MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

THE STATE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF ECD LEARNERS AT TWO SCHOOLS IN THE DISOSI SCHOOLS CLUSTER OF TSHOLOTSHO DISTRICT

BY

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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DECLARATION

I, Ngwenya Proud do hereby declare that this project is a result of my own investigation and research and that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other University for a similar or any other degree award.

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       Student's signature   Date

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       Supervisor's signature   Date

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       Chairperson's signature   Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my lovely wife Nhanisi Ngwenya and our son Mzamomuhle Tabaka Ngwenya. This study is also dedicated to my younger brother (Leader Ngwenya) and my young sisters (Kindness Lungile Ngwenya and Pretty Ngwenya). This study is also dedicated to my grandmother (Ngwenya Sikhonzile) who nurtured me. I would also like to dedicate this study to my uncle Gilbert Mpande who is always encouraging me to keep on studying. Lastly, this study is dedicated to my parents Edward Ndlovu (late) and Sitholakele Ngwenya.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the state of parental involvement in the education of ECD learners in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District. The study was aimed at investigating the forms in which parents are involved, the structures that enhance parental involvement in the cluster, challenges faced as a result of parental involvement and the strategies that enhance parental involvement. Data were collected through the use of interviews for parents and questionnaires for ECD teachers and School administrators (Heads and T.I.Cs). A sample of 13 ECD teachers, 25 parents and 4 school administrators was selected. Purposive sampling was used for teachers and administrators while convenient sampling was used for parents. Case study was used. Data were presented through the use of frequency tables, graphs and descriptions. Findings show that parents are not fully active in some of the forms of parental involvement. Recommendations for enhancement of parental involvement were offered based on the findings of the study.

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails the background to the study which highlights what triggered the researcher to carry out this study. Statement of the problem is also included in this chapter as it clearly identifies the concept under study. The other items that are found in this chapter are research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations. Definition of terms is also part of this chapter.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The issue of including parents in the education of their children can be traced back to the 18th century theorists like Pestallozi and Froebel. (Mawere, Thomas and Nyaruwata 2015). This means that the involvement of parents in the education of their children is not something new, but it has been there even before the coming in of Early Childhood Development in schools. OECD (2012) points out that parents are the primary educators and they are used by teachers to learn about the child's interests and home-style. In agreement, Mawere et al. (2015) point out that parents are the first teachers of their children and have unique knowledge concerning their children as compared to the teachers. This is because the parents know the history of the child as far as the child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development as well as medical history are concerned. Before the child comes to school, it's the parents who socialize the child, therefore the parents will find it easy to facilitate the education of their children.

Mawere et al. (2015) argue that the care and education of ECD children is a right and responsibility of the parent. This means that the learning of ECD children is largely based on the involvement of the parents. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in Article 11 states that every child has a right to Education. Therefore the parents are supposed to send their children to school so as to uphold this fundamental right. This shows that parents are involved in the education of the ECD children since they are the ones who bring them to school because if they were not involved they would have stayed with them at home.

The Warnock Committee as cited in Mawere et al. (2015:23) says, "In the earliest years, parents rather than teachers should be regarded wherever possible as the main educators of their children." In this respect the ECD teacher may use home-works so that the parents help the learners at home. United Nations (2015) points out that Article 26:3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says, "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." The above commission clearly states that the curriculum is chosen by the parents. In our Zimbabwean situation, before the introduction of the new curriculum which was first implemented at the beginning of 2017, parents were first consulted on the areas to be taught to children. This clearly shows that parental involvement has a great role in the education.

Parliament Zimbabwe (2010) points out one of the aims of the ECD Committee as to increase parental awareness on development and appropriate practices in raising children. This shows that parents as the main and primary educators of the ECD children need to be involved so that they gain knowledge on raising children. To add on

this point, Armstrong and Goldfield (2004) are of the idea that parents should undergo positive parenting program which has positive impact in children's education.

The Director's Circular number 12 of 2005 describes that parents should play an active role in implementing the ECD program in primary schools by contributing towards construction and equipping of ECD centres through School Development Committees (SDCs). It is said that parents are to maintain a reciprocal relationship with ECD teachers. From this point it shall be noted that parents and teachers of ECD children need to work hand in hand. The parents also need to work with the school authorities in improving the structures at ECD centres. This shows that whatever activity that involves an ECD child the teacher, parents and the administration need to work with each other.

Parents are either directly or indirectly involved in the learning of their children. Oundo, Poipoi and Were (2014:152) say, "... the most effective forms of parental involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home". This means that parents play a crucial role in the education of their children at home.

Director's Circular Number 12 of 2005 also states that a reciprocal relationship between the parent and the ECD practitioner should be maintained. From this statement, one observes that the relationship between the parent and the teacher is a two-way process which involves the teacher and the parent helping each other in educating the ECD learner.

Since ECD A and B classes were introduced into schools in 2005 following the Nziramasanga Commission Report of 1999, this area has drawn the interest of

researchers. Mawere et al. (2015) in their research discovered that parents are rarely involved in ECD programs, the major reason being that teachers do not know how to involve the parents, while some parents hardly get time to involve themselves in the school activities. However, since the introduction of these classes in schools no one has researched on the state of parental involvement in DISOSI cluster in Tsholotsho District. For this reason, this study will be carried out to cover that gap

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The inclusion of ECD A and B classes in primary schools has been embraced by many schools since it is a policy. In some schools infrastructure for these classes is still not adequate. Parents are seen as key players in the provision of resources and in the decision making. This research then seeks to find the state of parental involvement in the education of ECD learners at two schools in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 MAIN QUESTION

What is the state of parental involvement in the education of ECD learners at two schools in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District?

1.3.2 SUB-QUESTIONS

1. What are the forms of parental involvement?

2. What structures exist to enhance parental involvement in the education of ECD learners?

3. What challenges are faced with the involvement of parents in the education of ECD learners?

4. What strategies can schools employ to enhance parental involvement in the education of ECD learners?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to assist different stakeholders in education by looking at whether parents are involved or not. The findings of this study will help the teachers, parents, SDC, School administrators and ECD learners.

1.4.1 SIGNIFICANCE TO PRACTICE

To the teachers

The involvement of parents in the education of ECD learners directly affects the teacher. Therefore the study will equip teachers with strategies on how to enhance parental involvement in their teaching.

To the parents

This study will help parents understand that they are the key players in the education of their children and they are the primary educators since they know the background of the child and they are the primary socialising agents of their children.

To the SDC This study will help the SDC members understand that parental involvement is important in the education of ECD learners and this will help them to be more influential in mobilizing parents towards implementation of ECD education.

To the school administrators

This study will help the school administrators, for example the School Heads, TICs and Deputy Heads understand that parents play the major role in the education of ECD learners and this will help them when addressing parents on involvement and also on what activities parents may get involved in.

To the learners

This study will have a positive impact on learners if parents get involved and provide for the needs of learners and helping them in doing their school work at home.

1.4.2 TO THEORY

This study will have positive contribution to theory. The gaps in knowledge that were identified before this study was conducted will be filled. This study is the first of its kind in DISOSI schools cluster. Bridging that gap will add to the existing literature. Future studies may be influenced by the gaps that this research would have left, as well as it will provide literature to other researchers in the area.

1.4.3 TO THE RESEARCHER

The researcher will gain the skills of researching. The researcher will get knowledge and skills that will be of help in the execution of duties. This means that the researcher's skills of implementing parental involvement in the education of ECD learners would be enhanced.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on the state of parental involvement in the education of ECD learners. This study will be conducted in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District. The cluster consists of three primary schools but only two of these will be involved in this study. The participants of this study will be drawn from the two schools involving parents of ECD learners, TICs, ECD practitioners and SDC chairpersons.

1.6 LIMITATIONS

Since the schools are far from each other, the researcher might find it difficult reaching all the participants. To try to curb this, the research will deal with the parents who are near these two schools. Time is also a cause for concern since the researcher is full time employed. The researcher will use the after school time to carry out the research. Since the schools are far from each other, the traveling from one school to the other will be time consuming since the other school is not on the main road therefore getting transport will be a challenge. To curb this, the researcher will ask for a bike from a friend.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.7.1 Parental Involvement

Starkey and Kleir (2000) in Oundo, Poipoi and Were (2014) define parental involvement as the participation of parents in academic learning and other school activities including helping the children in doing their school work at home in order to achieve the educational goals. Eldridge (2002) in Mawere et al (2015) defines parental involvement as the process through which schools, parents and other services work together towards stimulating the children's curiosity and motivating them so as to achieve the

educational objectives. From the above definitions, one may conclude that parental involvement refers to the process by which parents are allowed to work with teachers and to partake in activities that promote the education of their children.

1.7.2 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

UNICEF (2001) defines ECD as the years from conception to eight years, which are important to the complete growth of children, while Gordon and Browne (2004) define ECD as the stage from infancy through to the age of eight years. This means that ECD is a stage of growth in children, which spans from conception up to the age of eight.

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has contextualized the problem under study. The background to the study revealed how the problem of the study was deduced. The statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations have been clearly shown. Key terms have been defined also.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with relevant literature that is related to parental involvement in the education of ECD learners. Literature will be guided by research questions. The headings of the literature review are forms of parental involvement, structures that enhance parental involvement, challenges faced with involvement of parents in Early Childhood Education and strategies that schools can use to enhance parental involvement.

2.1. FORMS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement can take different forms. Research by Mawere et al (2015) revealed that parents are either directly involved or indirectly involved in the education of their children. Epstein (1971) in Mafa and Mabuka (2013) identified six forms of parental involvement. These are parenting, communication, volunteer, home involvement, school governance and collaboration with the community. Literature review will explain these in detail

2.1.1 Parenting : basic responsibilities

Mafa and Mabuka (2013) point out that basic responsibilities of parents that include health and safety, parenting skills, guiding and disciplining children at each age level and building positive home conditions that support learning and behavior appropriate for each grade level. OECD (2012) on parenting highlights that parents need to be assisted

to establish home environments that support learning at home and that prepare children for learning. From the above sources it can be deduced that home environment has great impact on the education of the child.

The parenting styles play a crucial role in the education of the young children. At times parents speak negatively about teachers in front of their children and by doing this they negatively affect the education of their children. Therefore positive parenting is important in the education of early childhood education learners. Armstrong and Goldfeld (2004) in Mawere et al (2015) identified a form of parenting involvement which they termed the Triple P (Posititve Parenting Programme) which was developed in Australia. This program is said to help parents to be positive towards school programs and also to give their children enough time to do their school work as well as giving them rewards to them for doing good so as to motivate them. This program (Positive Parenting Programme) also emphasizes that parents should have realistic expectations. The researcher has realized that parents are at time over expecting, for example a parent of an ECD A child once said, "So and so (stating the name of the child) is not doing well, what are you teaching him because he is failing even to write the first letter of his name?" This clearly shows that the parent is involved in the education of the child but is over expecting. Therefore such programs as Triple P will help parents to have a clear picture of what is expected of the child at each grade level.

2.1.2. Communication : Basic responsibilities of school

Communication between the school and the parents is very crucial if we are to cultivate good relations between home and school. This helps to update each other on the

proceedings or challenges that affect the education of the child. Epstein (1997) as cited in Mafa and Makuba (2013) points out that this form of parental involvement is about the school informing parents about the programs of the school and the progress of the children. It is emphasized that schools need to design strategies that will help disseminate information to parents informing them of the school programs. Kernan (2012) emphasizes on improvement of communication and mutual understanding between the parents and the school. Unlike Epstein who looked at communication as one way process, Kernan sees it as a two way process which means teachers are also supposed to receive suggestions from parents and parents should be free to initiate communication. At the end of the term learners are given report books that they go with to their parents. Those report books are a form of communication between the school and the parent concerning the progress of the child.

2.1.3. Volunteer : Parent involvement at school

Parents at times get involved in school activities at school. Some may volunteer to do those activities or even take turns. Epstein (1997) as cited in Mafa and Makuba (2013) points out that this form of parental involvement involves parents helping teachers, learners and the school Heads in doing their work without being paid. This also involves the parents coming to school to gain knowledge on how they can help the learners at home. Examples of parents who engage in this form of parental involvement are those who come to support learners during sporting activities. The researcher has noted that some parents also come with different skills like coaching a soccer team. In ECD some parents help in telling stories and preparing food for learners. They do all these things for free, therefore they are volunteers.

2.1.4 Home involvement : Parent involvement in home learning activities

Learners are at times assigned work to be done at home, for example in ECD, learners may be asked to bring plastic balls to be used in Physical Education session. When such classroom related work is given to the child, the parent is supposed to help the child or monitor the child to do such activities at home. Epstein (1997) in Mafa and Mabuka (2013), noted that this form of parental involvement concerns parent-initiated activities or child-initiated activities that leads the parent into helping the child do school related activities at home. This implies that parents at times get involved when the teacher gives learners home work to be done. The concerned parent may initiate the discussion or be open when the child brings home work. By helping the child do school work at home shows that the parent is involved.

2.1.4. School governance : Leadership and Participation

Making decisions is important for planning future programs in an educational setting. Decisions can be made by parents at a meeting, it can be made by the Head and other members in the admin and it can also be made by teachers. These people highlighted above can collectively make decisions. Epstein (1997) in Mafa and Mabuka (2013) explains that this form of parental involvement is about parents taking part in decision making as far as school activities are concerned. For example during Annual General Meeting (AGM) parents may air their views concerning the ECD programs. This means that parents are also involved in decision making. SDC members represent parents in decision making, therefore parents are always represented in the running of the school because they get feedback from SDC members and they also channel their views through the same committee.

2.1.5. **Collaboration with community.**

Different educational stakeholders take part in educational programs at ECD level. These stakeholders may involve the local business community and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) among others. Epstein (1997) in Mafa and Mabuka (2013) notes that this form of parental involvement involves the school having links with different groups in the community for example business people and religious groups. Researcher has once seen parents being educated on the rights of children during a road show that was organized by a non-governmental organization. Parents were taught on the impact of parenting styles on education of early childhood learners to be specific.

2.2. STRUCTURES THAT ENHANCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.2.1 School Governing Body

Maluleke (2014) points out that the school managers should set an executive committee from the School Governing Body (SGB). This implies that the selected body will act between the school and the parents. It represents the school to the parents and the parents to the school. This will enhance the contribution of parents towards the education of their children.

2.2.2 Staff Development Workshops

Maluleke (2014) points out that although the teachers are qualified, some lack parental involvement training programs, therefore school managers need to use staff development sessions to equip the teachers with skills to involve parents. This shows that the training of teachers in colleges does not touch more on parental involvement

and as a result the teachers do not know how to involve parents in the education of their children.

2.3. CHALLENGES FACED WITH INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Parental involvement has both negative and positive effects. Different challenges are experienced during the implementation of different forms of parental involvement. The challenges with different forms of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education will be discussed.

2.3.1 Parenting

Lack of knowledge by ECD teachers and parents on parenting issues greatly contributes to the challenges faced in the implementation of parental involvement. (Christenson and Sheridan in Mawere et al (2015). This implies that at times parental involvement is hindered because teachers are at times not well versed with the parenting skills; hence they become reluctant in educating parents on involvement. Kerman (2012) postulates that sharing of information between teachers and parents on child rearing is not happening because teachers and parents treat school and home as distinct bodies as far as child rearing is concerned. Usually many individuals treat the home as the place for child rearing only and nothing to do with the school and the school as for academic activities and nothing on parenting. This means that parents and teachers tend to draw a line between each other on parenting. The positive parenting program highlighted above is not easily implemented because the ones (teachers/school) at times lack knowledge on parenting.

Research that was carried out by Bridgemohan (2001) revealed that changes in family structure and cultural backgrounds influence the parenting aspect as a form of parental involvement. This research by Bridgemohan stipulates that some children are from child headed families and some are from single-parent homes. Most of the times children from child headed families hardly come to school daily because they have to source for water and food, no one encourages them about the school. Some cultures do not value education and hence they will keep children at home so that they teach them survival skills, for example animal rearing.

2.3.2 Communication

Communication is an important aspect in parental involvement, however there are some communication challenges experienced in the implementation of parental involvement. Epstein (1997) in Bridgemohan (2001) highlighted that there are some challenges in implementing communication as a form of parental involvement. The challenges that Epstein highlighted are that language used in memos, notices and report books is not friendly to some parents. For example not all parents are able to read English. Therefore these forms of communication end up not serving their intended purpose since the information is at times not decoded by parents. This problem is not on the school side only; some teachers are not well versed with the local languages of the communities they serve. This means that parents and the affected teachers will hardly communicate due to language barrier and in result poor parental involvement will be inevitable. The other challenge highlighted by Epstein is that most of the times communication between school and parents is a one-way process which is school-to-

home communication. This means that parents are not empowered to start communication; they only follow orders from school.

2.3.3 Volunteering

At times poor parental involvement is not because parents are not concerned with the learning of their children. Dixon (1992:23) in Maluleke (2014:29) says, "Parents often do not feel welcomed at school. They feel that what they may have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated. Also, parents may not believe that they have any knowledge that the school is interested in knowing." This shows that at times parents may not volunteer to provide services to schools even if they are capable because they feel inferior and never think they can offer services that may benefit the school and learners in particular. For example a parent may be a good storyteller but fail to volunteer to help the ECE educator because of the inferiority complex. Brink and Chandler (1993) in Maluleke (2014) highlight that some parents were failures at school and will never volunteer to work in a place that will remind them of their failures. This shows that at times level of education determines whether the parent will volunteer or not to offer any services to the school.

2.3.4 Home involvement or learning at home

Epstein (1997) in Bridgemohan point out that learning as a form of parental involvement has some challenges in its implementation and these include little knowledge of the content for the children's grade levels by parents. Experience has shown that at times parents over expect from young children. Some parents of ECD A and B classes when their children cannot write their names take it as teacher's weakness not knowing that

the syllabus does not require them to do that. At times parents confuse learners by teaching them things that are contrary to what their teacher teaches. For example in grade one reading some parents teach children the names of letters while the teacher is concerned with the sound so that the learners will be able to attack words during reading. All this shows that at times parental involvement leaves the child in the middle of nowhere because they at times become confused on who to follow, the parent or the teacher.

2.3.5 Decision Making or School Governance

Parents at times do not get involved in the making of decisions. Crozier (1999) in Kimu (2012) points out that few parents wanted to be involved in decision making and committee work. This shows that more parents do not want to be involved in decision making committees. Experience has shown that committees usually recycle the same faces year after year. Therefore only a few parents are involved in decision making while the rest are always passive participants in decision making. Gordon (1997) in Kimu (2012) points out that; parents from low income families usually lack decision making skills. This implies that the economic status of the family has great influence in the parent's decision making skills.

2.3.6 Collaborating with the community

Kimu (2012) argues that the challenge of implementing this type of parental involvement includes how to solve problems of responsibilities, funds, staff and locations for collaborative activities. This implies that there is a challenge on deciding who to do which task in community collaboration and also who to fund the programs as well as

where the collaborative activities should take place. For example learners need to gain knowledge of their culture, they should conduct a field trip to the community around but the challenges emanate when the administrators have to allocate teachers and parents duties and when the funds are needed to finance such programs. The place to visit is always not easy to be chosen as stakeholders may hold diverse views about the places at which collaborative activities should take place.

2.4. STRATEGIES THAT SCHOOLS CAN USE TO ENHANCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.

Different strategies can be used by schools in order to improve parental involvement in the education of Early Childhood Education learners. The strategies to be used are based on enhancing different forms of parental involvement highlighted above.

2.4.1. Parenting

Kimu (2012:47) says, "… schools can encourage parental involvement by organizing programs that offer family support to assist families with child rearing skills, health and nutrition, and giving tips for creating conditions that sustain learning at each stage and grade level." This implies that the schools need to have programs that equip parents on the parenting which fosters learning at each grade level. For example the school may distribute documents on health matters and nutrition matters. This will help parents to raise healthy children who will participate fully during school activities. Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that basic needs need to be fulfilled before the other needs. For example a child who is not healthy or who is on an empty stomach will hardly partake in the school activities. Therefore the school need to educate parents so that

they understand the importance of good parenting as far as the education of the child is concerned. Videos of good parenting skills may be played during parenting workshops so that the school helps parents imitate them.

2.4.2 Communication

Communication is important because it facilitates parental involvement. Kimu (2012) states that in order for the school to enhance communication for parental involvement issues there is need to conduct conferences with parents at least once a year and with follow ups if there is need. This means that there is need for one on one interaction between the teacher or school and the parents. The schools through the Education Committee and the admin may organize consultation days so that parents and teachers may have one on one interaction which would help teachers and parents to share ideas on how they can help the children. This will be a good chance for the parents to give information on the background of the child and also for the teacher to report on the behavior of the child and also on how the child can be helped at home. Kimu (2012) points out that written communication should be regularly sent and be signed by parents to show that they received the information. Kernan (2012) points out that educators need to listen to parents more so as to improve communication. This means that parents are not to be placed at the reception end of the communication process while teachers are on the sending side but communication should be reciprocal between the parents and the school.

2.4.3 Volunteering

When emphasizing on strategies that can be used to enhance volunteering as a form of parental involvement Bridgemohan (2001) points out that schools need to create parent room or family centre for volunteer work and conduct surveys to identify all available talents and locations for volunteers. This means that schools need to find out what talents do the communities have and accommodate those who are willing to offer their expertise in different fields in the school activities. For example a parent who is a carpenter may volunteer to repair some school furniture during spare time. On this note Bridgemohan (2001) notes that the school needs to be flexible so that they accommodate the employed parents. On this point it shall be noted that some parents who may offer their expertise are at times full time employed and get off days at the time the schools are closed and as a result they fail to offer their services which they would have wanted to offer the school for free. Therefore the schools need to be flexible so that that parents are free to offer their services. For example some parents may volunteer to water the school garden during the holiday, so the school should consider them.

2.4.4 Home involvement or learning at home

The school has the capacity to influence learning at home. Bridgemohan (2001) points out that schools need to provide information to families on skills required for learners on homework policies and expectations at each grade level. It is also highlighted in Bridgemohan (2001) that schools should provide regular schedule of homework that require parents to help children at home. ECD learners may be given a picture book or

alphabet picture books for parents to help them at home. This as a way of engaging parents in the learning of ECD children will enhance parental involvement. Therefore for the teacher to be sure that the parent helped the child in doing the homework, the parent should sign at the end of the work. Parents do not only help children in written work only, they may help them in making learning media like dolls, balls and toys. Therefore, the teacher should through writing inform parents in advance so as to give them time to make the media.

2.4.5 Decision Making or School Governance

Parents need to be involved in decision making so that the policies will not be said to be 'owned' by the school or the Head of the school. Therefore parents should be part and parcel of decision making. Bridgemohan (2001) points out that parents and schools share owneandrship and accountability for the end product hence there is need to involve parents in decision making. This will help parents and schools to work towards the same goal. Parent Advisory Council as suggested by Bridgemohan (2001) should be organized so as to empower parents in setting goals, designing strategies, implementing plans and evaluating outcomes. This means that parents also need to be empowered so that they express their views during decision making. This decision making may be done during AGMs that the SDCs organize. Through these meetings, parents may have a say on how they want the ECD centre to be manned.

2.4.6 Collaborating with the community

Henderson et al (2002) in OECD (2012) point out that the involvement of wider community services for example health, social services and sport organization plays an

important role in the development of young children. OECD (2012) points out that if the communication between schools and communities is strong it is easier for children to develop social, emotional, physical and academic skills. This implies that the strategy that the school should employ to enhance involvement is to create strong relations with the community services. For example engaging health services personnel who will teach parents and teachers and children about health matters that involve children may create strong relations between the school and the community. OECD (2012) goes on to note that when ECE services are collaborated with services that mitigate the negative effects of family backgrounds usually the positive results are yielded. For example the adoption of children from poor backgrounds or paying fees and providing them with school requirements helps them socially, emotionally and cognitively. This implies that the school may, with the help of the community members help the children from poor backgrounds. For example the business community may organize soccer tournaments to fundraise for the needy children. Child headed families may also be helped through community collaboration that may be initiated by the school.

2.5 Summary

The chapter presented literature on important aspects of parental involvement. Literature was captured in relation to research questions. Therefore literature collected was based on forms of parental involvement, structures that enhance parental involvement, challenges faced with parental involvement and strategies that schools can employ to enhance parental involvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the research designs to be used. The targeted population is outlined under this chapter; the way the sample was chosen will be shown. Instrumentation and data collection procedures are also part of this chapter. Data analysis plan is also part of this chapter. Validity and reliability as well as the ethical considerations are included in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

Mouton (1996) views a research design as, the blue print of research project that precedes the actual research process. Whereas McMillan and Schumader (2006) in Kimm (2012) describe research design as the way of conducting a study, including when, from, whom and under what conditions the data will be obtained. Therefore, one may deduce that a research design is a plan to be taken by researcher in gathering the information needed to complete the study effectively. To add on, the description above implies that research design shows when data will be collected, who the participants are and the procedure followed during collection of data.

For this project, the case study design was used. Yin (2014) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a current case in depth and within its real life context. This means that a case study involves the researcher trying to get information from its

natural state in a given area. In this research the case is the cluster and the phenomenon is parental involvement.

3.2 Population

Newman (2006) defines population as an aggregate or totality of all subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. This implies that population is the number of individuals that are under study. The population for this study was made up of parents, school heads, TICs and ECD teachers of two schools in DISOSI schools cluster in Tsholotsho. The population is shown in the table below.

POPULATION

Table 3:1 Population from which the sample was taken.

	PARENTS (based on the number of children)	TEACHERS	T.I.Cs	HEADS	TOTAL
School A	320	9	1	1	331
School B	175	4	1	1	181
TOTAL	495	13	2	2	512

3.3 Sample

The researcher drew up a sample since the DISOSI cluster had a larger population that the researcher could not manage. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) describe a sample as a smaller group or subset of the whole population. Thus, a sample is a

number of few chosen individuals to be used in the study whose findings will be generalized to the whole population. A sample should possess the characteristics of the population which it presents. This implies that the sample should proportionally represent a population. For the parents, the researcher administered convenience sampling. Deming (2002) suggests that in convenience sampling the samples are selected because they are accessible. The parents will be interviewed when they come for cooking routines. Parents were too many and therefore 5% of them per school were involved and convenience sampling was used. School heads, TICs and the ECD teachers were purposively selected. Bryman (2012) points out that in purposive sampling, subjects are selected for a good reasons tied to purposes of research. Hence, it was used on teachers as they were the ones who constantly kept in touch with parents. Thus, automatically the heads of those schools and the teachers selected were given questionnaires.

The sample used was as follows

Table 3:2 Sample which was used during the study

	PARENTS (based on the number of children)	TEACHERS	T.I.Cs	HEADS	TOTAL
School A	16	9	1	1	27
School B	9	4	1	1	15
TOTAL	25	13	2	2	42

3.4 Research Instruments

According to Chivore (1995) research instruments are tools that researchers use to help them find information. These are the tools that assist the researcher to gather data needed. In this research, interviews and questionnaires were used. The researcher used questionnaires that had both open and close ended questions and semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 Interviews

Booth and Gall (1996) view an interview as one on one verbal interaction between the researcher and the participant. Therefore, it is a way of talking and listening to people so as to collect data and gain knowledge from individuals. In this study semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected parents. David and Sutton (2004) say semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative analysis. Thus the order of the questions can be changed depending on the direction of the interview. An interview guide will be used but leaving room for additional questions. Corbetta (2003) says an interview guide is a list of questions, topics or issues that the researcher wants to cover during the interview. Hence, the researcher used guiding questions but further asked questions depending on the responses from the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews are an advantage in that researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the situation as well as explain or rephrase the questions if respondents are unclear about the questions. However, it also has its own negatives in that an inexperienced interviewer may not be able to ask questions thus relevant information may not be captured.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

Berg (2006) defines a questionnaire as a document that asks the same questions to all individuals in a sample. Thus, it entails a set of questions carefully designed to provide the required information or data. In this research, questionnaires were given to ECD teachers, T.I.Cs and School Heads. The researcher used open-ended questionnaires where respondents were expected to give detailed answers to the questions. Questionnaires are an advantage in that the respondents can be left with the questionnaire so that they will answer it whenever they are free and without the researcher around. Bryman (2012) asserts that people who are spread across a wide geographical area are easily reached.

However, questionnaires also have some limitations. Neuman (2006) posits that there is little control over who completes a questionnaire which can cause results in bias. Therefore the researcher asked the respondents not to ask other people to complete the questionnaire on their behalf so as to foster validity and reliability.

3.5 Data collection procedure

The researcher got the letter from the University confirming that the proposal was approved. This letter was taken to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education for the researcher to be given by the ministry the green light to collect data from schools. The letter of approval from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was taken to schools for the researcher to be granted permission to carry out the study. The researcher personally issued the questionnaires to the participants so that informed decisions was considered. Data analysis will be presented in the next section.

Interviews were conducted with parents of learners who stay nearby and also with those the researcher met in the school during dismissal time. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) state that convenience sampling involves selection of members who are nearest or those who are available. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) also note that this sampling technique works best for case studies. The interviews were ten minutes and below depending on the answers the respondent would have given. Some answers needed clarifications whilst some resulted in formation of new questions. The interviews were carried out after school hours because the PED had advised the researcher not to interfere with the smooth running of school programmes and the researcher is full time employed as a classroom practitioner. For questionnaires, the researcher personally distributed them and gave respondents time frame of five days. Time to time follow ups were made. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) point out that follow ups on returns are important.

3.5.1 Ethical considerations

The researcher got an authorisation letter from the university which was taken to Provincial Education Director (PED) Matabeleland North to seek permission before conducting the research. From there, the researcher went further to seek permission from heads of schools that were sampled and explained procedures for data collection. After permission was granted, the researcher distributed the questionnaires personally to the respondents and collected them to avoid chances of losing them and also enhance confidentiality. Creswell (2008) in Mawire (2011) points out that informed consent and protection of research participants' privacy and confidentiality are some of the key principles in ethical consideration. Bearing this in mind the researcher explained

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the aim of this research to the participants as well as assuring them that the information they will disclose will be kept between them and the researcher. The respondents were asked not to provide their identity details. This was done to protect the participants and assure them that their privacy and confidentiality was protected. The participants were made aware of the times at which interviews were to be conducted. This helped them to make informed decisions.

3.5.2 Validity and reliability

Patton (2002) in Chikutuma (2013) defines validity as a demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound and when the argument is made based on the results is strong. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) in Chikutuma (2013) state that validity is addressed through honesty, participants approached triangulation and researcher's objectivity. This implies that validity refers to the extent to which one can strongly argue that the results are a true reflection of the concept under study based on the sampling done and data collection procedures. In this research, validity was assured through selection of the participants who were directly involved in the ECD programs. Those participants were teachers, parents and school administrators. To enhance validity of this research, the researcher used different instruments to collect data and these were interviews and questionnaires. Agar (1993) in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) points out that in qualitative data collection, validity and reliability is enhanced through intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals. In this study the researcher allowed the researchers to give opinions and also to provide in-depth answers. The researcher also took active part in distributing and collecting the data. Respondents were asked to provide correct information and this enhances the validity and reliability of the study.

3.6 Data presentation and analysis

Poggenpoel (1998) points out that the analysis of data begins with data collection, transmitting data into transcripts and identifying concept themes. Berg (2006) defines data as the systematic breaking down, organizing and presenting of statistics and logical techniques to describe and evaluate phenomena. This suggests that data collected will be analyzed according to themes in relation to problem to check whether responses answer or fail to answer the research questions. The researcher analysed data from interviews by grouping the findings based on research questions. The items that are closely related were grouped together. Similarities and differences in findings were discussed. The researcher established the extent to which parents were involved in the education of ECD learners in DISOSI cluster in Tsholotsho District. Data collected were presented in tables and analysed as percentages.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the research design that was used which is the case study. Population targeted and the sample are discussed in this chapter. Sampling procedures were also highlighted. Ethical considerations, validity and reliability and data collection procedures were also highlighted in chapter. The next chapter will present data collected and analyse it.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0.   Introduction

This chapter consists of presentation of data, analysis and discussion. Data are presented using frequency tables, pie charts and descriptions. Data presentation is organised around themes from research questions, i.e. forms of parental involvement, structures that enhance parental involvement, challenges faced with parental involvement and strategies that schools can use to enhance parental involvement in the education of ECE learners. First of all, biographical data of the participants are presented.

4.1 Biographical data

4.1.1 Biographical data for ECD teachers

Table 4:1 Summary of biographical data of ECD teachers

Respondents	Biographical variable	Variable description	Frequency
	Gender	Male	0 (0%)
		Female	13 (100%)
		Total	**13 (100%)**
	Age group	18-25 years	3 (23%)
		26-30 years	3 (23%)

		31-35 years	4	(31%)
ECD teachers		36-40 years	1	(8%)
		41 years and above	2	(15%)
		Total	**13**	**(100%)**
	Highest qualification	Para-professional	3	(23%)
		O' level	1	(8%)
		A' level	0	(0%)
		Diploma	8	(61%)
		Degree	1	(8%)
		Masters	0	(0%)
		Total	**13**	**(100%)**
	Experience in years	0-5 years	7	(54%)
		6-10 years	2	(15%)
		11-15 years	3	(23%)
		16-20 years	0	(0%)
		21 years and above	1	(8%)
		Total	**13**	**(100%)**
	Class size	20-30 learners	2	(15%)
		31-40 learners	7	(54%)
		41-50 learners	3	(23%)
		51 learners and above	1	(8%)

		Total	13 (100%)

Table 4:1 shows that in DISOSI schools cluster there were no male infants' teachers since all the thirteen infants' teachers in the cluster were females. This indicates that there is gender imbalance when it comes to ECD teaching. Kimu (2012) also found out that majority of teachers in primary schools are females. People believe that females are the best caregivers hence they should be given young learners to deal with them. The majority [4(31%)] of the teachers were aged between 31 and 35. This shows that many teachers in the cluster were mature enough to deal with parents and learners. The age group that had the least number of participants was the 36-40 being 8% of the sample. Of the 13 ECD teachers in the cluster only 1 (8%) was a degree holder and was the highest qualified. 3 (23%) were Para-professionals employed by the community. These para-professionals are experienced and hence they are the right group to deal with if credible information is to be presented. 1 (8%) participant was an O' level holder also paid by the community due to high enrolment in one of the schools. This participant was chosen by the virtue of being one of the teachers manning ECD class. The majority [8 (61%)] of the ECD teachers in the cluster were diploma holders. This means that the ECD teachers in the DISOSI schools cluster were qualified to implement ECD programs in general and parental involvement in particular. Most [7(54%)] of the teachers in the DISOSI schools cluster had class sizes of between 31 and 40. This implies that most of the classes exceeded the recommended ratio of 1 teacher to 20 learners. Therefore the teachers had high work load. 1 (8%) teacher had a class of above 50 learners; a situation that causes challenges in terms of class

management and control. This corresponds with the findings that were made by Moyo, Wadesango and Kurebwa (2012) that ECD programmes operated with high teacher pupil ratio.

4.1.2 Biographical data for administrators at school level (Heads and T.I.Cs)

Table 4:2 A summary of the biographical data of the administrators

Respondents	Biographical variable	Variable description	Frequency
Heads and TICs	Gender	Male	2 (50%)
		Female	2 (50%)
		Total	**4 (100%)**
	Age group	36-40 years	1 (25%)
		41 years and above	3 (75%)
		Total	**4 (100%)**
	Highest qualification	Diploma	2 (50%)
		Degree	1 (25%)
		Masters	1 (25%)
		Total	**4 (100%)**
	Experience in years	11-15 years	1 (25%)

		16-20 years	2 (50%)
		21 years and above	1 (25%)
		Total	**4 (100%)**

Table 4:2 shows that there was balance in gender of the administrators in DISOSI schools cluster. This means that both males and females are now in leadership roles as opposed to what used to be when females were discriminated when it came to leadership roles. Most of the members were aged above 40. This shows that the administrators in the DISOSI schools cluster are mature to control their schools. 1 (25%) of the participants had a Masters degree and was the highest qualified. 1 (25%) had a first degree. This shows that 50% of the participants are degree holders which mean that they are qualified to lead the schools. On the other hand, 2 (50%) of the administrators were diploma holders meaning that they were at the same educational level with the majority of the teachers. Therefore they might be lacking leadership skills which might result in their leadership being undermined by their subordinates. Majority [2(50%)] of the administrators in DISOSI schools cluster had experience between 16-20 years. This shows that the administrators are experienced and have the capacity to lead in the implementation of parental involvement.

4.1.3 Biographical data for parents with ECD children

Table 4:3 A summary of biographical data of parents

Respondents	Biographical variable	Variable description	Frequency	
Parents	Gender	Male	2	(8%)
		Female	23	(92%)
		Total	**25**	**(100%)**
	Age group	15-25 years	2	(8%)
		26-35 years	17	(68%)
		36-40 years	1	(4%)
		41 -50 years	4	(16%)
		51 years and above	1	(4%)
		Total	**25**	**(100%)**
	Highest qualification	O' level	1	(4%)
		A' level	0	(0%)
		Diploma	2	(8%)
		Degree	0	(0%)
		No educational qualification	22	(88%)
		Total	**25**	**(100%)**
	Number of children in ECD (grades ECD a – grade 2)	1	17	(68%)
		2	7	(28%)
		3	1	(4%)
		Total	**25**	**(100%)**

Table 4:3 shows that majority [23 (92%)] of the parents were females. This shows that most of the parents who were in care of the children were the female counterparts. This was typical of rural set up where men are working to provide the needs of the family while women are tasked to stay at home and look after children. This is in line with the findings that were made by Mawere et al (2015) in which females dominated in the care of children. The bulk [17 (68%)] of the parents were aged between 26 and 35. This shows that the majority of the parents were mature enough to care for their children and to get involved in the education of their children. Mawere et al (2015) point out that the most active and mature parents who are expected to be active in the education of their children are those aged between 21 and 50. Majority [22 (88%)] of the parents were not holders of any educational qualification. This implies that most of the children in the community lack role models. This is contradicting with Mawere et al findings of 2015 in which most parents literate and were holders of O' level. The majority [17 (68%)] of the parents had one ECD child each. This implies that parents were not overburdened when it comes to involvement in ECD programs. 1 (4%) of the parents had the highest number of ECD children which is 3 children. This implies that the parent might face challenges in helping all the three children for example in doing their homework.

Having presented biographical data for ECD teachers, administrators at school level (Heads and T.I.Cs) and parents, the next sub-sections are based on the responses of the participants based on themes derived from research questions.

4.2 Forms of parental involvement

ECD teachers and administrators as well as parents have shown an understanding of forms in which parents can be involved in the education of ECD learners. All the participants mentioned feeding scheme, clearing play centre, making of learning media, paying levies and attending meetings. However, no participant mentioned volunteering and involvement of other stakeholders as part of parental involvement. This implies that though participants have an idea of what parental involvement entails, they miss some of its components. 21 (84%) of parents stated that they always take part in school programmes provided they are told about those programs.

The remaining 4 (16%) of the parents highlighted that they sometimes take part when the programs are organized when they are available because they work outside the country. This shows that parents' work place has great influence in the involvement of parents in the education of their children. This is in line with Kimu (2012) who pointed out that parental commitment to workplace had an effect on their involvement in the education of their children. When asked about who cares for their children during their absence they unanimously pointed out that they have maids. This shows that parenting as a form of parental involvement is compromised.

When asked about the forms of parental involvement in which the parents are involved the following activities were mentioned by majority of the participants across the groups of participants: gardening, provision of stationery and learning aids, consultation days, paying levies, planning graduation ceremonies, clearing play centre and feeding

scheme. This implies that parents take part in different activities in the education of ECD learners.

When participants were asked about inclusion of parents in decision making, 23 parents, 7 teachers and 4 administrators agreed that parents are involved in decision making. This implies that 34 (81%) of the participants agreed that parents are involved in decision making. The remaining 2 parents mentioned that at times they see developments without being consulted or asked. This concurs with Mawere et al (2015) who pointed out that the parents-teachers' meetings usually take the form of lectures and times parents are not consulted on some issues. The remaining 6 teachers noted that they were not sure whether parents are involved in the making of decisions. The impression is that parents are involved in decision making though at times they are never included. One of the administrators said, "Parents are represented by the SDC in decision making." This implies that at times not every parent is consulted in decision making since they have a representation. Wheeler (2009) in Mawere et al (2015) points out that the extent and form of parental involvement largely depends on SDCs.

Teachers and administrators fully agreed that other stakeholders are involved in the implementation of ECD programs. When asked about those stakeholders they mentioned NGOs like UNICEF which they said it once provided the ECDs with learning materials and donated equipment for the play centre. Ministry of Health and child welfare was also mentioned as one of the organisations that help in ECD by conducting health checks and immunizing children.

All the participants disagreed to the question that local business people help in the implementation of ECD programs. This implies that collaboration with community as a form of parental involvement is not fully taken into consideration. Mafa and Mabuka (2013) point out that collaborating with business people equips children with business skills. This implies that local business people should be engaged in ECD progranmes especially when taking into consideration that the new curriculum is there to inculcate business skills in learners.

4.3 Structures that enhance parental involvement

Of the 42 participants, 28 (67%) agreed that there are structures that enhance parental involvement in ECD programs. All (4) administrators, 17 parents and 7 teachers agreed that there are structures that enhance parental involvement. This implies that though the structures are there, they are not noticed by other participants or the participants were giving the researcher what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. This contradiction leaves some gaps that might require further research. When asked further about the structures that are put up in place to enhance the involvement of parent in ECD programmes the participants gave the following structures:

4.3.1 Child protection committee

Teacher participant number 2 said, *"We have the child protection committee in the community which looks at affairs of our ECE learners and works together with the child protection committee in the school."*

Administrator number 4 said, *"Child protection committee."*

This implies that parents are included in the protection of ECD learners meaning that they are involved in parenting of their children and they work together with the school. However not even a single parent mentioned the existence of this committee which leaves a gap as to whether the teachers and administrators gave answers which they thought the researcher wanted or the researcher was unfortunate to come across the parents who were not aware of the existence of such a committee. This leaves a gap that requires further research.

4.3.2 School Development Committee

Of the 28 participants who said there are structures that enhance parental involvement, 10 of them mentioned School Development Committee as one of those structures. Wheeler (2009) in Mawere et al (2015) points out that the extent and form of parental involvement largely depends on SDCs. One of the administrators said,

"SDC is made up of a sub-committee which is responsible for the ECD programmes." This implies that SDCs also play a role in coordinating parents on ECD programmes.

4.3.3 ECD Graduation Committee

Of the 28 participants who echoed that there are structures that enhance parental involvement in ECD, 16 of them mentioned graduation committee as one of those. *The participants unanimously agreed that the committee is composed of chosen ECD teachers and one parent per village.*

Teacher participant number 4 said, *"The graduation committee is made up of selected parents per village and selected ECD teachers."*

This implies that parents have contribution in the planning and organizing of ECD Graduation ceremonies. Mawere et al (2015) recommended that for schools to enhance parental involvement there is need for formulation of Committees that are dedicated to promote involvement of parents.

4.3.4 Feeding Scheme Committee

Majority [16(64%)] of the parents agreed that they have a Feeding Scheme Committee which drafts the duty roster for cooking and also make follow up on feeding programme. When asked about the effectiveness of the committee, the participants across the groups mentioned that parents always come for feeding.

4.4 Challenges faced with parental involvement

Participants mentioned some challenges that are associated with parental involvement. Data collected are showing that the group that was highly affected by the challenges is the teachers [11 (85%)] followed by the administrators [3 (75%)] and lastly the parents [10 (40%)]. This information implies that teachers are the most affected by challenges associated with parental involvement. Teachers pointed out different challenges which include: Failure by parents of learners with learning difficulties to come and discuss way forward with the teachers when called for that.

> Teacher participant number 3 said, *"Parents of children with learning difficulties usually don't come to school to discuss the issues of their children's learning difficulties."*

This implies that involvement of parents may adjust the behavior and performance of the child. This is in agreement with the observation that was made by Bist and Gera in 2015. Bist and Gera (2015) pointed out that, parents have significant role in adjustment of children with learning disabilities. Therefore since parents of these learners are said to be negative in the education, the teachers face problems in influencing change in these learners.

The issue of child headed and maid headed families is also a challenge in the implementation of parental involvement.

> Teacher participant number 7 said, *"Some learners are from child and maid headed families who cannot cater for all the needs of the learners."*

This implies that absence of parents affects the education of the learners. This concurs with Hill and Taylor (2004) who said parental involvement is a critical feature in of children's early academic development. Therefore this implies that children from child headed families are bound to face challenges in their education.

Teachers and administrators pointed out that payment of levies is a challenge since parent take too long to pay levies which hinders the implementation of some ECD programmes.

> Teacher participant number 6 said, *"Non-payment of levies and failure by parents to buy stationery negatively affects the smooth running of ECD programmes."*

On the other hand some parents pointed out that their involvement is sometimes restricted by financial constraints.

Parent participate number 2 said, *"Some of the programmes require money which at times will be not available."*

This means that the socio-economic position of the family affects the extent to which the parents are involved in the education of their children. Kimu (2012) also noted that economic deficiencies have undesirable influence on parental involvement. On the same not, one of the administrators pointed out that due to financial resources some parents have resorted to bringing their children for ECD A in second or third term so as to cut costs. This practice negatively affects the learners academically and alters the teacher's effort in helping other learners since he or she will have to orient those newly enrolled learners.

Teachers also noted that learners are at times not helped in doing homework. On the same note parents pointed out that they face challenges in helping their children in doing homework. National Education Association (2008) argues that some parents lack the know-how to help their children do homework.

Parent participant number 11 said, *"My child hardly concentrates when I'm helping her in doing her homework and at times insists that the teacher said we should do it this way not that way."*

This reveals that parents face challenges in helping children do their homework because they do not know the expectations of the teacher.

One of the parents pointed out that communication is at times ineffective because using young learners as messengers at times distort the whole information.

Parent participant number 5 said, *"Sometimes children do not say what they would have been asked to tell us and at times they are not clear."*

The interpretation from this response is that there should be an effective way of communicating since ECD children sometimes forget to deliver the messages they would be given.

Teachers, parents and administrators pointed out that the parents' work at home at times clash with programmes scheduled by the school.

One of the administrators said, *"Timetabling is not easy since parents also have their duties at home."*

Parent participant number 15 said, *"Some of the programs clash with my duties."* While

Parent participant number 17 said, *"I will be at work too, so I cannot take part in programmes like feeding and clearing play centre but I help my child in doing homework and I pay fees."*

In short, the challenges that are faced with the involvement of parents in DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District include; financial constraints, time factor, ineffective communication means, lack of knowledge (by parents) of what the teacher expects and family structures (child headed families). Bridgemohan (2001) pointed out that changes in family structure influences the parenting aspect as a form of parental involvement.

4.5 Strategies that can enhance parental involvement in ECD

strategies suggested by different participants

	ECD teachers	administrators	parents
■ workshops	6	1	
■ sports	4		
■ projects	1		1
■ strong policy	2	1	
■ SDC for ECD		2	
■ effective communication			2
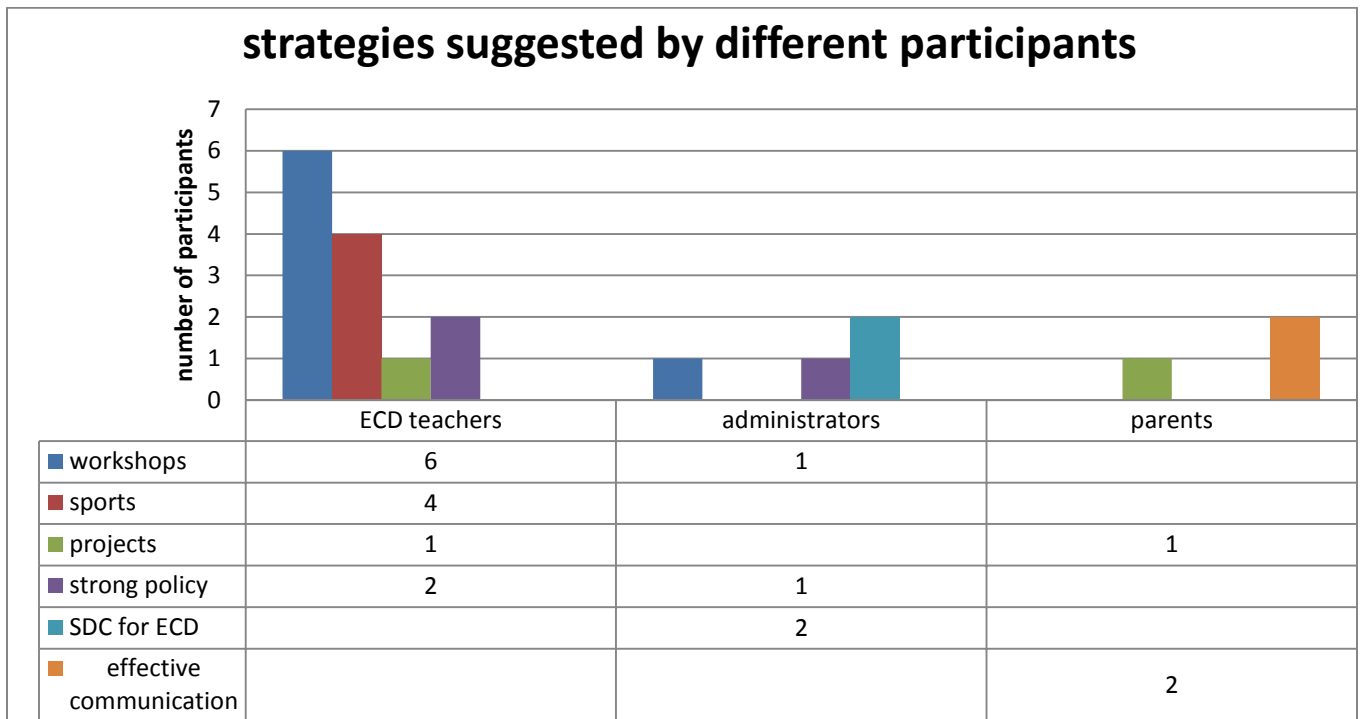
Fig 4.1

Fig 4.1 shows that all the 13 teachers gave strategies that can enhance involvement of parent and all the 4 administrators gave some strategies whilst only 3 parents stated strategies that can enhance parental involvement. Of the 42 participants, only 20 contributed in suggesting the strategies which can enhance parental involvement. Of the 20 participants who suggested strategies, 7 (35%) suggested that workshops be used. One of the participants said, *"Workshops to help parents understand their roles in teaching and learning of ECD."* This shows that at times lack of knowledge by parents on the roles they should play in ECD leads to poor parental involvement. To support

this, Moyo, Wadesango and Kurebwa (2012:148) are quoted saying, "Low parental involvement could be attributed parent' lack of knowledge on ECD programmes." Therefore teaching them will be effective in making them aware that they play a good role in the education of their children and they are the first teachers of their children. 4 (20%) of these participants advocated for sporting activities,

> Teacher participant number 5 said, "*Engage parents not in frustrating and laborious activities only but also engage them in exciting programmes like sporting, let them form their teams and showcase in schools so that they feel appreciated.*"

> Teacher participant number 9 said, "*Organise functions at which ECD learners will showcase their talents and invite parents so that they realize the importance of ECD.*

This shows that when parents are involved in exciting activities they may have positive attitudes towards ECD programs and they may realize the importance of ECD in the development of the child. This concurs with Chikutuma's findings of 2013 that teachers' good intentions may not work well if the communication is only in connection with problems. National Education Association (2008) also noted that parents are only called to school when there is a problem about their child's behaviour or performance. This shows that there is need for good relations between home and school so that parents may have positive attitude towards their involvement in ECD activities. Kernan (2012) cited in literature review points out that teachers need to listen to parents so as to improve communication.

2 (10%) advocated for incoming generating projects so that parents who are failing to pay fees can be involved in those projects and exempted from paying fees since they will be generating income for the school. One of the parents said, *"We should be allocated an area on which we can grow vegetables on large scale on which we can grow vegetables on large scale and money raised be used for ECD programs and fees be lowered."* This will help the parents who have financial challenges.

Mawere et al (2015) suggested that the school policies be clear on guidelines on how parents are involved. 3 (15%) of the participants that came up with strategies suggested that the schools should come up with school policy on parental involvement. Two of these suggested that punitive measures be introduced for those parents who deliberately disengage in parental involvement while one of them pointed out that strong follow ups be made to parents who do not take part in school programmes. Strong policies will make parents take parental involvement seriously.

2 (10%) of the participants noted that there should be an improvement in communication. One of them said, *"Newsletters need to be used at times since the children at times forget what they would have been told."* , while the other one said, *"A WhatsApp group can be created through which important messages about ECD programmes can be sent."* This shows that at times parents fail to attend some activities due to poor communication between home and school. Therefore written communication is vital since it is not altered like oral communication.

2 (10%) of these participants noted that SDC plays a crucial role in the implementation of ECD programs hence a special SDC for ECD should be formed. One of the participants said, *"Choose an ECD School Development Committee at school level."*

The other participant said, *"Visit schools with SDC so that we emulate what others do and we once took our SDC to urban schools so that they will share with other parents what they learnt and saw from those schools."*

Wheeler (2009) in Mawere et al (2015) points out that the extent and form of parental involvement largely depends on SDCs. This shows that SDC is believed to have great influence to parents hence the need for a special SDC committee meant for ECD programmes only. The committee may visit other schools so that they can emulate what other parents do to develop their ECD centres.

4.6.   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the state of parental involvement in the education of ECD learners in DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District. This section discusses the findings of the study following sub-headings created from research questions: forms of parental involvement in ECD, structures that enhance parental involvement in ECD programs, challenges faced with parental involvement in ECD programs and strategies that can be used to enhance parental involvement in the education of ECD learners. The findings of the study are discussed in relation to literature.

4.6.1 Forms of parental involvement in ECD programs

ECD teachers, administrators and parents totally agreed that there is parental involvement taking place in the education of ECD learners in the cluster. Responses showed that parents are involved in parenting, communication, governing and home involvement. However, the study findings show that parents are not fully engaged in volunteering and some stakeholders like local business people are not involved. Collaboration with the community is one of the forms of parental involvement and partnering with local business people and other service providers is emphasized by Kimu (2012) in his study findings.

Non-payment of fees by parents is another area in which parents are not fully involved as shown by the current study's findings. This concurs with Kimu (2012) who realized that economic deficiencies had negative impact on the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Teachers' and parents' responses are in agreement that home involvement is another area in which parents are involved though not all of them are involved. Parents grieved their lack of knowledge as a limiting factor in helping their children in some areas of the curriculum. This concurs with National Education Association's findings of (2008) in that some parents were not confident about how to help their children and as a result they could hardly help their children in doing homework.

The study also revealed that it's the female parents who are usually involved in parental involvement which implies that parenting in homes is usually placed on the female parent. This concurs with Mawere et al findings of 2015 that females dominate in the

care of children than males. The general findings from all the groups of participants are that parents help in the feeding program, clearing of the play centre, home involvement and meeting and consultation days.

4.6.2 Structures that enhance parental involvement in the education of ECD learners

The responses of all the participants show that there are some structures that are put in place to enhance parental involvement and these include SDCs, Child protection Committee in the community which works together with the other one in school, graduation ceremony committee and feeding scheme committee in the community which works hand in hand with the one at school. Wheeler (2009) in Mawere et al (2015) points out that the extent and form of parental involvement largely depends on SDCs. However, it shall be noted that some teachers are not aware that the SDCs include representatives for ECD programs as said by the administrators and as a result those teachers said there are no structure put in place. This shows that there might be a communication breakdown between the teachers and the administrators or the administrators said what they thought the researcher wanted.

4.6.3 Challenges faced with parental involvement in the education of ECD learners.

Findings of the current study show that most teachers faced challenges with the involvement of parents. All the participants from different groups stated that at times parents do not attend programs they would have been called for because the programs at times clash with their duties at home. One of the administrators also highlighted that

due to parents' duties at home it becomes difficult when time tabling the duties. The findings of the current study concur with Kimu's findings of 2012 that most of the parents in the area were wage earners and it was difficult to have them on market days and as a result they were no programs that were scheduled for those days. Same applies with the parents in the area of the current study, they depend on farming as the source of food and some work in other people's fields to get food and including them on days they go to the fields is difficult, so the schools usually engage them on Wednesdays (sacred day) because they do not go to the fields on this day.

One of the findings from the teachers' and administrators' response is that some parents hardly pay levies which hinder the full implementation of some ECD programs that require money. Shortage of money hinders employment of Para-professionals since the schools have a shortage of teachers in ECD which leads to high teacher-pupil ratio which in turn lowers the performance of the teacher. Some parents agreed that they have financial problems since they are not employed and are keeping orphans.

On the other hand one of the administrators noted that some parents due to fear of paying fees send their children to ECD A in third term or late second term. Late enrolment of learners affect the teachers because they have to orient the newly enrolled child at the expense of other learners who would have been enrolled in term one.

However, fewer parents had challenges compared to the majority who did not have challenges. One of the parents said, "Sometimes children do not say what they would have been asked to tell us, they just forget and at times are not clear." The finding is that some ECD children are still young to carry information as it is and this affects

communication between teachers and parents negatively. Therefore the use of written messages can be effective. This concurs with Hanhan's findings of (1998) that written messages are an accepted way of bridging the gap between the school and the home. Kimu's (2012) findings show that the use of older siblings or neighbours is also effective.

The findings also show that due to low levels of education parents at times find it difficult to help their children at home in some academic area like reading and those who can help them stated that their children hardly concentrate and always tell them that the teacher said we should not do it that way.

4.6.4 Strategies that can enhance parental involvement in ECD programs

Teachers suggested that to increase parents' knowledge of ECD and to make them realize their importance in the education of their children there is need for workshops and awareness campaigns. Teachers also feel that parents need to be educated on their roles in the teaching and learning of ECD children. Other teachers and administrators believe that the introduction of punitive measures might enhance parental involvement. This implies that schools in collaboration with the parents should design a school policy on parental involvement. This strategy was also advocated for by Kimu (2012). Some parents their inclusion in income generating projects may benefit the ECD programs and fees be lowered since they are failing to meet the deadlines as far as payment of fees is concerned.

One of the teachers suggested that what lowers parental involvement is that parents are only called or involved when there is a problem or in frustrating programs. The teacher

suggested that parents be asked to form sporting teams that can compete against teachers' teams as this will strengthen the bond between home and school and will make parents feel appreciated. This concurs with Chikutuma's (2013) findings that teachers' good intentions may not work well if communication is only in connection with problems.

One of the administrators revealed that as a school they once organized a trip that included ECD teachers, administrators and SDC members to urban schools so that they observe how other schools involve parents. This administrator says the SDC members had gone on behalf of other parents and the feedback they gave other parents was warmly received and since then the parents' attitude has positively changed.

4.7 Summary

This chapter focused on presentation of data and the analysis of the findings. Data was presented based on the research questions and groups of the participants. Tables, graphs and descriptions were also used in presentation of data. Data presented was qualitative. Discussion of the findings was also included in this chapter. The discussion of the findings followed the order of the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions derived from the findings of the study and recommendations.

5.1 Summary

This study focused on the state of parental involvement in DISOSI schools cluster in Tsholotsho District of Matabeleland North Province. The research was guided by four research questions. Significance of the study was also laid. The literature review was based on the research questions. Sub-topics: forms of parental involvement, structures that enhance parental involvement, challenges faced with parental involvement and strategies that could enhance parental involvement were drawn from research questions.

The study used case study design which allowed the researcher to get in-depth responses from the participants. The research was confined to two schools in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District. Target population and sample were quantified and the sampling procedures were also clearly stated. Parents were selected based on convenience sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique. ECD teachers, Heads and T.I.Cs were purposively selected because they are the appropriate people who interact with parents and ECD learners frequently. Interviews were used for parents and questionnaires were used for ECD teachers and School Heads and T.I.Cs.

Before data collection the researcher got authorization letter from Midlands State University. The researcher then applied for permission to carry out research from the Provincial Education Director (P.E.D) Matabeleland North Province. Respondents were assured that the research findings were to be used for academic purposes only. Tables and descriptions were used to present and analyse data. Presentation of data was done based on research questions. Findings were then discussed.

5.2 Conclusions

The study has recognized that the socio-economic status of the family affects the involvement of the parents. The findings also show that teachers are not well versed with the structures that enhance parental involvement due to lack of clear communication between them and the administrators. This was shown by the percentage of teachers who said there are no structures that enhance parental involvement whilst the administrators highlighted that the SDC is composed of parents who represent ECD programs' interests. It also emerged that at times communication is distorted by the ECD learners who fail to report what they would have been asked to tell the parents. The study also recognized that at times parents fail to attend to some ECD programs due to their schedules at home like going to fields and some going to work. It also emerged that there are no male teachers manning the ECD classes in the cluster. This implies that males are not willing to take lower grades in their teaching. It also emerged that parents do not value their involvement due to their level of education and not knowing their importance in the roles in the education of their children. It also that strong school policies on parental involvement may increase the involvement of parents.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions made above based on the research findings

- ✓ It is recommended that workshops be organized for teachers, school managers and parents.

- ✓ Schools have clear communication about the structures that enhance parental involvement.

- ✓ Teachers to explain their expectations to parents on homework given to learners.

- ✓ Introduction of modern communication modes like WhatsApp groups and newsletters.

- ✓ Inclusion of parents during time tabling of duties so that they are not slotted on days that are busy for them.

- ✓ Introduction of school policies that make it clear on how parents should be involved. These policies should be made by the stakeholders not by the administrators only or teachers only.

- ✓ Parents to be involved in exciting programs like having a sports team playing against teachers as this will strengthen the bond between home and school.

- ✓ Parents to start income generating projects that will finance ECE programs.

5.4 Suggestion for future research

The researcher does not claim to have exhausted everything on parental involvement in ECD programmes. Future research can be carried out to establish factors that influence parental involvement in other levels other than ECD and even in other settings.

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY P.O. BOX 9055 SENGA, GWERU ZIMBABWE

INFORMED CONSENT IN PARTICIPATION IN AN ACADEMIC PROJECT

THE STATE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF ECD LEARNERS AT TWO SCHOOLS IN THE DISOSI SCHOOLS CLUSTER OF TSHOLOTSHO DISTRICT.

Dear Respondent

You are kindly invited to participate in an academic study conducted by Proud Ngwenya, a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education student at Midlands State University.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the state of parental involvement in the education of ECD learners in DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District. All your responses will be treated with confidentiality as you are not required to provide identify.

Your contribution to this research is of great value. However, you are allowed to choose not to participate in it or to withdraw at any point without any undesirable consequences. The research results are for academic purposes only.

Yours sincerely

Ngwenya Proud

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. How many children do you have, that are doing ECD (ECD A to Grade 2)?

2. Do you take part in the school programs?   yes/no

3. If yes in what ways?

4. Do you help your child in doing school work at home?

5. If yes how?

6. What challenges do you face when assisting your child at home?

7. Have you been called to a consultation?

8. If yes, how often are you called?

9. Do you have a committee that coordinates parents with the school programs?

10. Are there any challenges with being involved in school programs?

11. If yes, what are those challenges

12. Are you involved or represented in decision making of ECD programs?

QUESTIONAIRES FOR ECD TEACHERS

My name is Proud Ngwenya, a student at Midlands State University who is studying for a Bachelor's Degree in Education in Early Childhood Education (BECE). I want to carry out a research on the **state of parental involvement in the education of Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners at two schools in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho district.** You have been purposively selected to take part in this study as a respondent to the questions that will help carrying out this research. The information you will provide will be used for academic purposes only. You are not required to provide any details that will identify you such as names.

PLEASE PUT A TICK IN THE BOX NEXT TO THE ANSWER OF YOUR CHOICE OR WRITE IN THE SPACES PROVIDE AS THE CASE MAY BE.

SECTION A (DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS)

AGE   18-25 ( )   26-30 ( ) 31-35 ( ) 36-40 ( ) 41-45 ( ) 41 and above ( )

    A- GENDER

      Male   [ ]   female [ ]

    B- EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

      O' LEVEL   [ ]   A' LEVEL [ ]   DIPLOMA [ ]   DEGREE [ ]

      MASTERS [ ]   OTHERS (specify)……………………………………

    C- TEACHING EXPERIENCE

0-5 YEARS [ ]   6-10 YEARS [ ]   11-15 YEARS [ ]   16-20 YEARS [ ]

21 YEARS AND ABOVE [ ]

D- CLASS SIZE

Less than 20 learners [ ]   20 – 30 learners [ ] 31-40 learners [ ]

41-50 learners [ ]   51-60 learners [ ]   60 and above [ ]

SECTION B

1. Are parents involved in ECD programs?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

   If yes state the activities in which they are involved……………………….

   ……………………………………………………………………………

   ………………………………………………………………………………….

   ………………………………………………………………………………….

   ……………………………………………………….

2. Which ECD programs in schools require parental involvement?, for each

   program state whether parents are involved or not.

   …………………………………………………………………….

   …………………………………………………………………………..

   …………………………………………………………………….

3. Do you give your learners work to be done at home? Yes ( )   No ( )

   sometimes ( )

4. If you answered yes to the above question, Do parents help their children in

   doing that work? Yes ( ) No ( )

5. Are there any structures that enhance parental involvement in ECD programs?

   Yes [ ] No [ ]

   If yes, state those structures…………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Have you ever experienced any challenges with parental involvement in ECD programs?   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

   If yes, describe those challenges

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   …………………………………………………………………………………………..

7. What strategies do you think would, to enhance parental involvement in ECD programs?

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QUESTIONAIRES FOR ECD TEACHERS

My name is Proud Ngwenya, a student at Midlands State University who is studying for a Bachelor's Degree in Education in Early Childhood Education (BECE). I want to carry out a research on the **state of parental involvement in the education of Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners at two schools in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho district.** You have been purposively selected to take part in this study as a respondent to the questions that will help carrying out this research. The information you will provide will be used for academic purposes only. You are not required to provide any details that will identify you such as names.

PLEASE PUT A TICK IN THE BOX NEXT TO THE ANSWER OF YOUR CHOICE OR WRITE IN THE SPACES PROVIDE AS THE CASE MAY BE.

SECTION A (DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS)

AGE   18-25 ( )   26-30 ( )   31-35 ( ) 36-40 ( ) 41-45 ( ) 41 and above ( )

E- GENDER

Male   [ ]   female [ ]

F- EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

O' LEVEL   [ ]

A' LEVEL [ ]

DIPLOMA [ ]

DEGREE [ ]

MASTERS [ ]

OTHERS (specify)…………………………………………………..

G- TEACHING EXPERIENCE

0-5 YEARS [ ]   6-10 YEARS [ ] 11-15 YEARS [ ]

16-20 YEARS [ ]   21 YEARS AND ABOVE [ ]

H- CLASS SIZE

Less than 20 learners [ ]   20 – 30 learners [ ] 31-40 learners [ ]

41-50 learners [ ]   51-60 learners [ ]   60 and above [ ]

SECTION B

8. Are parents involved in ECD programs?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes state the activities in which they are involved……………………….

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9. Which ECD programs in schools require parental involvement?, for each

program state whether parents are involved or not.

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10. Do you give your learners work to be done at home? Yes ( )   No ( )

    sometimes ( )

11. If you answered yes to the above question, Do parents help their children in

    doing that work? Yes ( ) No ( )

12. Are there any structures that enhance parental involvement in ECD

    programs?

    Yes [ ] No [ ]

    If yes, state those structures………………………………………………………

    ……………………………………………………………………………………

    ………………………………………………………………………………

13. Have you ever experienced any challenges with parental involvement in ECD

    programs?   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

    If yes, describe those challenges

    ………………………………………………………………………………..

    ………………………………………………………………………………

14. What strategies do you think would, to enhance parental involvement in ECD

    programs?

    ....

    ....

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

P. BAG 9055
Gweru
Zimbabwe

Telephone: (263) 54 60404/60337/60667/60450
Fax: (263) 54 60233/60311

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

8 March 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer...... *NGWENYA PROUD* ....is a
B.Ed/~~MED/PGDE~~ student at this University. ~~She~~ / He has to undertake research and thereafter present a Research Project in partial fulfilment of the degree programme.
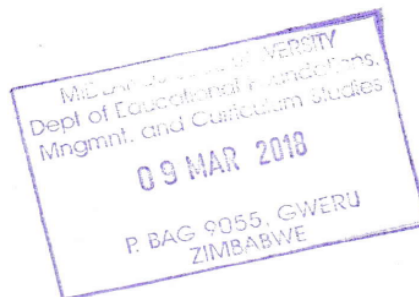
In this regard, the university kindly requests both your institution and personnel's assistance in this student's research endeavours.

Your co-operation and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Thank you

....
PP **Dr. C. Manyumwa**
(Chairperson – Educational Foundations Management and Curriculum Studies)

09 MAR 2018

Dinyane Primary School

P.O. Box 33

Tsholotsho

26 March 2018

The PED

Matabaleland North Province

P.O. Bulawayo

Dear Sir/Madam

RE : PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN TSHOLOTSHO DISTRICT, MATABELAND NORTH PROVINCE.

I am Ngwenya Proud a BECE student at Midlands State University. I seek permission to carry out a research in Tsholotsho District in Matabelaland North Province. This is in fulfilment of the Degree Programme. The research will include Dinyane and Soluswe SDA Primary Schools.

RESEARCH TOPIC

The state of parental involvement in the education of Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners at two schools in the DISOSI schools cluster of Tsholotsho District.

Attached to this letter are the instruments to be used during the research, research questions and the authorisation letter from the university.

Your positive response will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ngwenya Proud

All communications should be addressed to
"The Provincial Education Director"
 Tele-Fax: 67574
E-mail: matnorth12@gmail.com

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Matabeleland North Province
P O Box 555
Bulawayo
Zimbabwe

26 March 2018

Midlands State University
P Bag 9055
Gweru

Attention: **Ngwenya Proud (Mr.)**   **Registration No. R167998B**

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRYOUT A RESEARCH PROJECT:
TSHOLOTSHO DISTRICT: MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE

Reference is made to your letter dated 26 March 2018, requesting for permission to carry out a research project entitled *"The state of parental involvement in the education of Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners at two schools in the DISOSI schools clusters"* at Dinyane and Soluswe SDA Primary Schools, in Tsholotsho District, Matabeleland North Province.

You are hereby granted permission to conduct your research in the above mentioned district. However, your research should not in any way disturb the smooth running of teaching and learning activities in schools.

You will be required to furnish the Province with a copy of your findings after the research.

NB: Before proceeding into schools, please ensure that you pass through the District Schools Inspector – Tsholotsho.

Mpofu J. A. (Mr.)
A/Provincial Education Director – Matabeleland North.

cc: **District Schools Inspector – Tsholotsho.**