrangements. My appointment with the participants of the study was scheduled for the week of 25 - 28 August 1998 .

3.3 THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

In this inquiry interviewing was used to better understand parents' perceptions on their role in the education of foundation phase children. Two kinds of interviews were conducted, namely, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews. The venue for the interviews was the head of departments office. The chairs were arranged in a semi-circle, with a tape recorder placed in the centre. I was seated on the first chair next to the entrance.

Each group for the focus group interviews consisted of six members. I first welcomed the participants, restated my interest in hearing about parents perceptions of their role in education, and asked permission to use the audiotape. I explained to them what the aim of the inquiry is, what is expected of them, the duration of the interview and the language of communication to be used. The following raw data serve as examples of how data was transcribed from N-Sotho into English to assure validity of data collected for the study. I asked parents about the extent to which they attend meetings. In response Parent 4 said :

Re ra gore ...batho ba a swarega, bangwe ba ya mahung,, ba bangwe mesomong . Efela ka kakaretso ba tla ka go ata ge ba biditswe. [People have commitments, some attend funerals and others work over the weekend. Generally the attendance is good]

Probes helped me as the interview continued and participants ultimately opened up and started to respond to the questions. For example, as the interviewer I used the following probe question: "giving the fact that the school belongs to the community, what is it you can do as a concerned parent to improve the conditions of the foundation phase classrooms?" Parent 6 responded with:

Re nyaka gore mistres wa bana ba rena a re bitse e le rena batswadi ba grade 1 feela. Ge go na le mathata a re botse. I mean a gona ntho ye e ka re sitang..... [The grade 1 class teacher should invite all the parents in her class to discuss problems if there are any. I mean nothing is impossible....]"

To obtain more clarity, I asked as probes what the problems are that exist at this school. I also asked which of the problems that have been mentioned, could be solved or addressed through voluntary work by parents and whether they would be willing to volunteer. Furthermore, they were asked in which areas they would be interested in volunteering their services. Parent 5 responded with:

I am afraid of other parents and their talks. They will say I think I am better than others. *Ke ithekisa go mathisere* [they would think that I'm carrying favour with the teacher]

Parent 6 response was:

People can talk, I don't want to be the talk of the township. Some will say if I am rich why are my children not in model C schools.

I took notes during the interview. Key phrases and major points made by

respondents were noted. This helped me to formulate new questions as the interview progressed. The experience I gained in the first interview helped me to conduct the second focus group interview with more success.

The information I obtained from the focus group interviews was used to guide me in formulating questions for in-depth interviews. The question was about the role of parents in the school. Teacher 1 response was:

We have problems in getting parents to be part of the school. Parents who come to school regularly are those whose children are doing well in class. There are children with learning problems and I have problems with contacting the parents. If I invite them to come to school they don't turn up. I have a child in my class whom I gave several letters to give to his parents, but they did not respond. The child's quarterly reports have not been collected till this day.



Teacher 2 response was:

I have a child in my class who had no shoes. I gave her some clothes and shoes but the parents never said anything to show appreciation. Parents feel inferior they perceive us to be ... I don't know. These parents can make you feel guilty because you gave their children clothes. I feel bad because they don't want me to know them.

One key informant commented about children who stay with grandparents and said that at times the child skipped the classes to go from door to door begging for food.

At the end of the interview, I provided informal feedback to the interviewees. The aim was to include their reactions as part of the data. Some of the subjects volunteered to help me in furthering my research. On the last day I gave the feedback about the interviews to the principal. The principal suggested that on completion of my study, I should supply them with a copy of my research essay.

After each interview I fully transcribed the data in North-Sotho. This data helped me identify areas of uncertainty, and helped me review the quality of information received. I re-phrased questions for the next interview, in order to fill in the gaps. For example, in the question which focussed on parents knowledge of their children's classrooms, participants remarked about the physical appearance of the class. No comment was made about the pictures, charts and children's art on the walls.

To fill in the gaps, I went back to some of the participants and I asked the following follow-up questions: " If the teacher was to show you how to supervise during the writing of tests and to observe teacher-child interaction in class, would you be willing to help? If so how will you help?" The one parent responded as follows:

If given a chance and given training, yes... I will be able to help with supervision, paired reading and dictation.

On completion I then transcribed data from North-Sotho to English and started with analysis.

3.4 THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves the process of coding, categorising, clustering and consolidation of data. Miles and Herberman (1994:50) recommend early coding because the researcher can use existing data to improve as she continues with data collection. In the event of a category being poorly developed, the researcher can return to the

field and collect data to fill in the gaps (Miles & Hurberman:1994).

Data was sequentially analysed. I started with open coding where concepts were formed and coded. In the study on the perception of Daveyton parents on their role in the education of their foundation phase children, the following codes were proposed:

- Par-R : Parent role in education
- Par-Tel: Parents-teacher interaction....
- Par-C: Parents cooperation
- Dec: Decentralising schools
- Par-Emp: Parent empowerment
- Dem-da: Demographic data

An example of how data was coded is given below in Table 1.

Table 1: Data Coding



Par-R Dem-da	P1: “ I attend meetings to support teachers because if I don’t come they will ill-treat my child.”
Par-Tel Dem-da	P2: “I visit the class teacher to discuss my child’s progress and to check his schoolwork.
Par-R Par-C	P3: “To show that teachers are supportive when teachers send us letters we respond by signing them and returning them to school.”

3.5 FORMING CATEGORIES

This is the process in which the researcher groups concepts that seems to pertain to each other. Each category consists of a set of properties which can be dimensionalized to give a category further specification. For example, the sub-category of marital status of a parent, has general properties such as single, divorced or married, which will specify the reasons for parents perception of their role in the education of their foundation phase children. Examples of categorization is given below in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Data of Parents

CATEGORY: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	
PROPERTIES	DIMENSIONAL RANGE
1 Parent interested in the child's school work.	Mother, Father, Grandparents, Guardian.
2 Educational Background	Illiterate, Literate, Semi-illiterate.
3 Age	15 - 30, 31 - 40, 40+.
4 Residents	Own house, Renting house, Informal settlement.
5 Economic Status	Employed, Unemployed, Self-employed.

The other category identified in the research is parent involvement in education. Its properties are parents role in the school, parent teacher interaction, and parent cooperation. Each property is dimensionalised on the basis of the parents motivation to get involved in education.

Table 3: Parent Involvement in Education

CATEGORY: PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION	
PROPERTIES	DIMENSIONAL
Parents' role in the school	Motivation → External ↘ Internal
Parent-Teacher integration	Motivation → External ↘ Internal
Parent-Co-operation	Motivation → External ↘ Internal

The category decentralization of schools emerged because most parents needed the school to be localised. They want to work in small groups in their children's classes. They are against the idea of general meetings in the school. The following is a table of how data was categorised.

Table 4: Decentralization in Schools



CATEGORY: DECENTRALIZATION IN SCHOOLS	
PROPERTIES	DIMENSIONAL RANGE
Parents attendance	Extend more less
Parents participation	Intensity high low
Parents initiative role	Intensity high low
Parent voluntary work	Extend more less
Parents training	Extend more less

3.6 CONSOLIDATION OF DATA

A matrix table was used to cluster data. All the categories were identified, and their properties are indicated in the table.

Method of data collection.	Category 1 Parent involvement	Category 2 Linking structures between the school and the home.	Category 3 Decentralising the schools.	Category 4 Parent involvement.	Category 5 Demographic data.
Interview NO 1.	-attend meetings -visit class teachers -homework -collect reports -financial contributions	-newsletters -passive listeners in meetings -fear teachers and parents	-small groups -initiators -competition within the classes -parent attendance	-Saturday classes -initiators -training	-single -married -mothers and grandmothers -illiterate -unemployed -self employed
Interview NO 2	-school uniform -cleaning classrooms -help with home works -signing school reports -respond to school letters	-class teacher -class meetings	-class representatives -class meetings -parents voluntary work	-training -learner and observer -competency	-mothers -single -married -illiterate -literate -unemployed
Interview NO 3	-gifted children's parents -parents do not collect reports -parents do not respond to teachers letters	-parents do not respond to letters -parents do not contribute in the meetings -passive listeners	-school community assert -teacher coordinates	-home-works -supervision -parents observe teacher-child interaction	-female -married -teachers

3.7 CONCLUSION

An overview of data collection, processing of data, coding and categorising has been given. Selected examples of raw data, data processing and tables were presented in this section. Section four will discuss the findings and will forward recommendations based on these findings.

SECTION IV

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the final part of section three, the final analysis of data was outlined. The data revealed the following categories:

- parent involvement in education,
- demographic data,
- linkage of structures between the school and the family,
- decentralization the schools,
- parent empowerment in education,

This supported my claim as stated in section one, that parents are uninvolved in the education of their children. The above mentioned findings will be explained from the perspective of community education.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 Parental involvement in Education

Data collected revealed the perceptions of parents on their role in the education of their children in the foundation phase. The parental role is viewed in terms of financial contributions, collection of quarterly reports and attendance of meetings. One of the concepts revealed was the parents attendance of meetings. Most parents consider attending meetings as important even if they do not contribute to discussions. Their purpose is to be marked present in the register, because they fear that teachers will mis-treat their children in classes if they do not attend. It seems parents do not know their value as primary educators. Their definition of their role is a non-educational role.

In support of this perception Dekker (1995 :484), states that in South Africa, parents involvement in education has long been acknowledged, but nothing has been done to prove its feasibility. A related factor which explained parents unavailability to their children, is their own educational background. Most parents are illiterate, hence their inferiority complexes. This is exacerbated by their negative perception of teachers. They think that teachers have an unwelcoming attitude. They also think that teachers will mistreat and fail their children, if they were to say something in the meetings that the teacher disapprove of. As a result they attend meetings but stay silent partners without power.

The demographic data of parents revealed that the majority of concerned parents are mothers. According to Dekker (1995:35), the success of education is based on the support of mothers. In responding to the schools plea for help in the provision of services, some mothers were willing to volunteer to help clean the classrooms and toilets. Their help was however not sought about academic matters. They suggested that if given training, they would be able to help the teacher with other classroom chores such as the invigilation of tests or observation of teacher -child interaction.

4.2.2 Linkage structures between the school and home

Most parents cannot express themselves in meetings. For this reason they suggested that meetings be held in classrooms, with class teachers. They felt that by so doing, all the parents would attend class meetings and take an active role in the education process. They will also be free to communicate and initiate good ideas for the sake of their children's education. Barnard (1991 :425) supports the idea that the development of the child rests in the educative teaching partnership between parents and teachers. He further states that the principal should ensure reciprocal communication between the

school and the home. According to Barnard the principal should determine what the community expects of the school, as this could facilitate the process of effective teaching and learning.

In addition, the language used in communication materials is another contributing factor to parent involvement in education. Most parents have difficulty understanding English. This results in them not reading letters from the school. To improve this situation, the principal and teachers should communicate in the vernacular, which is not North-Sotho. In addition, they must become involved in the community, in community activities. By so doing, they will be able to identify the community's expectations of the school and promote the school-community relationship.

4.2.3 Decentralising the schools

Most parents feel that general parents meetings have no value as only a minority of parents contribute. As a result of the inferiority complexes parents feel their voices could be heard if meetings within the schools were localised. They feel that each class should select parent representatives to represent them in school general meetings. If there is anything that need specific attention, meetings can always be convened in different classrooms.

Parents feel competition within the school will be encouraged. Responsibility will be transferred and shared among teachers and parents. Wickstrom's (1994:6) metaphors of what schools should do to be effective are illustrated here. If all parents are involved and know their rights then the school would best be described as (a) a factory where there is production and quality control, for example parents being responsible for the tuck shop at school (b) a department store where everyone is given an opportunity to choose, for example the choice of school subjects for children to follow (c) a family where there is love and compassion, parents-teacher co-operation (d) a garden where there is growth, beauty, diversity and interest, for example an environment created by the teachers that is conducive to learning and harmonious relationships amongst children of

various cultural backgrounds and parents sharing in this responsibility by providing that which is needed for learning and (e) as Olympics where competition and excellence are encouraged for example the school offering certificates to students in various academic subjects, on the sport fields and making parents proud of their childrens' achievements.

4.2.4 Parents empowerment in education

As most of the parents are illiterate, they need training to be empowered. Some parents suggested that because at times they do not understand their children's homework, they think Saturday literacy classes for them would be effective. Parents need to be trained on how to relate and interact with a foundation phase child. They also need to know the methods of instruction when helping the children with their home-work. If training was provided, then parents could take on the roles of supporters, learners, service givers and teachers. By doing so, the culture of learning and teaching can be rebuilt.

4.3 IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS



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The fact that parent involvement is recommended, indicates the willingness of parents to participate in the educational activities at the school. The school should identify areas in which parents may become involved. If their services are not effectively utilized, it is possible that they may unnecessarily criticize activities and people involved in the school. Opportunities to foster parents's awareness and parent training sessions, which introduce parents to their new role in the school, are vital for the effective management of the school.

An urgent attempt should be made to involve the larger community in the school, and the school should play an active role in organizations within the community. This will help bridge the existing gap between the school and community at large. It will also help in preventing community conflict from spilling over into the school. Educational policy-making should be based on a well grounded situational analysis, in which community members are involved at a grass-root level. In this way the community will determine the spirit and direction of the

education of its children.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In conclusion it may be stated that this research covered only a small section of the broad field of parent involvement in schools. This is due to the length of the essay.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This essay reflects the perception of parents and teachers with regard to parents role in education in the foundation phase. The section of the study on literature review created a theoretical framework within which the research questions were put forward. Qualitative research design was used. Data on perceptions of the participants were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. Data was recorded for verification and reliability. Tables and matrixes were used to analyse and consolidate data.

I have concluded that parents perceive their roles as cleaners and subservient to that of the teacher. Parents further attend meetings just to be marked present. They are afraid to make their voice heard in general meetings but prefer classroom meetings where they will feel free to express themselves and not feel intimidated by the “learned”. New discoveries such as decentralizing the school and parent empowerment were made.

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ADDENDUM 1

GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE.

- 1 Welcome.
 - 1.1 Individual approval for audio taping the interview.

 - 2.1 Permission to record the interview on tape.
 - 2.2 Confirmation of confidentiality agreement, participants understand that their names will not be used in any way
 - 2.3 Inform participants that anytime during the interview the tape-recorder can be turned off.

 - 3 Introduction
 - 3.1 Familiarise everyone
 - 3.2 What made you decide to participate in this group?

 - 4 Opening question
- What is your role in the education of your child? What are you doing currently at your child's school?
- 5 Questions
 - 5.1 What is your role as a parent in the foundation phase?
 - 5.2 What are your opinions about parents role in the education of their children.
 - 5.3. How do you feel about the role of parents in the education of their children?
 - 5.4 What services can you volunteer to provide in the school?

 - 6 End
 - 6.1. Reconfirm confidentiality agreement.
 - 6.2. Thank you for participating.

