Examining challenges to Parental Involvement in Enhancing Academic Performance Among Grade 7 Learners/Students

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Abstract

Parental involvement is a critical determining factor of learners' academic success, particularly during transitional educational phases such as Grade 7. This study explores the factors challenging parental engagement in supporting their children's academic performance at this crucial stage in South Africa, Tshwane South District. Although extensive research has been conducted on parental involvement, there is limited studies focusing on the transitional phase of grade 7 within the South African context. Employing a qualitative approach, and purposively selected 11 participants (6 parents, 5 educators). Furthermore, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. Findings indicate that socioeconomic constraints, limited parental education, communication gaps between schools and families, and parents' time constraints significantly hinder effective involvement. Additionally, cultural perceptions of parental roles in education and students' increasing need for autonomy in adolescence further complicate engagement efforts. The study also identifies systemic barriers, such as inadequate school initiatives to foster parent-teacher collaboration. Recommendations include capacity-building workshops for parents, and the development of inclusive communication strategies by schools. This paper highlights the need for a holistic, community-driven approach to overcoming barriers and fostering sustained parental involvement to enhance student achievement in Grade 7, offering insights that are particularly relevant within South African context.

Keywords: parental involvement; academic performance; Grade 7 learner; educational challenges

Introduction

It is widely recognized that parents play a crucial role as partners in their children's education, and their active participation has been shown to have a positive influence on academic success (Ndwandwe, 2023). As noted by the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2016) one of the primary objectives of schools is to provide children with educational activities and prepare them for success in life. Because of the need to develop educated and successful learners, both parents and schools play an important role in involving themselves in and committing to their children's education. Ali et al. (2022) highlight the significance of a partnership between family and school, underscoring that the collective impact of such involvement, both within the home and school environment, serves as a valuable means of enhancing children's academic performance, leading to increased academic achievement and improved grades. Furthermore, parental involvement in their children's education entails active engagement and participation. In a similar vein, Poudel and Subedi (2023) emphasise the essential role of parental involvement in facilitating children's educational progress and academic advancement. Unfortunately, parental involvement in learners' education in South Africa is currently at a low level, which is why the overall achievement of educational outcomes remains poor, sometimes even poorer in comparison to other African countries with fewer resources (DBE, 2016). South Africa's parental involvement

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is shaped by high unemployment, income inequality, multilingual classrooms, and varying literacy. Historical disparities affect resource allocation, widening urban-rural gaps. Although similar challenges exist in other low- and middle-income countries, South Africa's policies, like the DBE's 2016 guidelines, aim to promote inclusivity. In contrast, wealthier nations typically enjoy better resources, higher parental literacy, and stronger community networks, enabling more effective engagement (Mchia & Mwila, 2024). While a growing body of research explores the role of parental involvement globally, there is limited focus on how such involvement changes during the Grade 7 transitional phase marked by increasing learner academic independence and academic demands in the South African context.

Focusing on grade 7 academic performance and parental involvement it appears that when learners reach Grade 7, their parents drop the ball and expect them to be self-sufficient in their academics. Similarly, Leander and Fabella (2020) point out that some parents believe that their children require more independence upon entering middle school (Grades 4-7). They further state that parents may also believe that their engagement with their children should decrease to meet these changes. Over the past three years the Grade 7 learners in the chosen school have consistently performed poorly academically. The majority of learners hardly meet the NCS standards for promotion outlined in the national policy. The Senior Phase programme requirements (Grades 7–9) specify that a Grade 7 learner enrolled in both public and independent schools must complete the internal and external assessment requirements for the nine subjects specified in the national policy document about promotion requirements in order to be promoted to the next grade (DBE, 2011). This highlights the significance of Grade 7 learners' academic performance. In specific circumstances, due to a significant percentage of learners in Grade 7 performing poorly academically, the Council of Education Ministers under the DBE (2015) authorized a 7%-mark modification to learners who achieved between 35%-39% in Mathematics and other subjects with a 40% pass mark and those who accumulated between 45–49% in Home language subject with which has a 50% pass mark to ensure that learners advance to Grade 8. Table 1. illustrates this trend, showing consistently low academic performance among Grade 7 learners over the past three years.

Table 1. Grade 7 school academic performance records for past 3 years (2020-2022), Tshwane South District, obtained with permission

Year	% Average mark	Number of learners enrolled	Number of learners in each achievement rating							Number of learners promoted	The number of learners progressed	Number of learners who failed
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
2020	44.59%	154	12	35	61	39	7	0	0	41	75	38
2021	52.30%	178	6	11	57	65	31	8	0	131	38	9
2011	48.90%	163	11	24	56	46	22	4	0	85	54	24

Source: Internal school records, Tshwane South District

Parental involvement is crucial for enhancing students' academic performance, yet many parents struggle to engage, especially at the Grade 7 level (Onchwari and Keengwe, 2020). Often, parents are preoccupied with life responsibilities, preventing participation in school activities like meetings and monitoring learners' academics. It is important to note that Grade 7 marks a significant stage of adolescence, which involves curiosity, character development, and increased academic demands, making parental support vital (WHO, 2023). Additionally, parental involvement in both primary (intermediate phase) and senior phase not only has a great positive impact on learner's academic performance, but trust between the learners and the teachers can also be easily established, and these factors may result in learners having a good connection with the school (Ma et al., 2022). Nevertheless, achieving meaningful involvement remains a challenge for many families and schools.

This study aimed to explore the various challenges that hinder parental involvement in the academic lives of Grade 7 learners. By identifying these obstacles, we can better understand the dynamics between home and school environments and develop strategies to foster more effective parental participation. The study explored factors such as socio-economic constraints such as cultural perceptions of parental roles, communication gaps between schools and families, and time constraints often impede parents' ability to actively participate in their children's education. Additionally, the increasing autonomy of adolescents and the evolving expectations from both schools and parents further complicate this dynamic.

3

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Understanding these challenges is essential for educators, policymakers, and parents themselves, as it provides insights into how to create supportive environments that promote student success. Through a comprehensive analysis of the barriers to parental involvement, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational improvement and student achievement.

Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned on Epstein's six types of parental involvement model which outlines six types of parental involvement (1) parenting, (2) communication, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making and (6) collaborating with the community. Epstein and Rodriguez (2004) suggest that a strong partnership between school, home and the community should be established to achieve the common goal of learners' success at school and positive learner behavior both at school and at home. Epstein and Rodriguez (2004) state that most parents do wish to fully participate in their children's academics, to enhance their performance at school, as well as build positive attitudes of the learners, but, they do not know how to go about it.

Epstein's six types of involvement are widely used in parental engagement research but are critiqued for assuming equal parental capacity, ignoring socioeconomic, cultural, and structural barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In South Africa, where unemployment, poverty, and multilingualism impact parental involvement, these critiques are especially pertinent. Nonetheless, the model's flexibility allows adaptation to diverse contexts, making it a valuable framework. Despite limitations, Epstein's approach was deemed most suitable for this study, as it provides a comprehensive, adaptable structure aligned with the resource-constrained realities of South African schools.

Research aims and questions

Aims

The main aim of the study is to explore the roles of parents in enhancing the academic performance of Grade 7 learners in Tshwane South District.
Main research questions:

- What are the challenges faced by parents in enhancing the academic performance of grade 7 learners?
- How are parents currently involved in enhancing the academic performance of grade 7 learners?
- What strategies are used by the school to involve parents to enhance the academic performance of Grade 7 learners?

Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative research approach was selected for this study, followed by the constructivism research paradigm. This method allowed for an in-depth examination of participants' perceptions of involvement and academic success based on their unique perspectives (Mohammed, 2023). Using the qualitative research method, parent participants discussed different challenges parents face to support Grade 7 learners' academic success and the interplay between home and educational settings. This approach facilitated the collection of insights through focus group interviews and diverse participants.

Participants

A total of eleven participants were purposively selected, including six parents and five educators from a Grade 7 cohort in a school located within the Tshwane South District. Selection criteria were based on their direct engagement with Grade 7 learners. Demographic data collected included educational level, occupation, and the nature of their relationship to the learner (e.g., mother, educator), which allowed for examination of socioeconomic and educational diversity.

Sample size and power

The researcher selected six parents and five teachers because this number made it possible to gather enough useful information and see common patterns. It was also a manageable group size that allowed a deep understanding without being too big for the study.

Sample description (participants' profiles)

Table 2. Parents' participants' profile focus

Parents' participants	Gender	Education level	Occupation	Relationship to the child
Parent 1	Female	Certificate in professional secretary and business management	School food handler	Mother
Parent 2	Female	Grade 12	School food handler	Mother
Parent 3	Female	Grade 12	School food handler	Mother
Parent 4	Female	Grade 12	Unemployed	Mother
Parent 5	Female	B.Ed. Honours	Educator	Mother
Parent 6	Female	Grade 10	Assistant teacher	Mother

Table 3. Teacher participants' profile

Teacher participants	Gender	Subject teaching	Qualification	Age	Years of teaching experience
Teacher participant 1	Female	English	B.Ed. degree	30 years	6 years
Teacher participant 2	Male	Mathematics	B.Ed. degree	27 years	6 years
Teacher participant 3	Female	Afrikaans	B.Ed. Honours degree	33 years	5 years

Table 4. Deputy principal and SBST participants' profile

Participants	Other roles	Qualification	Gender	Age	Years of teaching experience
Deputy	Teacher, SMT	B.Ed Honours	Male	61	30 years
SBST coordinator	Departmental head, SMT	Diploma in Junior Phase and Diploma in Remedial Education	Female	56	23 years

The six parents had different education levels, from Grade 10 to a B.Ed. Honours degree, and worked in various jobs like food handling and teaching, with one unemployed. The educators included three Grade 7 teachers (English, Maths, and Afrikaans), aged 27 to 33, with 5 to 6 years of experience, as well as a deputy principal and an SBST coordinator, aged 56 and 61. This mix of backgrounds helped the study explore how education and job roles affect how parents get involved in their children's learning.

Data collection

In-person interviews were conducted, including a 50-minute focus group with six parents. To accurately capture responses, the sessions were recorded for later transcription. The focus group took place in a classroom at the school with the principal's permission. The study employed semi-structured interviews to collect data from educators and parents for flexibility, allowing the researcher to follow up on predetermined questions (Taherdoost, 2022). Follow-up individual interviews with parents were conducted in their homes to reduce transport costs. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes and was similarly recorded and noted.

Document analysis was another selected data collection technique, involving the review of published electronic sources. This method requires examining and interpreting data to gain insights and empirical knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2021). With the principal's permission, school documents were accessed to enhance the information gathered from study participants. Minutes from parental meetings and attendance records were analyzed to confirm parent attendance. The researcher also reviewed South African School and Management System (SA-SAMS) documents showing Grade 7 learner results, focusing on those whose parents interviewed to assess their academic performance. Additionally, we examined student workbooks for parents'

signatures, indicating homework assistance, to evaluate parental involvement through meeting attendance and monitoring of academic work.

Data analysis

The analysis of data was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process. First, the researcher became familiar with the data by listening to the recordings of each interview and typing out the transcriptions to understand the content and begin noting initial ideas. Second, the information from the recorded and transcribed interviews was categorized by highlighting significant text segments and assigning short codes to represent their content, which helped organize the data in a way that reflected recurring topics related to parental involvement and learner performance (Caulfield, 2023). Third, the codes from the previous step were examined to identify patterns, recurring concepts, and shared meanings across participants, and then grouped into preliminary themes that reflected common challenges, perceptions, and experiences. Fourth, the identified themes were reviewed against the entire data set to determine whether each theme was viable and accurately captured the implications within the data set as a whole (Caulfield, 2023). Fifth, each theme was clearly defined and named to reflect its central idea and show how it contributed to understanding the relationship between parental involvement and Grade 7 learners' academic performance (Caulfield, 2023). Finally, the findings were compiled into a written report, illustrating each theme with excerpts from participants' responses and linking the results back to the study's research questions and objectives.

Ethical consideration

Ethics protect participant's rights and their well-being, they ensure that the researcher's findings are valid and reliable (Bos, 2020). In this study only consenting participants were interviewed. A study's type, prospective benefits, and dangers were all be explained to participants to obtain their informed permission (Denison, 2023) before interviews took place. Participants had the option to opt out whenever they chose to, and they were never made to feel compelled to participate. Participants' personal information was kept confidential, ensuring that their identities cannot be connected to the research data gathered (Denison, 2023). Data was collected after obtaining the ethical committee's and GDE's approval for the research.

Measures to ensure trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, the four criteria outlined by Kyngäs et al. (2019): were employed, (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability). Credibility was established through triangulation, utilizing data collected from interviews, meeting minutes, and SA-SAMS (learners' ac academic results) documents to identify consistent patterns between parental involvement and academic performance (Stahl & King, 2020). Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and methodologies, thereby enabling other researchers to apply the findings to comparable educational contexts. Dependability was ensured through the consistent application of data collection methods—namely interviews and document analysis—and by meticulously recording, transcribing, and coding responses to facilitate reproducibility. Confirmability was maintained by anchoring findings in participants' perspectives, minimizing researcher bias, and by analyzing learner performance data to substantiate emerging themes.

Research site

The research was carried out at a mainstream educational institution located within the Tshwane South District. The school comprises of 1300 learners from different cultural backgrounds, and different socio-economic status, including the unemployed and some working class parents. It is a fee-paying school with an exemption option for parents who cannot afford the fees. The school uses English as the medium of instruction. The reason this primary school and the specific Grade was chosen was because, over the years, the researcher has observed the school having a very low parental involvement, and learner academic performance declining especially in Grade 7. Therefore, the researcher wanted to explore and understand how parental involvement can enhance learner academic performance of the Grade 7 learners.

Findings

Socioeconomic constraints

Parents' time constraints, Unemployment and poverty

Factors such as education level, family income, and age significantly impact parental involvement (Erdener & Knoeppel,2018). Poverty is a critical issue globally, with over 18.2 million South Africans living in severe poverty (Langalanga, 2019). South Africa also grapples with high unemployment rates. Erdener and Knoeppel (2018) highlights that poverty-related family issues lead to diminished parental involvement in schooling, as unemployed parents struggle to afford transportation or childcare for school meetings (Hornby, 2011). Drydakis (2023) found that parental unemployment adversely affects adolescents' academic performance. As a teacher, I've seen students withdraw and lose motivation, often preoccupied with their challenging home situations. Low-income parents face significant challenges balancing work and their children's education due to inflexible schedules (Williams & Sánchez, 2011). Hornby (2011) notes that time constraints hinder parental involvement, especially for those in minimum-wage jobs. 2018). Some households are led by children, with young caregivers, sometimes just 15, looking after terminally ill parents, leading older siblings to find ways to support younger ones (Mabekebeke, 2022). In other cases, children live in child-headed families without accountable parents (Zenda, 2021). Furthermore, children raised by grandparents or less literate single parents may lack academic support (Fabella, 2020). Single parenting also hinders parental involvement, as single mothers and non-resident fathers often struggle to balance work and caregiving due to rising non-marital childbearing and divorce (Walper & Kreyenfeld, 2022). My study revealed that many interested participants could not join the interviews due to work commitments.

Participants also cited work commitments as a key barrier to parents attending school meetings. One parent said, *"Some lack time for their child... due to work",* while another noted shift conflicts with school hours. These responses underscore how inflexible jobs, and economic pressures hinder parental involvement, highlighting socioeconomic barriers. Poverty, unemployment, and time constraints hinder parental involvement, reducing participation in meetings, homework help, and academic monitoring, which impacts student performance. In addition to this, the researcher initially had over 11 participants who expressed interest, but work commitments prevented their attendance at the focus group interviews.

Limited parental education and cultural perceptions of parental roles in education

Sowton (2021) states that some parents may be reluctant to get involved in their children's education because they believe they have no place in it, particularly if they have had poor or no educational experiences. Similarly, Sellami et al. (2022) indicate that some parents believe that teachers are the professionals who are most suited to educate their children, and thus they delegate this responsibility to the school. In addition, Sellami et al. (2022) is of the opinion that low literacy rates can make parents feel inadequate when it comes to academic involvement in the education of their children. Some parents do not assist their children with schoolwork because they do not understand the subjects that their children are studying in school (Zenda, 2021). One of the parents 'indicated her challenge being the fact that the current syllabus differs from when she was still in school, "*…Eeh but me, as I was schooling long time ago! I don't know the, sometimes the syllabus change, I was doing that long time ago, but now the, the things is changed...",* even so, it is crucial to note that parents and guardians do not need to be education professionals or formally trained to ensure that learning occurs outside of the school; instead, being supportive of their children is more important than what they may not know about schooling (Sowton, 2021). Some parents indicated that there are occasions when they are unable to attend meetings or provide academic assistance to their children due to work commitment demands, "*some parents do lack time to their child not because they don't want to because of the work that they are doing".* Parents have unique skills that can be used to positively assist their children with learning.

The above accounts indicate that limited formal education and specific cultural beliefs diminish parents' confidence and capacity to assist with academic tasks. Even when parents recognize the importance of education, deficiencies in knowledge, skills, and understanding of the contemporary curriculum impede their ability to provide effective support for learners within the home environment.

Communication gaps between school and families

It is essential to emphasise that effective communication plays a crucial role in the daily interactions of individuals (Kamal et al., 2023). Furthermore, Epstein and Rodriguez's model (2004) explains that it is imperative to establish dual communication pathways between schools and families to facilitate seamless interactions between teachers, administrators and other families. From the participants' responses, communication within the school is primarily facilitated through WhatsApp and newsletters. Educators, the deputy principal and the SBST coordinator used WhatsApp to promptly reach out to parents for urgent matters, while formal issues such as incident reporting or invitations to school meetings were communicated through letters. The deputy principal emphasized the D6 School communicator app for posting notices and school events for parents., however, it was mentioned that parents did not make use of the school's D6 communicator, citing a lack of internet data as the reason (The D6 School Communicator app, developed by D6 Technology, provides digital communication tools for schools to effectively share news, events, schedules, and notices with students, parents, and staff. It is widely used, especially in South Africa). While the school used a mix of digital and traditional communication methods to engage parents, persistent challenges remained, such as technological access, parental literacy levels and communication gaps due to outdated contact information. Therefore, tailored approaches are needed to overcome these ongoing challenges and ensure effective parental engagement across all demographics. In the study done by Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), the findings revealed that while parents recognized the importance of their involvement, they concluded that schools should empower them, use modern communication methods and clearly convey the school vision and expectations for parental involvement.

Schools use various channels, but technology gaps, low literacy, and outdated contacts hinder some parents from receiving important information, weakening partnerships and limiting collaboration between school and home.

Inadequate school initiatives to foster parent-teacher collaboration

Generally, parent-teacher meetings are another form of parental involvement where the school and families can share and communicate views relating to the running of the school and issues on learner academic performance. Unfortunately, many South African schools, especially multilingual ones, struggle with this, often using only English, which alienates non-English-speaking parents (Lemmer, 2007). For learners to thrive and attain academic greatness, both the home and the school must recognise the significance of parental engagement. Schools must also help and guide parents in being involved in their children's education (Triegaardt & van Diermen, 2021).

Miller (2021) notes that another obstacle to parental involvement is that some school leaders and teachers are unable to provide parents with the opportunity to become involved in their children's education as well as the governance of the school. Additionally, the significant mistrust that can exist between parents and educators is a crucial obstacle to building partnerships with parents (Brinn, 2020). In a study conducted by Goss (2017), some parents indicated that they faced resistance from schools when attempting to engage in their children's education.

Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2024), found that a narrative of distrust and inequality between teachers and parents hinders parental involvement, as parents perceive teachers in state schools as feeling superior and unapproachable. Epstein's model of parental involvement highlights the importance of school-family communication, Parent-teacher meetings are crucial for family-school cooperation and positively influence educational attainment (Širiakovienė & Kovienė, 2023).

Language barriers, mistrust, and limited parental involvement hinder meaningful collaboration. Without intentional, inclusive strategies, parent-teacher partnerships in diverse, multilingual settings remain weak.

Understanding adolescence learner

All participant parents in this study acknowledged that Grade 7 was a crucial time as children were entering their teenage years, experiencing changes in behaviour, increased independence and various distractions. They unanimously agree on the need for parents to be more involved during this period to support their children academically, emotionally and socially. These parents recognised the importance of addressing challenges such as distractions, peer pressure, lack of transparency and the desire for academic improvement. One parent noted, *"The challenge that I am facing maybe the child will be angry and say 'Mom, you're always calling my teacher*

what, what, what, what, don't do that I can do on my own...". This made it difficult for the parents to effectively monitor their child's academic progress.

At this stage, the child begins to assert their desire for independence and may challenge parental authority. Consequently, many parents perceive this period as challenging, necessitating a substantial degree of adaptation (Luna & Valle, 2023). Furthermore, Onchwari and Keengwe (2020) indicate that academic achievement is crucial for all children and adolescents. To appease their adolescents' demand for independence, parents may feel that their child needs more autonomy and as a result, reduce their involvement in school. But when a child enters the adolescent stage, parental involvement does not decrease; rather, it changes (Sorbring et al., 2019). De Jonge et al. (2022). assert that while autonomy remains a central developmental task for adolescents, they still rely on parental support during times of distress and when they harbour concerns regarding their academic or social competence. Based on the results of this study, it has been observed that parents encounter difficulties when adolescents express a reluctance for their parents to be overly involved.

These reflections highlight that adolescence brings increased independence and resistance to parental oversight, making this stage especially challenging for engagement. Consequently, parents need to adapt their involvement strategies to balance learners' need for autonomy with the academic and emotional support required for success.

Discussion

Parental involvement is considered a crucial strategy for enhancing academic outcomes among learners (Wilder, 2023). Epstein et al. (2018) emphasised the importance of collaboration between teachers, school administrators and parents to strengthen learner academic performance. Gerdes et al. (2022) indicates that for learners to excel academically, both families and schools must collaborate to support their progress. Furthermore, it has been noted that parents face difficulties in becoming academically involved in their children's education. In a study conducted by Nkosi and Adebayo (2021), findings indicated that some parents showed concern and made efforts to be involved in their children's educational activities; however, their societal and educational constraints hindered their involvement. Some parents have reported a lack of understanding regarding the new curriculum, socio-economic issues, challenges related to communication between the school and families, and instances where adolescents express a reluctance for their parents to be excessively involved.

It is widely acknowledged that even the most prestigious educational institutions are unable to effectively educate learners without the essential support and engagement of their families (Li et al., 2019). The critical nature of decisions being made during a formal meeting is acknowledged within this framework by Epstein (2004). According to the deputy principal, the School-Based Support Team (SBST) and the educators, meetings, among other strategies, are employed by the school to engage parents in discussions concerning student academic progress and school-related decisions; however, attendance among parents has been notably low. Despite all the strategies used by the school, there are still some mechanisms that can be put in place to cater for all the parents.

Furthermore, in this study, all the participants acknowledged that Grade 7 was a crucial time as children were entering their teenage years, experiencing changes in behavior, increased independence and various distractions. The participants unanimously agree on the need for parents to be more involved during this period to support their children academically, emotionally and socially. However, several interviewed parents expressed difficulty in supporting their adolescent children's education, with two noting complaints from their children about excessive parental involvement and frequent teacher communication. This made it difficult for the parents to effectively monitor their child's academic progress. In a study conducted by Szabo (2019), it was found that although Grade 7 learners expressed a positive view regarding parental involvement, they showed a lack of enthusiasm for their parents assisting with schoolwork because they believed they were mature enough to take responsibility for their academics. When asked on the level of involvement needed for a grade 7 learner, parents specifically noted that strengthening parental involvement is necessary at this stage due to the transition of children in Grade 7 into adolescence.

These parents recognised the importance of addressing challenges such as distractions, peer pressure, lack of transparency and the desire for academic improvement. Each parent offered different suggestions, ranging from promoting open communication to understanding changes in behaviour and actively monitoring academic progress.

Conclusions

This study examined the challenges encountered by parents in their involvement in the academic performance of Grade 7 learners, as well as the strategies that parents currently adopt to support their children's education. Furthermore, the research investigated the strategies employed by the school to promote parental engagement with the objective of enhancing the academic achievement of Grade 7 learners. The findings reveal that, despite recognition by parents, teachers, and senior management of the importance of parental involvement in students' academic pursuits, there exists a significant deficiency in parental participation in both the daily operations of the school and in the academic development of Grade 7 learners, attributed to various challenges. It is acknowledged that while the partnership between parents and the school positively affects the academic performance of Grade 7 learners, achieving comprehensive parental engagement is a process that cannot be realized in a short period.

In conclusion, Epstein's six types of parental involvement emphasize that schools should inform families on supporting learning at home, establish effective communication with parents, and encourage parental participation in school activities and decision-making (Epstein, 2004). It is recommended that the school and the Department of Education develop capacity-building workshops for parents, wherein they can learn about various forms of participation in their children's education and parenting strategies that may facilitate involvement in the academic affairs of adolescents. Additionally, it is recommended that the school establish inclusive communication strategies and implement a holistic, community-driven approach to foster a collaborative partnership between schools and families.

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