

THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF CURRICULUM 21 IN A RURAL KWAZULU-NATAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

BY

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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25/11/2003

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my wife, Thabisile Jenneth (MaNtombela), my sons, Sibongiseni and Sanele, my daughters, Tholakele, Siphesihle and Sinothile, my parents, Mr Mkhangezi (late) and Aselina Biyela (Mancube), my sister, Sethembile (late) and my brothers, Velenkosini, Thokozani and Sibusiso.

My family's belief that:

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that built it; except the

Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1),

has been a motivating factor for the successful completion of this research study.

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P.M. BIYELA

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of Curriculum 21 in South Africa in 1998 has brought with it added responsibilities for parents. According to the South African Schools' Act, No.84 (1996), parents have been granted powers to “support teachers in the performance of their task ”and “determine subject choices” for their children. However, when Curriculum 21 was introduced in 1998, relevant programmes for introducing parents to these ideas did not exist. According to Schlebusch and Spady (1999) family, home, identity and respect are important features of Curriculum 21 and only parents can create the best conditions for the academic development of their children. Therefore, the involvement of parents in the education of their children is vital. This dissertation is a case study of a rural KwaZulu-Natal public school, Hopewell Primary School, in which a pilot study of a programme to introduce parents to their responsibilities in the implementation of Curriculum 21, was first introduced.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration of Originality	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	ix
Appendices	xi

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, MOTIVATION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction.	1
1.2 Motivation for this study	3
1.3 Methodology	4
1.4 Examination of some key concepts	6
1.4.1 Curriculum 21 and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE)	6
1.4.2 Outcomes-Based Education	8
1.4.3 Parental Participation	11
1.4.3.1 Parents as resource providers	13
1.4.3.2 Computers as a resource	13
1.4.3.3 Television as a resource	13
1.4.3.4 People as a resource	14
1.4.3.5 Textbooks as a resource	15

1.5 Conclusion	16
1.6 Summary	16
1.7 Reference List	17

CHAPTER TWO

FOCUS ON HOPEWELL PRIMARY: THE CASE STUDY

2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 The school	19
2.3 Conclusion	24
2.4 Summary	24

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTRODUCTORY PROGRAMME AND DISPLAY OF RESULTS

3.1 Introduction	25
3.2 The First Meeting: Introducing Parents to Curriculum 21	25
3.3 Workshop One	28
3.3.1 The Programme	28
3.4 Workshop Two	28
3.5 Workshop Three	29
3.5.1 Method of Data Collection and Display of Results	30
3.5.2 Parents' Questionnaire	31
3.5.3 Teachers' Questionnaire	36
3.6 Conclusion	38
3.7 Summary	38
3.8 Reference List	39

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS, FINAL OVERVIEW AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction: An Overview of Chapter Four	40
4.2 Analysis of Responses To The Questionnaires	42
4.3 Recommendations	48
4.4 Conclusion	49
4.5 Summary	49
4.6 Reference List	50
4.7 Bibliography	51

LIST OF TABLES

1. Parents' Language Proficiency	31
2. Educational Level of Parents	32
3. Employment Status of Parents	32
4. Educational Aids for Curriculum 21	33
5. Parent-teacher contact	33
6. Parental Evaluation of Educational standards at Hopewell Primary	34
7. Parental Involvement in school homework	34
8. Parental Ability to Provide Learning Material	35
9. Parental Response to School's Requests for Assistance	35
10. Parental Knowledge of OBE	35
11. Parents' Willingness to Participate in Curriculum 21	36

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARENTS’ QUESTIONNAIRE	(xi)
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APPENDIX B: TEACHERS’ QUESTIONNAIRE	(xvi)
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INTRODUCTION, MOTIVATION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

When Curriculum 21 was introduced in 1998, the researcher realised that a programme for alerting parents to their responsibilities concerning the implementation of Curriculum 21 did not exist. This curriculum is a learner-centred curriculum, therefore, parents who are children's first educators, should remain involved in their education. Furthermore, the South African Schools' Act, No 84. 1996, provides for parents to be involved in the education of their children through determining subject choices and options and supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional duties. According to the publication by Schlebusch and Spady (1999) family, home, identity and respect are important features of Curriculum 21 and only parents can create the best conditions for the academic development of their children.

Prinsloo, Vorster and Sibaya (1996) support the following assumptions made by Hetznecker, Arnold and Phillips (1978: 368) about the attitudes teachers should have about parents:

- “....assume that the parent is an expert on his child and that he has been responsible and will be responsible long after the teacher has completed his term of responsibility;
- assume that the parent is as well intentioned as you are;
- assume that the parents are as consistent in applying their principles as you are;

- assume that the parent has a great emotional investment in the child and that the child's success or failure academically or behaviourally affects the parent's self-esteem in his role as a parent;
- assume that the purpose of the parent and school personnel working together is to help the child have the space he needs to be what he is and can be;
- assume that you and the parent can find a way to establish a working alliance” (Prinsloo *et al.*, 1996:263).

The above assumptions explain how important it is for parents to be involved in the education of their children, why the teacher-parent partnership is so vital in education and why parents should rather be trained to work with teachers than be excluded from the education of their children. It is for this reason that the researcher has chosen the topic “The involvement of parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21...”

Hetznecker *et al.*, (1978:365) caution all educators, who undervalue the role of parents, that they are the experts concerning their children. The teacher should remember that the parent is the God-given, the most important and irreplaceable educator of the child. Parents contribute in many ways to the development of their children, even when a teacher's task is over. It is parents who actually accompany their children into adulthood. What the child eventually becomes in life affects his/ her own family, not the teacher's. It is against this background that the researcher had reservations about Curriculum 21, especially when it was implemented without the participation of the most indispensable partners in education, parents.

According to Jansen (1997), “Why OBE will fail”, a number of deliberations by committees of departmental officials, curriculum developers, subject specialists, teachers, lecturers, trade unions, business representatives and foreign observers were involved in formulating Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). The deliberations were held in order to establish criteria for the selection of curriculum content, methods of teaching and assessment procedures. Parents were, however, omitted from the discussions.

Educational theorists believe that teaching and learning is only complete if it includes three pillars, that is, the teacher, the parent and the learner. According to Bertram and Fotheringham (1999:9), education is about people. Learners, the parents and community members, in addition to teachers, are all important and, sometimes, overlooked as resources for learning.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

This research on attitudes towards parental involvement in Curriculum 21 in a rural primary school has been undertaken, in the hope, that it may promote the implementation of Curriculum 21 and apprise education planners of the special problems encountered in rural KwaZulu-Natal schools. Among these problems are the shortage of teachers and material resources. Training parents in some classroom duties will, to some extent, assist in alleviating the situation. It is hoped that alerting parents to the necessity of their roles in the education of their children will encourage educators to devise and develop programmes for parents and to train them in the ways they can assist in implementing Curriculum 21. Parents should be made aware that the success of their children is also in their hands and they should be empowered to play a vital role in Curriculum 21 and have the opportunity to share their own experiences and skills for the benefit of their children.

This introductory programme, which forms the basis of this research, should be aimed at both literate and illiterate parents. The latter, even if they can neither read nor write, may relate folktales and other stories to their children. This may encourage the latter to read stories to their parents from magazines, newspapers and books, which may instill love for reading in their children. An illiterate parent, who has been trained, also may supervise his/her children's study programmes by seeing to it that they focus attention on their books.

The researcher undertook this research because he was unable to find a study that was concerned with parental involvement in the implementation of Curriculum 21 in rural KwaZulu-Natal primary schools. Indeed, according to available research bibliography, very little has been written in South Africa on parental involvement. Heystek and Louw (1998), in their article in the "South African Journal of Education" are among the few who do emphasize the role of parents as partners in education: parents have valuable expertise and should share responsibilities with the professional staff of the school. Their article, however, does not deal with parental involvement in Curriculum 21.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The researcher has chosen a case study approach because in researching a rural KwaZulu-Natal primary school, a case study is the most useful. A case study is defined by Sommer & Sommer (1987:44) as "a unit of analysis, that is, it can be an individual, an institution, a family, a work team or a resource". It is basically an intensive investigation of the factors that contribute to the characteristics of the case. Each case has within it "a set of interrelationships that bind it together and shape it". A case study is a "detailed investigation of one or two instances the researcher wishes to investigate.

The case represents a holistic approach to research, therefore, the understanding of the study is increased by considering the entire entity rather than breaking it into constituent parts” (Sommer and Sommer, 1987: 45).

According to Sommer and Sommer, (1987:45) the advantage of a case study is that it catches the reader’s interest and it can be read as easily, and with as much enjoyment, as a “good novel or a story”. Also, a case study is used by educational researchers to study innovations such as the response of students, teachers and parents to a new curriculum or teaching method (Sommer and Sommer, 1987:46). Another feature of a case study, when compared to other kinds of research methodologies, is that the factors being studied are not unduly and artificially emphasized, but are phenomena as they exist in their natural setting. For example, the parent community in this particular primary school, which was the subject of this research, was best studied in its own setting in KwaZulu-Natal.

In this study the researcher looked at how parents and teachers respond to suggestions of involvement in the implementation of Curriculum 21 and the ways of introducing parents to its implementation and facilitation. Researchers, who conduct case studies, tend to be practitioners, who are interested in understanding a condition so that it can be treated or altered in some way. The researcher, himself a principal of a rural KwaZulu-Natal school, chose the case study approach because he was studying the conditions under which Curriculum 21 could be implemented, including the school environment, the socio-economic status of the parent community, the emotional and psychological preparedness of the parent community and the availability of resources. The case study approach was preferred because it would be possible to handle complex problems of education, for example, “the qualitative aspects of how teachers interact with parents, students and administrators” in a school situation.

In this particular study, the principal of the school was a participant observer. He had to be objective and impartial in recording and describing the nature of the social climate and the interaction between teachers and parents, parents and pupils. Among the questions he sought answers to were the following: do teachers involve parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21 at this primary school? Do parents feel involved in the education of their children?

1.4 EXAMINATION OF SOME KEY CONCEPTS

1.4.1 CURRICULUM 21 AND OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION (OBE)

Curriculum 21 is a new curriculum for South Africa. It focuses on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which learners should develop rather than the content they are given by teachers. "In order to achieve these competencies, learners need to be actively involved in the learning process, that is, they need to spend their time solving problems, making models, designing plans, resolving conflicts, working in groups, making posters, trying out ideas, applying knowledge in different contexts as well as understanding the information that teachers give them" (Bertram and Fotheringham, 1999:6-8). According to The Media in Education Trust (The National Department of Education 1997:2) Curriculum 21 is a new way of looking at how learning takes place, a new way of looking at what the planners of education want learning to achieve and a new way of looking at assessment and management.

In this research Curriculum 21 is used as an umbrella term to cover all aspects of the new system of education and curriculum in South Africa. This includes:

- the aims and objectives of the education system as well as the specific ethos and goals of individual schools;

- the selection of content to be taught, its arrangement into syllabuses, learning areas and work programmes;
- the process, the competencies and skills to be included in the syllabus, ways of teaching learning and the relationships between teachers and learners;
- the form of assessment and evaluation of students, the procedures which ensure the accountability of schools and teachers (Leabrook, 1992).

Curriculum 21 is based on OBE, derived from nationally agreed critical cross-field outcomes, that sketch the designer's vision of a transformed society and the role that education has to play in creating a transformed society (Gultig *et al.*, 1998:133). According to Gultig *et al.*, this curriculum is not based on traditional school subjects, but redefines these into broader learning areas. It includes aspects of knowledge previously ignored in the curriculum (such as "technology") and emphasizes the importance of other areas that were previously marginalized (such as "art and culture" and "life orientation"), or ignored in the primary and junior secondary phases (such as "economics and "management science"). The new curriculum has specific outcomes that ensure that a specific area achieves its contextualized and specific form in the broader critical outcomes. "Assessment criteria are provided to make clear the sort of evidence that could be used to evaluate the preparedness of learners towards achieving the outcomes" (The National Department of Education: The Media in Education Trust, 1997:3-4).

Assessment has a developmental and monitoring function to fulfil. It is through assessment that the efficiency of the teaching and learning process can be evaluated. “Feedback from assessment informs teaching and learning, and allows for the critique of outcomes, methodology and material. Assessment practices can have a profound impact on the process of teaching and learning in that they set standards which guide these activities (Gultig *et al.*, 1998:135). Moreover, Gultig *et al.* (1998:135-136) say that there are three distinct elements in the “coherent” system for the “holistic assessment” of learners, viz:

- a formal summative assessment : this is when learners are assessed through the reward of credits, qualifications and year marks;
- an ongoing formal continuous assessment : this type provides for a variety of ways of demonstrating competencies across a range of contexts and should lead to the reward of marks or grades accompanied by helpful feedback to the learner, as well as the formal recording of results;
- an ongoing informal formative assessment which is designed to monitor and encourage learning progress, providing guidance to the learner in the form of self-assessment”.

1.4.2 OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

Outcomes-Based Education is about preparing students for life, not simply getting them ready for university, college or employment. It means focusing, organising a school’s entire programme and instructional efforts around the clearly defined outcomes educators want all learners to be able to demonstrate when they leave school (Spady, 1994:5).

Outcomes, according to Spady (1994:5), must be practical and primarily significant for life after school. From an OBE perspective, it is not the number of courses taken at school, but what learners can do when they exit the education system. Outcomes-Based Education means that educators use a variety of processes to determine the intended learning for young people, it does not mean time-based education with “outcomes sprinkled on top”.

Because there is so much change going on in the world, including new technology, information and changing circumstances, “life-long learning in itself becomes a dimension of living”. We are called upon to be life-long learners in order to function well in life. In OBE, curriculum designers look at the arena of life for which students have to prepare so that they know what the world will be like. In OBE, whether students understand a task and perform it to a high standard, is more important than how long it takes them to complete it. The most important factor, accounting for differences in OBE approaches, involves the concept of “culminating demonstration”, that is, the end result, that which a learner is able to do after schooling (Spady, 1994:6).

According to Spady (1994:6) and The Media in Education Trust (The National Department of Education, 1997: 4), the content in OBE involves knowledge derived from the significant problems, challenges and opportunities people are likely to face after leaving school. The content is what students need to know and to understand about interpersonal relationships, work and resource management, managing finance and civil and global issues in order to be able to work and survive.

The outcomes are clearly defined and they involve reaching a certain standard rather than remaining at school for a given amount of time, “there is no system until the outcomes are defined. Outcomes-Based Education actually means practical reality” (Spady, 1994:6).

In OBE, according to Spady (1994:6-7) the curriculum content is not the outcome, the “demonstration of this content” is the outcome. An outcome is not the name of a concept or the name of a competence or the name of an attitude, but outcomes actually happen, somebody does something. Until they do something, an outcome has not been realized. Therefore, an outcome is an actual demonstration of three things, namely, knowledge, combined with competence, combined with orientation. Orientation is the “attitudinal, effective, motivational and rational element that help constitute a performance”.

Furthermore, Spady (1994:7) states that an outcome is a combination of the demonstration of the entire range of learning experiences and capabilities that underlie it. It occurs in a performance context that directly influences what it is and how it is carried out. The word “based” means to “direct, derive, define, determine, focus and organize”. What we do according to the “substance and nature of the learning result is what we want to have at the end”. When these two words, that is, “education” and “outcome” are put together, the term “Outcomes-Based Education” results. “Outcomes-Based implies that the designers will design and organize everything they do directly around the final intended learning demonstration. Outcomes of significance require substance applied through processes of significance.”

.Outcomes-Based Education starts with a framework and a set of expectations about the derived learning results. The curriculum and the organisational forms, that are appropriate for achieving those results, can then be built in. For children to be able to demonstrate the entire range of learning experiences, both institutions, that is, home and school, should work together. It is this interwovenness of home and school that brings in the parent as the indispensable partner in the education of his/her child.

1.4.3 PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

The parental community of the school selected for this case study comprised mainly illiterate parents. Nevertheless, the researcher chose to introduce a programme to involve parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21 because he was aware of untapped potential among parents which might have made the implementation of Curriculum 21 easier for teachers. Moreover, education laws, for example, South African Schools' Act, No. 84 of 1996, encourage parental involvement. Parents can help their children in school activities in some way. Even illiterate parents can encourage their offspring to study and do homework, even if they themselves do not understand the educational material to be studied. Rural parents tend to leave schooling to teachers. It is hoped that the efforts made to involve them in their children's education at this particular primary school will encourage other schools to follow suit.

The programme, aimed at alerting parents to how they could become partners in the primary school education of their children, looked at ways and means which parents could use to improve their children's attitudes towards reading by encouraging them to read newspapers, magazines, stories, the Bible and other books, which were not textbooks.

Also, by telling their children folktales. It is hoped that a love of story telling, reading for pleasure and learning in general could be developed.

Parental participation in the education of their children has not been given much attention in rural KwaZulu-Natal schools. Among the indigenous population, throughout history, education was regarded as a national, political, missionary or religious matter. Africans always considered Western education to be a foreign and formal way of Westernization, different from socialization. African parental involvement in the socialization and upbringing of children has always existed but this was not regarded as “education”. Mothers, for example, were expected to initiate their daughters into their roles as future mothers of the nation, while fathers taught their sons cultural norms, manners, the art of fighting, parental styles, family customs and songs of praise (Prinsloo *et al.*, 1996:265).

Nowadays parents are expected to act in partnership with educators by assisting in the implementation of a learning programme. This implies that parents should have access to school information and records, as these are necessary in decision-making, in diagnosis, assessment, planning, review and monitoring of children’s work. Parents act in partnership with educators by coming to school and sitting in as teachers go about their normal teaching routines and observe the work and behaviour of their children. In an OBE situation parents may participate actively in the education of their children by helping them with reading and games coaching or by communicating with educators and informing them about the skills their children have acquired in a year of schooling.

1.4.3.1 PARENTS AS RESOURCE PROVIDERS

In rural KwaZulu-Natal very few schools, if any, have adequate resources for all their learners. It is in these under-resourced schools that the role of parents is especially important. Curriculum 21 requires learners to access information from textbooks, magazines and newspapers, to interview people, observe the environment, listen to radio, watch television and use computers. Poor rural primary and secondary schools cannot provide all these resources. Parents have to dig deep into their pockets in order to see to it that textbooks and stationery are provided.

1.4.3.2 COMPUTERS AS A RESOURCE

According to Bertram and Fotheringham (1999:12), computers and the internet offer many possibilities for learning and teaching. It is vital that all learners know at least how to use a word processor so that they can type and produce documents. In rural primary schools, which cannot afford a computer, there may be a member of the community who can provide this educational resource.

1.4.3.3 TELEVISION AS A RESOURCE

Television is one of the most important educational resources and can be very useful in the implementation of Curriculum 21. Although Hopewell Primary does not have electricity, teachers can use battery powered television sets in order to access information from this resource. Rural primary and secondary schools are in great need of this resource. Television, as a resource, can broadcast new knowledge that can be utilized by OBE educators. There are some very useful and interesting programmes on television which can add a new dimension to learning. These include programmes showing new places and things. In schools where there is no television, parents can be involved in fund-raising for resources such as a television set.

The role of parents in the proper use of television cannot be over-emphasized. News broadcast and documentary programmes on science and history are good learning resources. Also, videos of setworks, for example, plays, will help learners to study plays. Television is a fun, visual way of learning which learners enjoy (Bertram and Fotheringham, 1999: 13-14). There are programmes such as “Open Sesame”, “Takalane Sesame”, and “Infomercial” (SABC1); “School TV” (SABC 2); “Tube” (SABC 1). Since parents in rural areas are sensitive to certain programmes, which they feel violate their cultural norms, parents can select programmes that are suitable for their children.

1.4.3.4 PEOPLE AS A RESOURCE

Parents and community members should help to show how the different learning areas are relevant to adult life. They should also share their knowledge, skills and life experiences with learners. The principal and the teachers can organize, for example, mechanics and electricians to come to school and tell learners about their jobs and also demonstrate the mechanical and scientific principles involved in their trades. Professionals, such as quantity surveyors, engineers, geologists and accountants could talk to learners and tell them how important mathematics is in their daily working lives and so encourage an understanding of the importance of mathematics.

1.4.3.5 TEXTBOOKS AS A RESOURCE

Schlebusch and Spady (1999:4) believe that Curriculum 21 should do the following:

- prepare learners for the next millennium by training them in the new basics, that is, “to do lots of things : do lots of things that are not about content memorisation from books or traditional course syllabuses ; do them outside the school itself and demonstrate what they have done in a way other than pencil-paper tests because no pencil-paper test can possibly measure life-role applications” (Schlebusch and Spady, 1999 : 66);
- give a common educational vision;
- address the core social and moral issues which had made us such a divided and bitter nation in the past, that is, have a strong social transformation agenda.

It should be noted, however, that the country is under-resourced and that a new curriculum cannot depend on supplies of locally produced textbooks. South Africa needs to use affordable resources for education, for example, human resources and their valuable experiences. Parental support in this aspect of education is important.

Nevertheless, textbooks are important too and the importance of parental participation in the provision of textbooks cannot be over-emphasized. Curriculum 21 requires that “learners should be able to identify and solve problems by using creative and critical thinking”. It stresses further, that learners should be able to “collect, organise, analyze and critically evaluate information” (Bertram and Fotheringham, 1999:13). Textbooks are essential for school work, presenting information in many forms including pictures, diagrams and tables as well as text. Since the Government does not supply textbooks any longer, it is now the parents’ responsibility to look for ways and means to obtain books for their children.

1.5 CONCLUSION

Education in South Africa is undergoing transformation and as such it becomes incumbent upon all partners in education to become involved in it. The new education system aims at equipping all students with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and competencies required to meet the challenges and opportunities they will face in their future careers and lives. Teachers and parents working together should help children realize their full potential. It is for this reason that parental participation in Curriculum 21 is necessary.

1.6 SUMMARY

Parental involvement was identified as one of the cornerstones in the implementation of Curriculum 21. The motivation for this was extensively explored and a relevant methodology selected. Key concepts that were used in this dissertation were analyzed. Chapter Two will introduce the subject of investigation to the reader. It will also look at the input parents and the community can make in the education of the child in an OBE era.

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CHAPTER TWO

FOCUS ON HOPEWELL PRIMARY: THE CASE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Chapter is to introduce readers to the school. This Chapter will look at the school's situation in KwaZulu-Natal, parents' educational as well as socio-economic status and the learners and teachers at Hopewell Primary.

2.2 THE SCHOOL

The school, the subject of this case study, is a primary school situated at Nkwenkwe Reserve. It is ten kilometres beyond Melmoth. Nkwenkwe Reserve is a rural area under the Entembeni Tribal Authority. The school overlooks Nkwalini Village. The school was established by St Paul's Anglican Church Parish in the late 1950s. It began as a lower primary school. The main aim of establishing it was to teach the community to read and write. In the early 1960s, when missionary schools were taken over by the Government, the Anglican Church donated a piece of land on which the school buildings were erected.

The school is painted brown and white. To keep domestic animals and vandals out, it is surrounded by barbed-wire. The roof is of corrugated iron. The school has fifteen classrooms, one staff-room and four administrative offices. There is one pit latrine for girls, one for boys and one for teachers. Neither cleaning nor gardening services are supplied by the provincial authorities. Learners clean their own classrooms and latrines.

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The playground is also kept clean by learners picking up litter almost every morning. The playground is bare but class teachers have planted flowers in front of their classrooms. The school has no electricity and so cannot use equipment such as television sets or radio (unless they are battery-powered). From the beginning the school used water from its own tanks.

The school accepts learners from the age of seven. Most are from the local pre-school, but some have never attended pre-school classes because their parents had not gone to school and so did not believe in sending their children to a pre-school. There are three classes in Grade One. Each class has 60 learners with one teacher, who teaches all subjects. The school has fifteen teachers, three heads of department, a deputy principal and a principal. The learners in this case study are from families that, in several cases, belong to the poorest of the poor. Their educational background is disadvantaged as some of their parents are either illiterate or semi-literate. The educational concepts that they have to deal with are foreign to their upbringing. Their family backgrounds revealed a lack of television and television videos, telephones, electric appliances and computers, so they were not prepared for the educational experiences expected of them in the implementation of Curriculum 21. It is hoped, however, that these learners, who grew up exposed to traditional Zulu festivities such as Zulu dances, traditional weddings and ceremonies, stick fighting and traditional dress codes, do have the potential to master the knowledge and skills expected of them by the new education dispensation.

The teaching staff at Hopewell Primary School consists of sixteen Post Level One educators, three heads of department, one deputy principal and the principal. 70% of the teaching staff started as privately paid teachers (PPTs) at Hopewell Primary School.

They had obtained their Primary Teachers' Certificates through correspondence. 50% had Higher Education Diplomas and 30% were specialized in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). This training was useful in conducting a parents' training programme, which, for purposes of this research, was concerned with introducing parents to the idea that they should share responsibility with teachers in educating their children.

Teachers were willing to improve the standard of education, not only of learners, but also of the parental community of this area. This was evident in the year 2000 when they requested the management of the school to apply for an Adult Centre at the school. As a result of the teachers' enthusiasm, the school was granted permission to embark on an Adult Basic Education and Training programme on 1 March 2002. Teachers, who were teaching at Hopewell Primary, were responsible for the smooth running of this programme.

The introduction of Curriculum 21 in 1998 was accepted with mixed feelings: 80% of the teaching staff were involved in this initial stage of curriculum implementation and attended workshops arranged for teachers in Grades One to Four; 60% of the educators, who were young and energetic, were very positive about the new curriculum, while 20% of those who attended the workshops were sceptical about doing away with "the tried and tested" methods of teaching. It was only after a series of workshops that the whole staff accepted Curriculum 21.

During the implementation of Curriculum 21, teachers had problems involving parents in helping their children with homework, the provision of learning materials and helping teachers in the implementation of Curriculum 21.

When the researcher introduced the idea of alerting parents to their involvement in Curriculum 21 at Hopewell Primary, teachers were elated with this idea. It was clear, during the researcher's discussions with teachers, that they wanted parents to volunteer to help in various ways in the school, for example, during excursions when they could accompany teachers and help them arrange food for the learners. Teachers also wanted parents to tell them about children's special needs or any home circumstances or health problems that they should take into consideration when dealing with pupils.

Teachers preferred parents to supervise homework and listen to their children reading. They wanted parents to have realistic expectations of their children's abilities and attend meetings to discuss their progress. Several teachers complained that parent did not read and acknowledge reports and letters sent to them by teachers. In discussions with teachers, the researcher found that they approved of parents being introduced to the implementation of Curriculum 21 but were aware that there might be difficulties. The introductory programme, which the researcher initiated, demanded that parents be available during the day, in the evening and during week-ends. However, teachers pointed out that some parents would not be available as teacher-aides during the day. Also, several parents were away earning a living in the cities and only came home infrequently. Teachers also feared opposition from parents if it was suggested that they be involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21, but they hoped that, after explaining the terms of the South African Schools' Act, No. 84 (1996), parents would agree. A difficulty to be overcome would be to draw in both illiterate and literate parents into the scheme.

The Government provides only limited resources. Parents buy additional books and stationery and pay R80.00 per child per year into the school fund.

As the school is short of resources and parents, in most cases, too poor to help, teachers continue to improvise when implementing Curriculum 21 (as they did when resources were required for other innovations in education).

The parent community of this school is Zulu and the school serves a traditional settlement consisting of groups of huts or homesteads dispersed over a wide area. Each homestead houses an extended family of, often, three generations living together. Polygamy is widely practised. Families depend on a subsistence economy.

Young people in the Nkwenkwe Reserve regularly leave the area to search for employment in urban areas. As employment is difficult to find, most are largely dependent on subsistence-farming and employment in the nearby sugar cane fields. Subsistence-farming in this area is unreliable. For most families the only dependable source of income is the pension granted to persons over the age of sixty, who are, in most cases, the grandparents of families. Grandparents use their pensions for school fees, food, school uniforms and even pocket money for their grandchildren.

In the Nkwenkwe Reserve the standard of education of adults is very low. Parents and grandparents, in most cases, had only attended until the lower primary school level. It is rare to find someone with a tertiary education. Most adults can only read and write in Zulu. Nevertheless, it is expected that parents should play a role in the implementation of Curriculum 21. As this presented a serious problem, the headmaster of the school had to find a solution.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The picture depicted of the subject of this research, its parent community and learner community is typical of many rural KwaZulu-Natal schools. In this rural school the implementation of Curriculum 21 and parental involvement seem to be taken for granted by education officials, that is, the education planners seem to see no operational differences between rural and well-to-do urban schools. When Curriculum 21 was introduced in 1998, not one rural school in KwaZulu-Natal was selected as a pilot school to discover whether rural schools were capable and ready to implement Curriculum 21.

2.4 SUMMARY

This Chapter introduced the subject of this research, Hopewell Primary School, its location, its teaching staff and the community it serves. In doing so it is apparent that there will be difficulties in assuming that parents can play a role in the implementation of Curriculum 21 without careful preparation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTRODUCTORY PROGRAMME AND DISPLAY OF RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter describes the introductory programme prepared to alert parents about the importance of their involvement in the implementation of Curriculum 21. It also informs the reader of the meetings that were held, the introduction of parents to Curriculum 21 and the steps that were followed in alerting parents to the need for their involvement in the new dispensation. It also includes the results of the questionnaires distributed to random samples of parents and eight teachers. These questionnaires sought information about the willingness of parents to be involved in the implementation of curriculum 21 and teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement.

3.2 THE FIRST MEETING : INTRODUCING PARENTS TO CURRICULUM 21

The parent community of Hopewell Primary School were given questionnaires to find out whether parents, whose children were in Grades One, Two, Three and Four knew anything about Curriculum 21. It was discovered that parents were unaware of what their children were learning. This preliminary survey led to a parents' meeting on 13 March 2002 at which they were made aware of the new system of education. Parents were told that South Africa's past education system did not produce "creative, critical and independent thinkers", but that the South African Schools' Act, No. 84 (1996) gave them the right to choose subjects for their children and that they were expected to support educators in the education of their children (Mthimkhulu, 1999; The National Department of Education: The Media in Education Trust, 1997). The researcher explained that education in South Africa, which was undergoing transformation, laid greater emphasis on outcomes than on content.

The researcher used wall-charts to explain the implications of the National Qualifications' Framework (NQF) and that it was designed out of recognition that the education system should meet the economic and social needs of South Africa and its people. Parents were informed that in the past "education" was seen as an area where knowledge was gained while "training" was an area where skills were gained. However, the NQF links education and training. Education may take place at school, formally or at home, informally. Under the new system prior learning whether at work or home is recognized, as is adult learning and "on the job" training. Lifetime learning will be encouraged to take place at any age and irrespective of levels of education and training (The National Department of Education: The Media in Education Trust, 1997). It was further explained how important Curriculum 21 was and that parental participation in children's learning was essential.

Wall-Chart 1: Example of visual material made available to parents

TRADITIONAL	OUTCOMES-BASED
Passive learners.	Active learners.
Rote learning.	Critical thinking, reasoning and reflection.
Syllabus is content based and broken down into subjects.	Integrated knowledge relevant to real-life situation.
Textbook/worksheet-bound.	Learner-centred, teacher is a facilitator, teacher uses groupwork and a variety of resources.
Teacher responsible for learning.	Learners take responsibility for their learning.
Motivation depends on the personality of the teacher.	Learner motivated by constant feedback and confirmation.

(The National Department of Education: The Media in Education Trust, 1997:1)

A wall-chart showing the differences between the “old” education and the new Outcomes-Based approach was displayed. This was found to be useful and the wall-chart inspired a short and constructive debate on the advantages and disadvantages of Outcomes-Based teaching.

The researcher wanted parents to understand the need for their active involvement in their children’s learning and that learners would be taking responsibility for their own learning. It was encouraging that at the end of this meeting both parental enthusiasm and dedication was apparent.

This first meeting ended with the researcher describing the content of the next workshop so that parents, who could read and write isiZulu, could discuss issues before the workshop. Parents were also involved in deciding on the number of workshops to be held in the six months of their introductory programme. A parents’ committee was formed to work closely with the researcher on the following:

- the co-ordination of school support activities;
- the development of home-school relations;
- the maintenance of the parental programme;
- the arrangement of future meetings.

The venue for the next meeting was announced. The meeting closed with a short prayer.

3.3 WORKSHOP ONE

3.3.1 The Programme

To set the tone for the workshop “icebreakers” that is light activities, that were interesting to parents, were used. These generated a warm and accepting climate. They helped parents to relax and become fully involved in the procedures. As many parents as possible were involved in the presentation of discussions as “scribes” and “reporters”. The teachers (who acted as facilitators) and the participating parents listed the outcomes they hoped to attain in each workshop. Participants were broken up into groups of six. Each group discussed the following:

- how can parents help their children develop skills useful in school?
- list all the activities in which parents and their children can work together.
- how can schools use parental skills in the implementation of Curriculum 21?

Information gleaned from a discussion of the three questions was used by teachers to draw up a programme for parents who could assist them as aides in the classroom.

3.4 WORKSHOP TWO

This was held after parents had been initiated into contributing to learning activities of their children. After a short prayer, the participants broke into groups of six and discussed the “benefits and difficulties of parental involvement”. All the groups agreed that among the benefits were increased parental satisfaction with the work of the teachers and the school in general. Parents spoke of their increased self-confidence in matters concerning education and this was useful for their children. During the course of discussion it came to light that teachers were totally in favour of parental involvement in the implementation of Curriculum 21.

This activity took 20 minutes. Teachers as facilitators then took over and led the discussion on “How can teachers minimize parents’ difficulties?” Parents maintained that teachers should accept them as teachers’ aides, irrespective of their level of education, but that they would welcome training so as to be able to have an input into the education of their children. Teachers were then given the opportunity to voice their difficulties with parental participation. Among these were that parents remained uninvolved because they suffered low self-esteem or did not know that they had a right to participate in the schooling of their children. Teachers, as had parents before, complained about the shortage of learning material needed for the implementation of Curriculum 21. On the positive note both teachers and parents agreed that their co-operation in the teaching of pupils at the school was essential.

3.5 WORKSHOP THREE

The third workshop was concerned with how parents could be used as “educators”. Several schemes of parental involvement were considered. One aspect that received attention was the importance of maintaining good communication between home and school. This could be facilitated by a number of strategies including the following:

- parents visiting the school, phone calls and sending letters, holding parents’ meetings, “open days” and individual parent-teacher meetings;
- written communication through school newsletters, class newsletters, a calendar of events and posters;
- questionnaires to parents to determine areas of concern and problems concerning home-school relations.

. (Long, 1986:19).

The attitude of parents and teachers towards the above methods of communication were very positive. Parents also discussed their involvement in such matters as using their own special talents and knowledge, the celebration of social and cultural events, such as assemblies and festivals, fund-raising through jumble sales and price draws, assisting teachers by helping in supervision during trips and as aides in school (Long, 1986:210). An important matter after a programme of parental involvement was introduced was the question as to how could this be sustained. The fear was expressed that after their initial enthusiasm parents would lose interest. It was at this stage of the discussion that the idea of training parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21 was mooted, but that was a matter for further investigation by the researcher.

3.5.1 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The researcher used the questionnaire as a data collecting method for this project. A questionnaire is a list of questions that a number of people are asked to complete so that information can be collected. The questionnaire method was preferred in this research because the researcher was gathering data from the subjects of research. Information could not only be obtained through observation. For the information to be accurate, uncompromised and pristine, the researcher applied the questionnaires before the workshop. The questionnaire was also preferred because it has, according to Orlich, the following advantages:

“Many individuals may be contacted at the same time; responses are easily tabulated; a questionnaire is less expensive to administer than using interviews; persons in remote or distant areas are easily reached; uniform data is gathered which allow for long range research implications” (Orlich, 1978:40).

3.5.2 PARENTS’ QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to discover the level of parents’ education, which would influence their ability to assist teacher implement Curriculum 21 and their general participation in their children’s education, a structural questionnaire was administered by the researcher during a special meeting of all parents. It was also preferred because it was going to help the researcher prepare questions to be asked during workshops, find out more about parents’ and teachers’ attitudes towards parental involvement in the implementation of Curriculum 21 and select issues to be involved in this introductory programme. The meeting was attended by 100 parents, whose children were in Grades One to Four. A questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of ten parents. Teachers, who taught Grades One to Four assisted parents in completing the questionnaire. Responses to questions have been provided in tabular form. Each Table corresponds to a question.

TABLE 1: Parents’ Language Proficiency

<u>LANGUAGES</u>	<u>SPEAK</u>	<u>WRITE</u>	<u>READ</u>
English	60%	60%	60%
Afrikaans	20%	20%	20%
IsiZulu	100%	100%	100%

Table 1 showed that 100% of the parents could speak, read and write isiZulu. Only 20% of the respondents could speak, read and write Afrikaans. 60% of the parents could speak, read and write English.

TABLE 2: Educational Level of Parents

<u>GRADES</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
0 – 1	-	-
1 – 4	1	10%
5 – 7	1	10%
8 – 12	8	80%
Tertiary	-	-

Table 2 showed that 80% of parents had passed Grades Eight to Ten while 20% has passed Grades One to Seven.

TABLE 3: Employment Status of Parents

<u>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Permanently employed	3	30%
Temporarily employed	-	-
Pensioner	4	40%
Unemployed	3	30%

Only 30% of parents were permanently employed, 40% were pensioners and 30% were unemployed.

TABLE 4: Educational Aids for Curriculum 21

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Radio (battery- powered)	10	100%
Electricity	0	0%
Telephone	0	0%
Television set and Video cassette player	1	10%
Computers	0	0%

The community was particularly poor in this respect as only 10% of the homes had a television and video cassette player. It was encouraging to note that all the households surveyed had a radio. Radio is also a most effective teaching aid which encourages learners’ imagination and visualization, thereby developing their ability as creative thinkers.

TABLE 5: Parent-teacher contact

<u>WHERE MET</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
At a party	0	0%
During parents’ meetings	8	80%
Summoned to school	2	20%
Home visit by teachers	0	0 %

Table 5 showed that 80% of parents met their children’s teachers during formal parent-teacher meetings. 20% said that they were summoned to school and that was how they came to know their children’s teachers.

TABLE 6: Parental Evaluation of Educational standards at Hopewell Primary

<u>EVALUATION</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Excellent	2	20%
Satisfactory	4	40%
Unsatisfactory	4	40%

20% of the parents said that the education their children were receiving was excellent. 40% of the respondents were satisfied with the educational standards. 40% indicated that they were dissatisfied with the education at Hopewell Primary School. This was cause for concern and required further investigation.

TABLE 7: Parental involvement in school homework.

The following Table, Table 7, showed that some parents were ready to help their children with their education:

<u>TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Do you listen to your children reading?	8	80%
Do you check spelling?	8	80%
Do you check tables?	8	80%
Uninvolved	2	20%

Table 7 indicated that 80% of the respondents checked spelling, tables, and listened to their children’s reading. 20% of the respondents did not help their children with school homework.

TABLE 8 : Parental Ability to Provide Learning Material.

<u>PARENTAL ABILITY</u>	<u>NUMBEROF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Can afford learning material	4	40
Cannot afford learning material	6	60%

Table 8 revealed that 60% of the respondents could not afford to provide learning material, which included textbooks and stationery, for their children. Only 40% of respondent could afford to provide learning material for their children.

TABLE 9: Parental Response to School's Requests for Assistance.

<u>PARENTAL RESPONSE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Asked	8	80%
Not asked	2	20%

The results showed that 80% of parents, who had been asked to help their children with school homework, did so, while 20% maintained they were not asked to help their children.

TABLE 10: Parental Knowledge of OBE.

<u>KNOWLEDGE OF OBE</u>	<u>NUMBEROF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Knew about it	2	20%
Read about it	2	20%
Head about it from taechers	1	10%
Never heard about it	5	50%

Table 10 revealed that 20% of the parents knew about OBE. 20% maintained that they had read about it, while 10% said they had heard about it from teachers. 50% indicated that they had never heard of OBE.

TABLE 11: Parents’ Willingness to Participate in Curriculum 21.

<u>PARENTS’ WILLINGNESS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARENTS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Willing to participate	10	100%
Not willing to participate	0	0%

All the respondents indicated that they were willing to participate in the implementation of Curriculum 21. This proved that the researcher was correct in believing that parents would do their best to assist their children to do well at school.

3.5.3 TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Information from teachers was essential. Their attitude towards the involvement of the parents in Curriculum 21 would be the key to its successful implementation. Since 1998, teachers had been at the forefront of the implementation of Curriculum 21. The researcher felt that teachers should be included in the survey. In the questionnaire teachers expressed their concerns about the implementation of Curriculum 21. Their concerns would have to be addressed. Eight teachers, who were involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21 in Grades One to Four were selected to answer the questionnaire. After analyzing the teachers' questionnaire, the researcher discovered that 70% of the teaching staff had not involved parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21, despite the spirit of the new education dispensation which maintained that parents were partners in the education of their children. Only 30% of the teachers had involved parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21.

TEACHERS' RESPONSES

QUESTION 2: If the answer to the question (Question 1): are the parents involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21, is "yes", explain briefly how they are involved?

This was a follow-up question on the 30% of teachers who had involved parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21. Some teachers said that parents had been involved in the “designing and planning of Curriculum 21”, despite the fact that parents had no control over curriculum in respect of content and methodology. Others said parents had been generally involved in their children’s education and on occasion discussed problems with teachers.

QUESTION 3: If the answer in 1 is "NO", how could they be involved?

According to Teachers' questionnaire, 70% of the teachers said that strategies should be adopted to involve parents. These strategies will be discussed in the next chapter.

QUESTION 4: Do you want parents to be involved in the implementation of curriculum 21?

All the teachers questioned were unanimous in wanting parents to be involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21.

QUESTION 5: Do you think that parents are in a position to assist in the implementation of Curriculum 21?

90% of teachers felt parents, irrespective of their level of education, could assist teachers in implementing Curriculum 21.

QUESTION 6: If the answer to Question 4 above is "NO" would you be prepared to train parents?

All the respondents agreed to train parents for involvement in Curriculum 21.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Regarding their involvement in their children's education, the results of this survey revealed that parents were willing to be involved. These responses indicated that the co-ordinators of Curriculum 21 were wrong in excluding parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21. Concerning teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement, however, all the teachers questioned wanted parents to be involved. The teachers' responses also implied that they were finding it difficult to implement Curriculum 21 without parental involvement and dismissed common suspicions, that teachers were against parental involvement in their professional sphere. It, furthermore, tended to support and verify the researcher's hypothesis concerning parental involvement in Curriculum 21 that parent would do all they could to promote the educational success of their children. The researcher recognized that parents might have to undergo training in strategies to assist their children in schoolwork. This might well be the topic of a future research study. However, this research project concentrated only on alerting parents to the fact that they should be involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21. Hence the workshops conducted and questionnaires distributed were limited to this topic.

3.7 SUMMARY

Chapter three described what was discussed in the three workshops that were conducted by the facilitators and examined the data collected from the questionnaires distributed to both parents and teachers. The results showed that parents were prepared to work with teachers for the good of their children and teachers were willing to train parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21. Chapter Four will contain educational recommendations for furthering parental involvement.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS, FINAL OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION :AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER FOUR

Curriculum 21 is a new curriculum for South Africa; it focuses on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which learners should develop, rather than the content they are taught by teachers (Bertram and Fotheringham, 1999:6-8); it is about preparing students for life, not simply getting them ready for university, college or employment; it focuses on and organises a school's entire programme and instructional efforts around the clearly defined outcomes educators want all learners to be able to demonstrate when they leave school (Spady, 1994:5).

Curriculum 21 is, however, not "user-friendly". Therefore, many educators would prefer that the old system of education remain in force as, according to them it has been "tried and tested". However, change is inevitable because of new technology, increased information and changing circumstances. "Life-long Learning has become a dimension of living necessary in order to function well in life. For this new educational reality the researcher believes that all relevant stakeholders, especially parents, should be involved in the implementation of this new curriculum, Curriculum 21. In fact, Curriculum 21 is so demanding for teachers that parents should not be excluded.

According to the South African Schools' Act, No.84 (1996) parents have been granted powers to "support teachers in the performance of their task" and "determine subjects choices" for their children. Docking (1990) sees parental involvement in reading as the most

critical motivating influence for young learners' attitudes towards reading. Parents who are active readers inspire the same enthusiasm and engagement in reading to their children. Prinsloo et al., (1996:263) assume that "the parent is an expert on his child and that he has been responsible and will be responsible long after the teacher has completed his term of responsibility".

In rural KwaZulu- Natal very few schools, if any, have adequate resources for all their learners, it is in these under- resourced schools that the role of parents is especially important. In the literature referred to in previous chapters, the researcher mentioned that learners of Curriculum 21 were required to access information from textbooks, magazines and newspapers, to interview people, observe the environment, listen to radio, watch television and use computers. It was furthermore noted that poor rural primary and secondary schools could not provide most of these recourses without the assistance of parents. Parental involvement in this respect cannot be over-emphasized.

In this Chapter the responses of both parents and teachers to the questionnaires will be analyzed. It is hoped that the attitudes and the enthusiasm shown by parents and teachers will help concerning parental involvement and also to convince the officials of the KwaZulu- Natal Department of Education and Culture that they should review the place of parents in the teaching of Curriculum 21. The researcher will also give his recommendations for future action concerning parental involvement, bearing in mind that the workshops held at Hopewell Primary School went no further than alerting parents to their responsibilities concerning the implementation of Curriculum 21.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The research project: “The involvement of parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21 in a rural KwaZulu-Natal Primary School : A case study” was undertaken at Hopewell Primary School. The aim of the researchers was to involve parents in the education of their children by introducing them to the fact that they could play an active role in the education of their children. As a result of this, the parents of children in Grade One, Two, Three and Four who attended this introductory programme, learned about OBE and Curriculum 21.

The researcher found that 60% of the parents could speak, read and write English . This meant that they could be effectively involved in the teaching of material which had been written in English. The same question on parent’s language proficiency revealed that 100% of parents could speak, read and write IsiZulu. This information showed that the researcher had no problem in addressing parents because, even those who were illiterate, could understand IsiZulu. Any material used in the training of parents for active participation should be translated into IsiZulu if the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture wants the information to reach the entire rural population. Moreover, any training programme for parents would have to be conducted through the medium of IsiZulu.

The researcher revealed that 80% of parents had passed Grade Eight to Ten. Under the old education dispensation and before 1994, men and women who had passed Grade Nine to Ten could train as educators. It was, therefore, possible in the view of the researcher, to use 80% of the parents as group leaders during the training session to lead discussions, to record parents’ points of view and to report back to the facilitators.

It was interesting to note that 70% of the parents responded that they were unemployed and so spent most of their time at home. It was therefore possible that, as they were available during the day, they could be used as teacher-aides. On the other hand as only 30% of parents were in employment, the availability of resources for Curriculum 21 was likely to be a problem. Parents would have to be taught to improvise in order to provide the much needed resources and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture would also have to be informed of the difficulties in implementing Curriculum 21, because of the high unemployment and poverty of the community of Hopewell Primary School.

The question on availability of educational aides revealed that only 10% of the homes had a television and video cassette player. This is an important resource in the implementation of Curriculum 21 as television can provide easily accessible knowledge that can be utilized by OBE educators. The South African Broadcasting Corporation provides useful and interesting programmes on television. The Liberty Learning Channel is especially valuable and its unavailability to learners at Hopewell Primary School is a real disadvantage. However, all the households surveyed had a radio. According to Bertram and Fotheringham (1999: 13-15) radio is also an effective teaching aide especially as it encourages the imagination and visualization of learners and is able to develop their ability as creative and critical thinkers. The principal and teachers would have to make extensive use of this medium in teaching Curriculum 21.

As Hopewell primary had neither electricity nor a telephone, parent-teacher communication was by written communication or personal contact. On the question of contact between parent and teachers, it was encouraging to note that 80% of the parents, who had completed the questionnaire, knew their children's teachers. This was important in order to improve the level of trust between parents and teachers.

Moreover, it promoted enthusiasm for schoolwork when learners saw their parents and teachers working together. According to the responses to the questionnaire most parents only met their children's teachers at formal parent-teacher meetings. OBE requires that most parents should be partners with educators in the educational process. This may be achieved by parents coming to school and sitting in as teachers go about their normal teaching routines. Parents will have the opportunity to observe the work and behaviour of their children and may even participate by helping with reading and games coaching. According to Long (1986:9) visiting learners' homes is one of the most effective means of communication between parents and teachers. This was not done at Hopewell Primary School and will be recommended in the future.

Concerning the parental view of Hopewell Primary's standards, it was most disturbing to note that 40% indicated that they were dissatisfied with the education offered. It was hoped that this attitude would change if parents could be more involved in the education of their children. Decker and Decker (1998) maintain that parental involvement often results in a change in parents' attitude in terms of satisfaction with their children's educational achievements, because parents begin to see the difficulties schools face and tend to criticize less. In the future perhaps the 60% of parents who were satisfied with educational standards at Hopewell Primary School will increase to 100%.

It was heartening to discover that all parents were ready to help their children with homework. Decker and Lemmer (1993) assert that parents should share in the education of their children because they can, in so doing, discover their own strengths, potential and talents and use these for the benefits of themselves, their families and the schools.

Parental involvement is important for OBE and is considered the essential ingredient in the success of an Outcome-Based curriculum, for example “The Thorpe Gordon School” in Missouri, United State of America. According to Guskey (1991) co-operative learning in this Missouri school produce positive results because of parental involvement. The researcher hopes that at Hopewell Primary School he will also have successful teaching of Curriculum 21, assisted by willing parents. With regard to the question concerning parents who helped their children with reading, spelling and tables, 80% of the respondents checked spelling and tables and listened to their children’s reading. It is interesting that this generation of parents had moved away from the traditional African belief, held by many, that education was a national, political, missionary or religious matter. Africans had always considered Western education to be foreign, a formal way of Westernization, different from socialization into the norms and values of their race. African parental involvement in the socialization and upbringing of their children had always existed but had not been regarded as “education”. This had now changed.

Overall, the results of this survey encourage teachers to expect better performance from learners because of parental involvement. The 20% who did not help their children with home-based activities should be seen as a challenge to teachers, that is, as parents who should be trained to assist their children in the implementation of Curriculum 21.

A serious defect in the educational system in KwaZulu-Natal and which affected Hopewell Primary School, was the provision of learning material. 60% of the respondents to the Parent’s Questionnaire could not afford learning materials, including textbooks and stationery for their children. According to Bertram and Fotheringham (1999:9-10), Curriculum 21 requires that “learners should be able to identify and solve problems by using creative and critical thinking”. They stress further, that learners should be able to “collect, organize,

analyze and critically evaluate information” (Bertram and Fotheringham, 1999: 13). For this, textbooks presenting information in many forms, including pictures, diagrams and tables as well as text, are essential. Parents may be made aware that since the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture does not supply textbooks it is now their responsibility to do so, but the problem remains: how can poor unemployed parents buy textbooks? The fact that 50% of the respondents knew nothing about OBE was of great concern to the researcher. Curriculum 21 was introduced in 1998 in all primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. To discover that in 2002 there were parents who still knew nothing about OBE justified the researchers’ aim to inform parents and eventually involve them in the implementation of Curriculum 21. In an article, Brogan (1995) maintains that parental participation is one of the issues that should be taken into consideration when implementing a new curriculum. When parents are not involved in the education of their children, an OBE fails. This was evident in Kentucky in the United States of America, where parents opposed the implementation of an Outcomes-Based curriculum and refused to have anything to do with it (Brogan, 1995).

Concerning the question on parents’ willingness to participate in the implementation of Curriculum 21, all the respondents indicated that they were willing. This proved that the researcher was correct in believing that parents would do their best to assist their children to do well at school. It must also be noted that 40% of the respondents were pensioners and 30% were unemployed parents. These were people who had nothing much materially to offer but who recognized the value of education and success at school and were prepared to help in all school activities. It is the researcher's belief that even illiterate parents can encourage their children to do their homework and study even if they themselves do not understand the educational material to be studied. Experience with immigrants in many parts of the world has proved this.

Teachers were also involved in this survey. Having expressed their concerns about the involvement of parents in the implementation of Curriculum 21, 70% of teachers questioned suggested the following strategies to be adopted:

- parents to be informed about Curriculum 21 so that they understand what the new curriculum is about;
- the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture to send curriculum specialists to parent-teacher meetings to talk to parents about their roles in the implementation of Curriculum 21;
- parents to be informed of their roles: the South African Schools' Act, No. 84 (1996) outlines the roles of parents very well but this has to be adopted for Curriculum 21;
- parents to be involved in the planning of learners' activities since the South African Schools' Act, No. 84(1996) gives parents powers to determine subject choices and options;
- parents to be encouraged to buy learning materials as these are so important in the implementation of Curriculum 21;
- parents to visit their children's schools: this strategy will improve parent-teacher relationships and learners' performance and behaviour;
- parents to communicate with teachers on a regular basis: this will be useful when learners have disciplinary problems;
- parents to check progress by examining exercise books and signing homework books: the majority of parents who had passed Grade Eight to Ten should have no problems doing this;
- parents to make sure that learners attended school regularly;
- parents to ask teachers about learning activities that are home-based: a homework timetable should be prepared by teachers for every class and made available to parents;

- parents, through their School Governing Bodies, to make use of the Nkosi and Ndunas of their areas when asking for donations to buy much needed resources and when confronted with serious problems such as assault by learners or teachers;
- parents to learn to treat their involvement in Curriculum 21 as part of socialization.

On teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement, all the teachers questioned were unanimous in wanting parents to be involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21. This meant that at Hopewell Primary the researcher had willing facilitators who would be happy to train parents when the time came.

90% of the teachers felt that, irrespective of their level of education, parents could assist teachers in the implementation of Curriculum 21. Knowing that Curriculum 21 incorporates all kinds of learning, be it formal, informal or on the job training, teachers felt that parental involvement was very important. Teachers knew that parents were among the most important stakeholders in education.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of research conducted at Hopewell Primary School and the study of literature on parental involvement in education, the researcher recommends the following:

- principals of primary schools, educators and School Governing Bodies should be encouraged to involve parents in the education of their children. This may be done through workshops and lectures;
- the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should develop support material for workshops and lectures and ensure that these are readily available to schools;

- the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should expedite the training of educators in OBE and Curriculum 21 and supply the necessary resources;
- special attention should be given to rural schools, which are frequently neglected in the provision of resources. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should ensure a sufficient supply of trained educators;
- as parents are a valuable resource for successful implementation of Curriculum 21 and OBE, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should facilitate their training to assist in the education of their children. This applies particularly to rural schools;
- programmes of Adult Basic Education and Training could include a special topic on training parents to be involved in the education of their children.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The researcher was overwhelmed by the interest shown by both parents and teachers in this research project. Parents attended the meeting in large numbers and teachers showed great enthusiasm in introducing parents to Curriculum 21. Trust between parents and teachers was created, an important result of the research. Also, in some cases, parents with low self-esteem were made to feel better about themselves when involved in the project. Teachers' attitudes towards parents also improved. This was evident during breaks and after the workshops when teachers and parents would stand together, chat and share jokes.

4.5 SUMMARY

This Chapter gave a final overview of the study and included recommendations for involving parents in the education of their primary school children.

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APPENDIX A

PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The objective of this Questionnaire is to find out information which will assist the researcher in drawing up a programme for involving parents in Hopewell Primary School's work. With this Questionnaire the researcher intends to investigate the level of education of parents with learners in Grades One to Four at Hopewell Primary School.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- i. Your answers will be regarded as strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only.
- ii. Please read every question carefully before you answer it.
- iii. Make sure that you answer all the questions.
- iv. Mark with an X to indicate your answer.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY:

Mark which of the languages you speak and/or write and/or read?

	SPEAK	WRITE	READ
English			
Afrikaans			
Zulu			
Xhosa			
Others			

1.2 Highest Grade at school passed

Grade 0 – 1	
Grade 1 – 4	
Grade 5 – 7	
Grade 8 – 12	

1.3 Do you have a Diploma or Degree?

Yes	
No	

1.4 Employment position: Tick one only.

Employed Permanently	
Temporarily Employed	
Pensioner	
Unemployed	

1.5 Do you have a Radio in your house?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.6 Do you have Electricity in your house?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.7 Do you have a Telephone in your house?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.8 Do you have a TV and Video Recorder in your house?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.9 Do you have a Computer in your house?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.10 Do you know your child's class teacher?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.11 If the answer is “Yes”, how did you met him/her? Choose one.

At a party?	
During a parents' meeting?	
Were you summoned to school?	
Teacher visited your house?	

1.12 How do you feel about your child's education? Choose one.

Excellent	
Satisfactory	
Unsatisfactory	
Don't know	

1.13 Do you help your children with homework?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.14 Do you listen to them reading?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.15 Do you check spelling?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.16 Do you check their tables

Yes	No
-----	----

1.17 Are you in a position to buy all learning materials needed in
Grades One, Two, Three and / or Four?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.18 Have you ever been asked to help your child with his/her work?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.19 Do you know anything about OBE?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.20 If the answer to question 1.19 is “Yes”, how did you come to know about it? Choose one.

Told by the teacher	
Read about it	
Heard about it on TV or over the radio? (Specify)	

1.21 Would you enjoy participating in the implementation of
Curriculum 21?

Yes	No
-----	----

APPENDIX B

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The main aim of this Questionnaire is to get teachers' attitudes to parental involvement in Curriculum 21.

1. Are parents involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21?

Yes	No
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2. If the answer in 2.1 above is “Yes”, explain briefly how they are involved?

3. If the answer is “No”, how could they be involved?

4. Do you want parents to be involved in the implementation of Curriculum 21?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Do you think that parents are in a position to assist in the implementation of Curriculum 21?

Yes	No
-----	----

6. If the answer in 2.5 above is “No”, would you be prepared to train
parents?

Yes	No
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