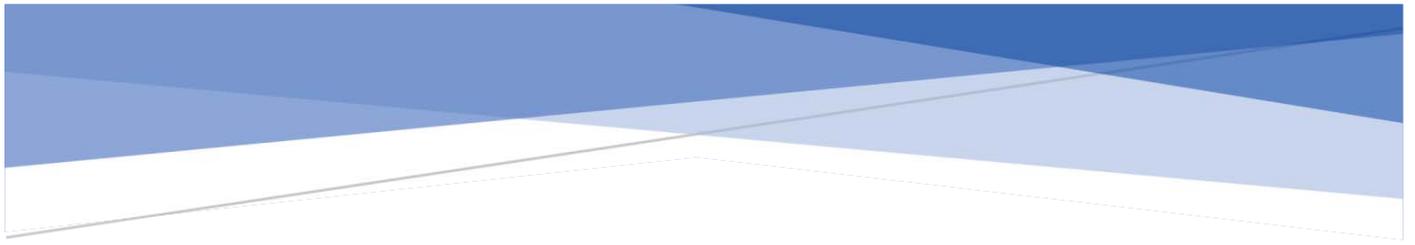


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Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning: a mixed method study

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the
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Abstract

Parental involvement in a child's learning has a positive impact on a child's academic success and emotional wellbeing, yet there are differing views about what this entails (Lewin & Luckin, 2010; Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011; Schnee & Bose, 2010). This study researched how parents, senior primary students and teachers in three New Zealand primary schools perceived 'parental involvement in learning' and the factors that influenced involvement. An explanatory sequential mixed methods research design was used so an understanding of the differing definitions could be gathered before they were explored in more depth in the qualitative stage of the study.

The findings of the study revealed that each group understood 'learning' differently and that these differences influenced their definitions of 'parental involvement in a child's learning'. These definitions of learning shaped the actions teachers acknowledged, or valued as parental involvement, helping to create a teacher discourse of under involved parents that was not reflected in the parental data. Possible suggestions for practice and further research are explored in the study.

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1. Introduction

Parents have always played a role in the education of their children and in public schooling. How this role is conceptualised and what is expected of them has changed and developed as governments and education systems have evolved around the world. Research shows the importance of 'parental involvement in learning' but this shift from a relationship centred around the school, to one focused on a child's learning has created new tensions and confusions about the role of parents in schooling (Crozier, 2000).

1.1 Definitions of terms used

The term "parental involvement" is a widely used one that describes a variety of parental actions and interactions with schools. These terms range from home-school connections, parental involvement with school, home-family- community partnerships, home-school-whānau partnerships, whanau connections, volunteering in school, parental support in the home, parental participation, parental engagement in schooling and home-school collaborations, to name a few (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Goodall, 2013; Herrell, 2011; McKinley, 2000; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Monroy Ochoa, 2011). The term 'parental involvement' will be used in this report to describe actions parents take to become involved in their child's education and to support their learning. This phrase will be used to unify all the above terms and to keep a consistent term of reference. The term 'parental' or 'parent' will be used to include parents, guardians, carers, families and whānau of the students.

1.2 Why do this research?

The positive impact of parents being involved in their child's learning has been widely evidenced in educational research, yet is still limited in practice (Lewin & Luckin, 2010;

Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011; Schnee & Bose, 2010). Currently little is understood about how New Zealand students, teachers and parents conceptualise 'parental involvement in a child's learning' creating possible tensions and misunderstandings in the home school relationship. Once a clear understanding of each groups' definition is gathered then a move toward a shared definition and relationship that is focused on 'parental engagement in learning', rather than 'involvement in the school' can begin (Education Review office, 2015; Goodall, 2013). This learning focused relationship could contribute to the creation of shared understandings of parental involvement and may eliminate some of the barriers that currently hinder parents from becoming fully involved in the learning of their child and alter the school centric relationship that currently exists in many educational institutions (Goodall, 2013).

1.3 Explanation of research conducted

An explanatory sequential mixed method study was conducted in three New Zealand primary schools to investigate the differing perceptions parents, senior primary students and teachers held about 'parental involvement in a child's learning'. The study sought to investigate two broad questions:

- How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?
- What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

The study had two distinct phases and data from the first stage was used to inform the second. Firstly, quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire sent to parents, senior primary students and teachers at each of the schools. This information was then collated and analysed for commonalities and divergences to inform interview questions in the second stage.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

Chapter One: *Introduction* introduces the concept of 'parental involvement in a child's learning', defines the term used in the thesis, introduces the research questions and outlines its structure.

Chapter Two: *Literature Review* explores current research on parental involvement, how this conception has changed over time and examines possible barriers and enablers for parental involvement. The Literature review identifies gaps in the research about how New Zealand parents, senior primary students and teachers conceptualise 'parental involvement in a child's learning' and this study seeks to address this.

Chapter Three: *Research methodology* describes and justifies the research methods used in this study and explains the reasons for their selection. The research questions are introduced, data collection and quality methods described, and ethical issues and possible limitations of the study are explored.

Chapter Four *Realities of research* describes the sites of study, sampling procedures, and data collection methods. The methods the researcher used to invite participants and the difficulties encountered are also described.

Chapter Five: *Results* presents the findings of the study. It examines how each group defines 'parental involvement in a child's learning', understands learning and the possible enablers and barriers for parental involvement.

Chapter Six: *Discussion* explores the study's findings in more depth and locates them in research literature. The possible impact of this study and how it may add to current research literature is discussed.

Chapter Seven: *Conclusion* summarises the findings of the study, discusses implications for practice and explores the value added to current literature by this study.

2. Literature Review

This chapter will examine the changes evidenced in research on 'parental involvement in a child's learning' and the influences this has had on educational legislation internationally. This review will include predominantly primary school focused research with most studies and articles being from the last decade. Barriers and enablers of parental involvement will be investigated as well as parents', students' and teachers' understanding of 'parental involvement in a child's learning'. As research into 'parental involvement in a child's learning' has developed over the last thirty years, increasingly 'parental engagement in learning' has been shown to have greater impact on a child's learning. The change from involvement to engagement is introduced and explored through the literature discussed below.

2.1 Background

Research has been conducted worldwide on the impact of 'parental involvement in learning', including in Israel, America, Sweden, United Kingdom and New Zealand, and many common themes have emerged. Reported benefits of 'parental involvement in schooling' for students include: improved developmental progress (Fan & Williams, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014), improved academic achievement (Epstein, Van Voorhis, Jansorn, Salinas, Simon, & Sanders, 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fan & Williams, 2009; Herrell, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Schnee & Bose, 2010), reduced educational inequality (Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011), increased self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Fan & Williams, 2009) and increased mental, physical and emotional well-being of students (Herrell, 2011; Kim & Sheridan, 2015).

In the 1990s governments around the world responded to emerging research on parental

involvement with a range of legislation that, combined with the effects of marketisation and decentralisation, resulted in a shift in how the role of a parent in education was defined. Not only were parents positioned as consumers with an increased say over the educational choices for their child, parents were also expected to become monitors and enforcers of their child's participation in the education system who had increased say over educational choices for their child, in England, they were also now monitors and enforcers of their child's participation in the education system (Crozier, 2000; Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011). Parents were no longer expected to remain distant supporters of schooling but instead were encouraged to become active participants of their child's educational journey.

England

In England, this focus on the relationship between schools and families was first introduced with the white paper "Excellence in Schools" in 1997 and then legislated with the School Standards and Framework Act in 1998. This act made it compulsory for all schools to create home-school agreements with the parent of every student attending their organisation ("School Standards and Framework Act 1998", 2017). These agreements clearly stated the school's aims, values and responsibilities to its students and parents and explained what was expected of parents and pupils in return. The Act also reminded parents of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attend full time schooling, follow school rules and maintain their attendance ("What are home-school agreements?", 2017). Although not compulsory or legally binding, all parents were expected to sign these contracts and those that did not were often labelled as 'difficult' or 'hard to reach parents' (Schnee & Bose, 2010).

America

In America, the focus on parental involvement in legislation began with the Goals: Educate America Act in 1994 which set partnerships with parents as a voluntary goal for all American schools (Epstein et al., 2002). The No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 legislated that states and districts develop plans to support schools to create and implement systems for increasing parental participation in the educational process (Epstein, 2010; Herrell, 2011; Fan & Williams, 2009). For schools that receive Title 1 funding (schools that have a high number or high percent of students from low income families) not only is it a legal requirement but, their funding is at risk if they cannot prove that they have systems and policies in place to encourage parental involvement ("Title 1", 2017).

New Zealand

In New Zealand, parental involvement in schooling came to prominence in 1989 with the introduction of a range of reforms known as Tomorrow's Schools. These reforms gave parents an increased formal role in the administration of schools through the Board of Trustees and promoted the development of home-school partnerships (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2016; Ramsay, Hawk, Harold, Marriott & Poskitt, 1993). In 2008 the Ministry of Education released *Successful home-school partnerships* (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008) which encouraged schools to create stronger connections with families and communities for the betterment of their students. In the last decade increasing parental involvement has become a large part of educational legislation with its inclusion in National Education Guidelines, National Administration Guidelines, The New Zealand Curriculum, Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success 2013-2017, Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017 and ERO's School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.

2.2. Issues in research

Although the research on parental involvement is vast, it contains multiple interpretations related to the terminology used to describe 'parental involvement in schooling'. This complexity makes it difficult for all stakeholders (parents, teachers, students and communities) to create a collaborative shared vision for parental involvement (Crozier, 2000; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Herrell, 2011). Broad and varied definitions and understandings of 'parental involvement in learning' makes it challenging to specify the strategies that have the largest impact on student learning; some of which overlap or are affected by factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age of the student, decile rating and school culture (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The predominant focus consistent across all of these definitions of parental involvement is one where the school defines and controls what parental involvement is in its organisation and retains the power and agency in the relationship with both families and students (Crozier, 2000; Durie, 2006; Goodall, 2013; Herrell, 2011). Consequently, 'parental involvement in schooling' is commonly conceptualised as the physical presence of parents at school, excluding many parental behaviours that do not fit the school defined mode of involved parents (Crozier, 2000; Durie, 2006; Goodall, 2013; Herrell, 2011; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; McKinley, 2000; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Monroy Ochoa, 2011; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011).

2.3 A shift towards 'parental engagement in learning'

The differing understandings of 'parental involvement in schooling' and the often negative impact of its currently school centric model has led to research and governmental policies moving towards 'parental engagement in learning' rather than with the school or

schooling. Increasingly 'parental engagement in learning' is being identified in research as the most effective form of support for increased academic results, motivation and self-efficacy for students. 'parental engagement in learning' has been proven to be more effective than school quality, decile rating or socio-economic status in making a difference to students' learning and success (Eagle, 1989; Fan & Williams, 2009; Goodall, 2013, L Harris & Goodall, 2008; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In the United Kingdom, Home-School agreements were removed from legislation in January 2016 as their prescriptive and 'one size fits all' nature was recognised as limiting rather than promoting effective home-school connections (Welsh Government, 2017). This withdrawal from policy acknowledged that schools need the flexibility to design and implement programs to increase 'parental engagement in learning' in a way that is responsive to their community (Welsh Government, 2017).

In New Zealand, the Education Review Office has moved from promoting 'home-school partnerships' (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008) to 'educationally powerful connections' that are focused on student learning and progress (Education Review Office, 2015). It is a move toward relationships that reflect the concept of mahi tahi- working together as a team for the educational success of a student. This focus on relationships based on learning rather than involvement in the school is a movement towards more equitable relationships where power and agency are shared rather than controlled by one partner (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006; Whyte & Karabon, 2016).

Possible model for a move towards engagement

Goodall and Montgomery (2013) propose a continuum of parental engagement that has three stages- parental involvement with the school, parental involvement with schooling and parental engagement in learning. Whilst called a continuum, this process is not

designed as a linear pathway due to the wide range of interactions, needs and aims of all involved. Instead it is a flexible continuum where schools and families move between stages depending on the event or activity, while aiming to predominantly work in the third stage of 'parental engagement in learning' for the betterment of their students.

When a school operates in the first stage (parental involvement with the school) information is controlled and disseminated by the organisation to parents and whilst parents may become involved in different activities these are instigated and designed by the school. This stage is characterised by the holding of power and agency by the school and is a stage where many schools begin their journey towards 'parental engagement in learning'. Parental involvement with schooling (the second stage) can occur at school or in the home and its focus is on schooling and the interchange of information between parents, school and students. This stage gives all involved an improved understanding of the learner as funds of knowledge from all stakeholders are shared and the responsibility for supporting the student is distributed equally between home and school. In the third stage of the continuum ('parental engagement in learning') parents have the greatest exercise of power and agency. Whilst their decisions and interventions may be informed by the school, the choice to act and how to address these needs resides with the parents. In this stage parents choose to engage with their child's learning not because of notices, instructions or calls from schools but because they see this as part of their role as a parent. The school no longer retains all the power and agency for learning and teaching where a parent is 'allowed' to help, instead parents are fully engaged in the process of learning themselves (Goodall & Montgomery, 2013).

2.4 School factors influencing parental involvement

For parents to engage in their child's learning and school the factors that affect parental

involvement need to be acknowledged and understood. Once these are acknowledged by teachers, school, and parents, solutions may be found to help overcome them.

The perfect box

One of the major barriers to 'parental involvement with learning' becoming part of a school's culture is the "perfect box" that schools and teachers create to categorise effective parental involvement at their institution. This box is rarely discussed or made visible, but it decides which parents are viewed as involved and those that are labelled as challenging or, even worse, disengaged (Lareau, 1992; Schnee & Bose, 2010). Too often these views are based on a parent's engagement with the school rather than in their child's learning (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Lareau (1992) spent ten months in two third grade classrooms in a small American mid-western town to understand the differing experiences of twelve white and twelve black families. She found that the two teachers held narrow and defined views of acceptable parental involvement in education. Although the teachers had different personalities and teaching approaches they had identical views about those parents they found to be involved and those they found to be challenging. Parents who empathised with a teacher's role, deferred to the teachers' professional assessment of their child and supported and praised the teachers were considered to be involved and helpful by both teachers. Any interactions that did not fit within this box were labelled as challenging or hostile and the concerns raised were classed as "unhelpful" (Lareau, 1992, p.19). This view of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours nullifies many beliefs, actions and thoughts of parents who behave differently and who may challenge a teacher's assessment of their child or criticise their choices and stops their voices from being heard and valued (Goodall, 2013; Lareau, 1992; Schnee & Bose, 2010). This disregard for differing opinions and thoughts means that

many teachers unintentionally create barriers that hinder 'parental involvement in learning'.

Invisible and visible parental actions

Teachers' views about what constitutes 'good' parental involvement from a school's and teacher's point of view is influenced by what is visibly represented. Schnee and Bose (2010) studied parents' perception and understanding of maths homework and their role in supporting their children in three urban school districts in America. They found that any actions that did not directly align with school expectations of involvement often caused parents to be viewed as disengaged or uninvolved parents. What was viewed by the school as a lack of involvement and null action was, in fact, well considered and thought out decisions made by parents based on their goals for their children. Encouraging their children to independently complete homework and answer challenging problems was seen by parents as an opportunity to develop self-resilience and confidence, as was managing time and workload. Sometimes parents also removed themselves from the learning interaction when they felt that their involvement would be detrimental to their child's learning. These were conscious decisions based on the parent's goals and beliefs about education and did not mean that the parents were disengaged or uninvolved. Not all parental decisions like these are visible to teachers yet parents are all too frequently judged on them. Teachers speak of a lack of parental involvement yet judge this on what is seen from school and miss much that is done at home creating a skewed perception about how parents are involved in their child's learning (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Goodall, 2013; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

Valuing 'parental involvement in a child's learning'

Improved 'parental involvement in learning' cannot occur when teachers do not value its

importance in the educational success of students or are unable to perceive the difference it makes for their learners. Bishop et al (2003) investigated what Year 9 and 10 New Zealand Māori students identified as the main factors influencing their educational achievement and compared their views to the thoughts of their parents, teachers and principals. Three out of the four groups identified relationships between teacher and student and teacher and family as the largest influence on a student's educational success. Teachers felt quite differently and identified the child and their home life as having the biggest impact on learning. This view places teachers in a non-agentive role where they feel powerless to make a positive impact for that child as they have no influence over the home life of students. Teacher low expectations of success and a reluctance to engage with families may become a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure for their Māori students (Bishop et al, 2003; Durie, 2006). The "Flaxmere project" (Clinton, Hattie & Dixon, 2007) found that parents, students and principals were quickly able to identify the impact of improved connections between home and school on student learning, behaviour and attendance. In comparison, teachers felt the connections had less impact on student learning and were the last to recognise its positive effect. Valuing parental involvement and recognising when positive change has occurred will help enable teachers to deal with the challenges and barriers that may arise when working with parents and families.

Power differential

Much of the literature on increasing parental involvement suggests improving communication can contribute towards an equal balance of power between schools and parents (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Lareau & Muñoz, 2012). This oversimplified view fails to take into account the institutionalised and structural inequality of power that exists between families, schools and teachers (Lareau & Muñoz, 2012). In this current form of education where schooling is a quasi-market, parents have become teacher's clients and

can be viewed as threats to a teacher's power and autonomy. Although teachers call for an increased parental presence in education, questions, disagreements and differing of opinions can be seen as a threat to their autonomy, judgement and professional standing (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008).

Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark's (2011) study of the use of technology in 12 primary schools in England provides an example of the effect of power on the teacher-parent dynamic. Their study focused on schools that were using Learning Platforms to increase parental involvement and found that the use of technology created more tension in parent teacher relationships as teachers felt under threat having their work so visible and accessible to parents. Technology was used as a one-way broadcast of information from school to parents that perpetuated the existing power base where the school decided what was appropriate and acceptable. The underlying cause for this constant power struggle between schools/teachers and parents is that both groups have different priorities and focuses; teachers focus on pedagogic knowledge and skills and are responsible for the children as a group, parents have a more enduring and active involvement in their own child's education and focus on their child as a member of the community (Herrell, 2011). These different aims and threats to perceived power bases can create tensions and impact on the ability of parents and teachers to work together for the betterment of the child.

Language

Language is a powerful and often unacknowledged factor in how reality is perceived. The words selected, and the tone used, often helps shape feelings and actions. Lightfoot (2004) studied a range of text that focused on school expectations of parental involvement to better understand how language reflected and created teacher perceptions. The

overriding metaphor that was discovered was one of a vessel- where parents are either full of resources or lacking/empty of them. Middle and upper-class families were consistently described as full and, if criticised, it was due to their involvement being overflowing and seen by teachers as needing to be controlled. The overwhelming metaphor for lower socioeconomic families was that of an empty container that needed to be filled with the skills and knowledge of the teacher before they can help their children achieve. This persistent and consistent image shared through language reflects the beliefs of the speaker and shows in their actions. Even well-meaning and sympathetic accounts of programs designed to help disadvantaged families engage with school, focused on the idea that they need to be filled with knowledge, that they are somehow lacking because they do not fit the narrow definition of 'parental involvement in learning' (Lightfoot, 2004). This language soon turns into action with middle class parents asked to volunteer at schools while lower socioeconomic families are offered parenting courses to attend. These courses are based on the assumption that these families lack something whilst middle and upper-class families have extra to give (Lightfoot, 2004). None of these discourses makes any effort to stop, understand and value the wealth of knowledge and skills the families already have- they are just labelled as 'empty'.

The definition of 'parental involvement in learning' needs to move beyond what teachers value. Schools need to be open and appreciate the diversity of culture, language, background, opinions and actions that families bring to support their children (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). They also need to have open and honest discussions about the connections with their communities as there is often a misconception about the strength of the learning connections between home and school. In a five-year study the New Zealand Auditor General (2015) found that 90% of New Zealand schools felt that they had effective relationships with their whānau and families whilst only 60% of families felt the

same. This finding indicates that many schools may be overestimating the strength of their learning relationships with parents and therefore not see the need for change. Teachers need to be open to change, to encourage parents to engage with their child's learning in ways that are different from their own (Goodall, 2013; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). They must also be willing to see the power and impact these improved connections have for students as the valuing of this will empower teachers to continue on the journey towards 'parental engagement in learning'.

2.5 Parental factors influencing parental involvement

Social Capital

Schools are powerful institutions that influence what cultural and social capital (the language, behaviour and norms) is to be valued and accepted. This image is almost always based on the dominant culture of the white middle class and becomes what all others are judged against (Durie, 2006; Goodall, 2013; Lareau, 1992; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). For parents who are not part of the dominant culture these actions, vocabulary and expectations create barriers to their involvement with their child's school and learning due to the current school centric view of parental involvement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Schnee & Bose, 2010). Some parents have negative memories of their time at school making it challenging for them to engage with school. These parents are not fluent in the 'language' of school and unlike middle class parents, do not feel entitled to be heard or treated as an equal by a teacher so will often stay quiet when they have concerns or problems (Herrell, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This lack of agency means parents may appear to the school personnel to be disengaged in their child's learning as they do not meet the school's expectations of how a parent should act. Few allowances are made for cultural, social, linguistic and economic differences, instead those parents not fitting the

norm are labelled as "disengaged" or "difficult to reach" (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Durie, 2006; Goodall, 2013; Lareau, 1992; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

Life conditions

Inflexible work hours, child care issues, unpredictable schedules and restrictive leave policies impact parents' abilities to attend school events and meetings (Goodall & Montgomery, 2013; Herrell, 2011). Schools tend to set meetings at times that work best for teachers or high socio-economic parents who have work flexibility and childcare options that enable their attendance. For lower socio-economic parents in particular, their desire for involvement in their child's schooling may be impacted by more restrictive work conditions and child care and transport issues (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Herrell, 2011; Goodall & Montgomery, 2013; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). These parents often wish to be involved with their child's school but their economic situations either precludes or seriously affects this. The lack of attendance can be interpreted as parental dis-interest by schools and teachers who often decide that single and low-income families cannot be expected to attend events so do not invite or include them in invitations to volunteer, attend meetings or assist with home learning (Herrell, 2011).

Structural racism

This one size fits all thinking also minimises the impact of structural racism. It ignores centuries of exclusion and bias that the education system has had against minorities and the long-term impact of this (Harris & Goodall, 2008). In America and New Zealand rates of school success are lower for minorities than white students of all socioeconomic groups; begging the question- is school adopting modes of behaviour and actions that are more challenging for minority students and parents to connect with (Lareau, 1992; Wylie & Bonne 2014)? The current definition of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' is a

predominantly white middle-class construct where power imbalances are rarely acknowledged and deficit thinking and victim blaming is common (Bishop et al, 2003; Durie, 2006; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Monroy Ochoa, 2011).

This construct of parental involvement can lead to interactions between schools and parents focusing on the failings and challenges of a child rather than their learning and potential. This result is parents are placed in a defensive position increasing their resistance to interactions with school and raising memories of their own past negative educational experiences (Bishop et al, 2003; Durie, 2006). Bishop et al (2003) study of the experiences of year nine and ten Maori students in mainstream classes supported this finding. Students in the study felt that teachers focused on sharing only the negative aspects of their time in the classroom. Parents identified that school controlled how they could participate in the school and made contact only when it related to their child's negative behaviour, administration or asking for voluntary assistance for example hangi laying and help with marae visits. Both Lareau (1992) and Bishop et al (2003) found that schools often dealt with issues raised by families who experienced these negative interactions by labelling them as "hostile and destructive" (Lareau, 1992, p.17). Parental ability to work with schools in constructive and positive ways for the betterment of their child is negatively impacted by these interactions.

Parental role construction and feelings of self-efficacy

Conceptualisation of the parental role is influenced by previous experiences, childhoods, family and social groups and the messages shared by these about the attribution of responsibility for children's education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parental conceptions about what being a parent

means, how a parent should be involved in their child's education (their parental role construction) and their feelings of self-efficacy affect their levels of involvement with their child's learning (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008). These beliefs are affected by factors such as socioeconomic status, experiences of schooling, ethnicity and gender. If the definition of parental involvement moves from one centred around the school to one focused on a child's learning many of these barriers are minimised. In fact, research indicates that creating a home environment where education is valued, educational goals are set and discussed regularly, space and time for study is made and parental educational aspirations for their children are high has a wider impact on student success than parental involvement with a child's school (Fan & Williams, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014; Harris & Goodall 2008; Goodall, 2013). A shift of focus from 'involvement with schools' to a focus on learning may address some of the barriers parents encounter when interacting with schools.

2.6 Differing Perceptions

One of the biggest barriers between parents and schools is their differing ideas and assumptions about 'parental involvement in learning'. There is a real danger that schools and teachers assume that all parents "are like us" and base their expectations for parental involvement around their own childhood or the dominant culture's norms (Goodall, 2013; Wylie & Bonne 2014). Harris and Goodall (2008) found that teachers, students and parents had very different ideas about what constituted parental involvement and its benefits for students. Teachers saw parental involvement as helping to improve behaviour management and support for the schools, parents considered it to be focused on offering support to students, and students viewed it as parents offering moral support. There was little consensus about what parental involvement entailed or its benefits. There is also

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

confusion over whose responsibility it is to ensure that parental involvement occurs.

Connors and Epstein (1994) surveyed parents, families and students from six Maryland High Schools about their attitudes towards home-school partnerships. The authors found that 90% of teachers felt that parental involvement was necessary for student success yet only 32% felt that it was their responsibility and 66% of teachers said that they needed more training to involve parents (Connors & Epstein, 1994). A shared definition of 'parental involvement in learning' and an understanding of the role each participant (parents, students and teachers) plays must be jointly constructed for real progress to be made and maintained.

2.7 Enablers for parental involvement and engagement in learning

Moving from a model of parental involvement with the school to parental engagement in a child's learning can only start when a positive relationship is formed between the home and school (Office of the Auditor-General, 2015). Once these are established schools can lead the change to a relationship based on mahi-tahi, the shared focus on a student's learning and achievement (Education Review Office, 2015).

Six factors

Mutch and Collins (2012) studied 233 New Zealand schools undergoing their Education Review cycles to examine the extent that school practices contributed to respectful partnerships with parents and the wider community. Many of these factors, or the lack of them, have been discussed earlier in the literature review and are reinforced in these findings. Mutch and Collins (2012) identified six factors crucial to effective engagement:

- **Leadership**- often the principal's leadership had the largest impact on how the school engaged with their parents and community

- **Relationships-** successful schools were creative in the ways they found to interact with families and invested time into doing this.
- **School Culture-** a genuine openness and willingness to engage with parents and practices that considered diversity were positive factors in increasing engagement.
- **Partnerships-** positive relationships where parents and schools worked in partnership to improve child's learning was positively associated with parental involvement.
- **Community Networks-** schools who spend time forming relationships with their community better understand their needs, leading to increased parental involvement.
- **Communication-** clear, honest and timely communication that is personalised and based on the needs of the community or parent was an important component of the building of strong relationships

School leadership

School leaders have significant influence on the school culture and creation of a cohesive and robust vision of parental involvement in their school (Hall, Hornby, & Macfarlane, 2015; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Ramsay, Hawk, Harold, Marriott & Poskitt, 1993). When teachers work in an environment that limits the ability of parents to be involved or maintains firm definitions of what is acceptable, it sends a message to teachers about the importance or nature of parental involvement in children's learning (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Principals are proven to have the most power to inhibit or encourage change. When they openly value the importance of parental involvement and give parents the platform to share their voice, change occurs ((Hall, Hornby, & Macfarlane, 2015; Mutch &

Collins, 2012; Ramsay, Hawk, Harold, Marriott & Poskitt, 1993). Principals have the power to widen the "box" of acceptable behaviours and shift it to one of engagement in learning rather than contact with the school.

Examining beliefs

Examination of the beliefs that teachers and leaders hold concerning 'parental involvement in a child's learning' is an important step towards a more open and inclusive definition (McDowall, Taumoepeau & Schaughency, 2017). It is only by examining our beliefs that reflection and change can occur (Education Review Office, 2015). These beliefs, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, are felt by parents and heavily influence their willingness to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Mutch & Collins, 2012; McDowall, Taumoepeau & Schaughency, 2017). McDowall, Taumoepeau & Schaughency (2017) studied 196 New Zealand families with Year one children to examine parent and teacher beliefs about parental involvement and its influence on parental actions over the first two years of schooling. The authors found that parent's perception of a teacher's openness to parental involvement at school determined their own involvement. If a child moved to a class where the teacher rated the helpfulness of parental involvement higher, parental involvement of the children in that class increased and vice versa. By leading teachers to examine the beliefs they hold (and may not be aware of) about 'parental involvement in learning' leaders can create a shared vision for this and positively influence the levels of involvement in their school (Education Review Office, 2015; Hall, Hornby, & Macfarlane, 2015; Mutch & Collins, 2012).

2.8. Summary and justification for study

These disparities of understanding about the definition of 'parental involvement in learning', assumptions made by both staff and parents and the current school centric

model creates barriers for both schools and families. For schools to move towards relationships based around learning (parental engagement with learning) and mahi-tahi an understanding of what each stakeholder deems involvement to be must be gathered. Then conversations can begin about a shared understanding of 'parental involvement in learning' where interactions related to student learning is of central importance rather than the number of events parents attend.

Research into parental involvement in New Zealand has traversed a wide range of foci. Studies range from investigating strategies principals and schools are currently using (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008; Duncan, Bowden, & Smith, 2006; Garbacz, & Sheridan, 2011; Hall, Hornby, & Macfarlane, 2015; Hornby, & Witte, 2010), barriers and factors that affect parental involvement (Garbacz, McDowall, Schaughency, Sheridan, & Welch, 2015; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011), the extent that school practices contribute to parental involvement (Mutch & Collins, 2012), the impact of parental involvement on learning (Clinton, & Hattie, 2013; Clinton, Hattie & Dixon, 2007; McDowall, & Schaughency, 2016) and changes in parental involvement as a child increases in age (Hartas, 2015). These studies are informative, but none have focused on the conceptions about parental involvement of each group (parents, teachers and students) or what it entails.

This study was conducted in three New Zealand schools and seeks to answer two broad questions:

- How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?
- What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

By gathering an understanding of how New Zealand parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning', differences and similarities

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

can be explored, and a shared definition may be created. The next chapter details the research methodology and research design for the current study.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Mixed methods

Mixed methods research design utilises the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches while compensating for their weaknesses to provide a more diverse and inclusive view of the issues being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Whilst qualitative research produces rich and in-depth examinations of an issue from the perspective of the few, it has often been criticised for a lack of generalisability and objectiveness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative research, on the other hand, provides information from larger populations identifying trends and causal relationships but often lacks the voice of those being studied and an understanding of the context or setting in which the research was conducted (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch 2009). As Creswell and Clark (2011) explain, “mixed methods provides a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers” (p.12). This methodology allows the researcher to fully examine their research problem by utilising both approaches to provide a better understanding than that attained by the use of one method alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch 2009). Researchers are empowered to use a wide range of data collection tools and are not restricted by the methods and tools typically associated with an either quantitative or qualitative approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Mixed methods research encourages the use of multiple paradigms for the different stages of the study being undertaken but predominantly uses pragmatism as it's overarching paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This worldview means that research decisions are

based primarily on the research question and finding the methodology that best allows for its exploration rather than being driven by methodology or paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Mixed methods research contains a variety of research designs that enable the exploration of a range of problems; one of which is explanatory sequential research design.

Explanatory sequential research design

Explanatory sequential research design allows the researcher to assess trends and patterns in quantitative data whilst also explaining the reasons behind these trends in more depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This research design has two distinct phases as evidenced in Figure one.

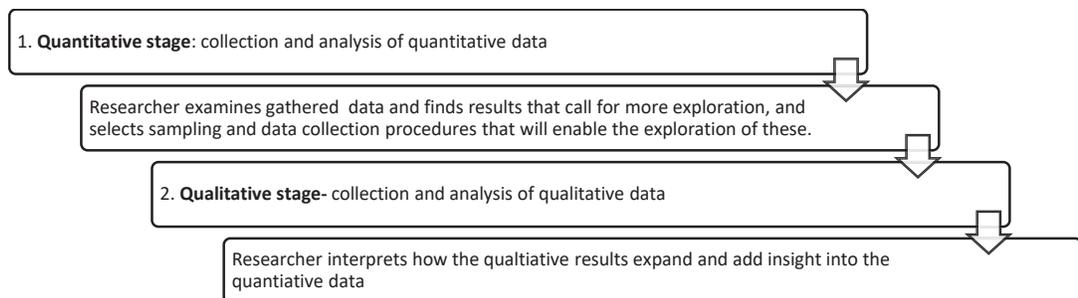


Figure 1: Explanatory sequential research design

In the first stage, the collection of quantitative data allows for the gathering of information from a wide population and provides results that can then be explored further in the qualitative stage. The qualitative phase is informed by the findings of the first stage and these findings direct the selection of the tools, data collection methods and focus of the second stage. This qualitative phase provides an opportunity to further explain and expand on the data from the quantitative stage and to explore similarities and contradictions in more depth with fewer participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Explanatory sequential

research design was chosen for this investigation into the different perceptions New Zealand parents, senior primary students and teachers have about parental involvement in a child's learning. As these perceptions have not been clearly established in research, an approach was needed that allowed for initial information to be gathered and then explored in more depth in a second stage. Information gathered in the first stage through quantitative data will identify trends to explore in more depth in a second qualitative stage.

3.2 Research questions

Initially the researcher intended to investigate the differing perceptions parents, senior primary students and teachers have about effective parental engagement in a child's learning. A study of the literature and experience in the field made it clear that most schools operate at a level of involvement which needed to be better understood before a transformation might be made to engagement. The current misunderstandings about the different ways each group (parents, students and teachers) perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning' in New Zealand meant further investigation on this aspect was warranted. This study aims to gather a better understanding of the perceptions parents, senior primary students and teachers have about 'parental involvement in learning'. It investigates the following research questions:

- How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive "parental involvement in a child's learning"?
- What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact "parental involvement in a child's learning"?

3.3 Data Collection

Each stage of the explanatory sequential design calls for the use of different tools to meet the differing foci of the phases.

Quantitative stage: Questionnaires

Quantitative research enables researchers to easily gather information from a wide range of participants allowing the discovery of trends and patterns in the data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Questionnaires comprise a set of predetermined questions that are readily administered in either paper or on-line form to a large population which provide results that can be generalised to the wider population. Responses may be given in a variety of ways including short answer, multiple choice and scaled questions providing statistical information that can be analysed and used to inform the later qualitative phase of the study (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin & Lowden, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Questionnaires also provide an opportunity for those who are unable or unwilling to participate in focus groups or individual interviews to have their opinions and voice heard (Elliott, 1991).

In this study a questionnaire was designed for parents, teachers and senior primary school students with some variance in language and questions to cater for the needs of each of the groups (see Appendix A). The questions focused on gathering an understanding of

- what each group (parents, senior students and teachers) understood 'parental involvement in a child's learning' to be
- the value each group placed on it
- how parents were currently involved
- activities identified as part of parental involvement
- the enablers and barriers that influence parental involvement.

Teachers were also asked about the factors that either promoted or hindered their

encouragement of parental involvement in their student's learning. The findings from the questionnaires were analysed to find commonalities, differences and trends within and across all three groups. These preliminary findings informed emerging themes and the creation of interview questions to explore of these themes in the individual and group interviews.

Qualitative stage: Individual and group interviews

Interviewing allows researchers to uncover and examine participants' assumptions and beliefs and captures participants' views of the world in which they inhabit (Keats, 1993; MacCracken, 2000; Punch, 2009). In this study the qualitative stage included both individual and group interviews (focus groups) enabling the exploration of themes, commonalities and disparities that emerged from the quantitative phase of the research study (see Appendix B). These themes included

- exploring the differing views across the groups of how learning was defined
- the roles and responsibility of parents, students and teachers in a child's learning
- more detailed insight into the barriers and enablers for parental involvement.

There are many types of interview formats ranging from focused to unstructured approaches, each with its own purposes and strengths and weaknesses (MacCracken, 2000). Structured interviews are pre-planned with set questions in a predetermined order that often have pre-coded categories for the responses. This structure reduces the influence of the researcher, allows for quick, easy and accurate coding but can restrict possible thoughts and theories emerging due to its tightly controlled nature. Unstructured interviews have general themes for discussion allowing the participants to speak openly and freely on a wide range of topics. This freedom, whilst providing an opportunity for

thoughts and views to be uncovered, can create an unmanageable amount of data and can easily become off topic and unhelpful to the researcher. In semi structured interviews, the researcher uses guiding questions containing a mix of both closed and open-ended questions to direct conversation to the study topic whilst enabling a more open dialogue to occur (Kvale, 2007; MacCracken, 2000; Punch, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study with consistent questions asked across all three groups (see Appendix B).

Group Interviews (Focus Groups)

Groups interviews use the dynamics and interactions that occur in group discussions to reveal participants' explicit and implicit beliefs about a topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Punch, 2009). Some participants find group settings a less daunting and emotionally challenging space than individual interviews, allowing their voice to be gathered and respected. The role of the interviewer changes in group interviews to one of facilitator and moderator ensuring that all voices are heard, and participants have the opportunity to share their beliefs and values (Keats, 1993; MacCracken, 2000; Punch, 2009). Interview questions were identical for both individual and group interviews in this study.

Issues to consider when conducting interviews

Whilst interviews are a powerful tool to uncover beliefs and the lived experiences of those interviewed, the close personal context in which interviews are held requires researchers to be conscious of the impact of their own beliefs and biases (MacCracken, 2000).

Researchers need to ensure that these beliefs do not bias or influence a participant answers resulting in the capture of the researcher's rather than participants' own beliefs and views (MacCracken, 2000; Woods, 2002). Language is also an important factor in both questionnaires and interviews. It can exclude or include participants, direct answers and thoughts through the use of overly technical or biased wording (Punch, 2009). To

safeguard this from occurring, questions were checked for bias or leading nature by the researcher's academic supervisors to ensure that the views gathered were those of the studied rather than the studier. The questionnaires were also piloted by non-teaching friends of the researcher to ensure the questions were easily understood, did not contain academic or professional language and drew the right kind of information from the participants.

3.4 Ethical Issues

Educational research centres on people and so contains many opportunities for ethical issues to arise. It is the exploration and examination of people's beliefs and experiences that creates these ethical challenges (Punch, 2009). Researchers must make themselves cognizant of their own beliefs, ideological bias and moral outlook to understand how this may temper the way they look at the world (Tolich & Davidson, 1999).

The use of a critical friend, academic supervisors and the ethical guidelines from associated academic institutions enable researchers to think through the implications of specific issues that may arise and guide decision making (Wiles, 2013). The Massey University "Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and evaluations" (2015) was the main guideline followed by the researcher, with the following principles:

- Respect for persons.
- Minimisation of harm to participants, researchers, institutions, and groups.
- Informed and voluntary consent.
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality.
- The avoidance of unnecessary deception.
- Avoidance of conflict of interest.
- Social and cultural sensitivity to the age, gender, culture, religion, social class of the participants.
- Justice.

This research was conducted in schools where the researcher did not have any ties with

the school, students, community or staff reducing the influence and bias of the researcher.

Information was kept in locked storage; the identity of all participants was kept anonymous and identifiable data (to person or school) was only shared with the academic supervisors of the researcher.

It is important that participants in research are fully informed of all facets of the study and of their rights (Wiles, 2013). To ensure that this occurred information sheets were sent to all families, senior students (Year Six in both School A and C and Year Eight in School B) and teachers from the schools (see Appendix C) involved that clearly stated the

- purpose of the study
- what participation involved
- how anonymity and consent would be managed
- possible risks and benefits of involvement
- how the data and results would be handled
- how the findings would be disseminated

3.5 Quality of Data

Having more than one form of data is important for the validity and reliability of research and this study contains both quantitative (survey) data and qualitative (interview) data from three different groups (parent, teachers, senior primary students) from three settings (school a, b, and c). Data triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods in the investigation of a research question (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). The purpose of triangulation is to use the different strengths of each data source to complement each other whilst limiting their possible biases or weaknesses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2009). This study used different sites, different groups and different data sources to ensure validity and reliability of its data.

3.6 Summary

Mixed methods is an educational research approach that utilises both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate research questions. This approach combines the strengths of each approach while compensating for their weaknesses to gain a better understanding of the research problem than the use of one approach alone allows (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Punch, 2009). An explanatory sequential research design was selected for this study as an understanding of how parents, senior primary students and teachers define parental involvement was needed. These definitions were then explored and expanded in the qualitative stage to better understand the similarities and differences between the groups. Questionnaires were selected as the most effective data gathering method to gather these definitions in the quantitative phase. This tool was chosen as questionnaires could be distributed to large populations and then analysed to inform questions for both the individual and group interviews. Individual and group interviews were then conducted as they allowed for the voices of each participant to be heard and provided a vehicle to provide a deeper understanding of the research question. The use of different data sources, groups and settings helps maintain the validity and reliability of the studied findings.

4. Realities of research in the field

4.1 Sampling

As there is very little information about how New Zealand parents, senior primary students and teachers perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning', maximum variation sampling was used. Maximum variation sampling uses settings, groups and individuals to gather data and a wider range of perspectives on the research topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). This sampling strategy ensured the study encompassed diversity of population, character of school and age of students.

All three schools selected for study are situated in a North Island city in New Zealand. New Zealand schools are currently allocated a decile number that indicates "the extent the school draws their students from low socio-economic communities" (Ministry of Education, 2017). The lower the decile rating (on a scale of one to ten), the higher the funding allocated to the school by the Ministry of Education. The schools studied ranged from decile three to decile ten comprising a broad socio-economic range of communities. It was important to the researcher that the voice of the students was included in this study. Too often students are removed or forgotten from educational research and their voice needs to be heard (Morgan & Sengedorj, 2014).

School A

School A is a large well-established decile five contributing (Year 0-6) state primary school located in the central city. It serves a diverse community and the school contains bilingual units and is a fund holder for students with special needs. At the time of the study the school roll contained:

- 343 families

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

- 22 classroom teachers
- 70 Year Six students

School B

School B is a decile three state intermediate school that caters for Year Seven and Eight students (eleven to thirteen-year olds). It serves a lower socio-economic community in an area where financial hardship is commonly experienced. At the time of the study the school roll contained:

- 265 families
- 10 classroom teachers
- 143 Year Eight students

School C

School C is a decile ten integrated contributing primary school with a special Catholic character. The school serves a culturally diverse community from a wide geographical area.

At the time of the study the school roll contained:

- 137 families
- 12 classroom teachers
- 30 Year Six students

Sampling for interviews and group interviews

Convenience sampling was used to select participants for the interviews. This form of sampling uses settings, groups or individuals who are available, willing and able to participate in the research (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Every questionnaire sent to participants (either on-line or paper form) contained a section in the questionnaire for participants to complete if they were willing to participate in either group or individual interviews (see Appendix A). These completed forms were separated from the completed questionnaires before the answers were analysed, ensuring confidentiality remained. The researcher contacted the people who indicated interest (and the parents of students who

wished to participate) and organised times and locations to meet. A range of times, days and locations were offered by the researcher to create minimal disruption for the participants. Most meetings were held on school grounds, but some were held in an offsite location that catered for those who could only meet after 5pm.

4.2 Conducting research in the field

Teaching and parenting are incredibly stressful and challenging roles. These pressures impact on the ability or willingness of participants to become involved in a research project. Many steps were taken by the researcher to encourage participants to become involved in the study.

Selection and confirmation of schools

Firstly, the researcher's principal made contact on her behalf with the four schools invited by the researcher and three replied with interest. These principals then met with the researcher before deciding to commit to the study. Information sheets for each group were shared with the principal and letters for the Board of Trustees so that approval from the Board of Trustees could be attained (see Appendix C).

On site visits to inform and attract participants

Each school was visited by the researcher to meet with both the staff and senior primary students to explain the study and to invite participation. All senior students were talked to as a group and encouraged to ask questions about the study and researcher. At the end of each meeting, questionnaires were handed out to every attendee who wished to receive one and spares were left for those who were unable to attend but wished to participate. Questionnaires were sent home with the oldest member of each school family and a notice explaining the study was published in each school's newsletter. A secure, confidential box

was created to be held in the school office of each school for the return of questionnaires.

Further encouragement and the use of multi-media

A range of ways to participate (paper questionnaires, on-line questionnaires and individual or group interviews) was offered by the researcher to optimise the response rate. Where possible, the researcher used provided email lists of staff, students and families to send a live link to the respective on-line questionnaires. These online questionnaires did not record any identifiable information such as email addresses, and so maintained participant confidentiality. Visits were made regularly to the school to check in with the office support staff and to talk to the staff as a whole. A card was also given to the staff of each school asking teachers to consider giving their senior students the option of completing the questionnaire in silent reading time if the student wished to participate. Reminder notices were placed in school newsletters and the date for submission was extended by two weeks to encourage participation.

Collection of questionnaires and the struggle for participants

Questionnaires were collected by the researcher. Those respondents who indicated, on separate forms, their interest in being involved in interviews were contacted. Interviews were recorded, with the duration ranging from twenty-five minutes to over an hour. Teachers were the most hesitant to be involved in interviews and, as seen above, several visits were made to invite participation. This hesitation appeared to flow on to the students as although teachers could offer students the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in silent reading time (that did not need parental approval) this did not occur. The majority of the student data emerged from one class at School B and the largest group of teacher participants came School C where the acting principal encouraged their involvement. Some difficulties occurred with student interviews as in both school A and

school C interviews were arranged but the students failed to attend. Final numbers of participants are detailed in Figure 2 below:

	Questionnaires		Individual Interviews		Group Interviews	
School A	Parents	19	Parents	6	Parents	0
	Year Six students	2	Year Six students	1 (as other child did not come)	Year Six students	0
	Teachers	5	Teachers	1	Teachers	0
School B	Parents	6	Parents	0	Parents	1 (of 2)
	Year Eight students	13	Year Eight students	0	Year Eight students	1 (of 10)
	Teachers	4	Teachers	1	Teachers	0
School C	Parents	7	Parents	3	Parents	1 (of 2)
	Year Six students	2	Year Six students	0	Year Six students	0 (did not come)
	Teachers	12	Teachers	3	Teachers	0
Total	Parents	32	Parents	9	Parents	2
	Students	17	Students	1	Students	1
	Teachers	23	Teachers	5	Teachers	0

Figure 2: Numbers of participants

4.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis

The data from this study had two main forms of analysis. The quantitative phase used both statistical analysis and coding (for the short answers provided). The survey aimed to uncover each group's definition of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' and it became clear that the short answers were more informative than the statistical data. The statistical data such as number of children in the family, age of students taught or children in the family, although interesting, provided little information for understanding the research topic. Once the quantitative data were analysed (see below section for information about how the short answers questions were analysed) themes,

commonalities and differences were examined in the data. These themes were used to develop interview questions and were further examined in the qualitative phase of the study. This data and possible theories arising from it were discussed with the researcher's supervisors who played the role of critical friend, ensuring bias and judgement was made clear and removed from the theories created.

Qualitative data

Most qualitative researchers work alone in the field and much care must be taken to ensure that their pre-existing beliefs, bias or hidden judgement do not taint the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher followed Miles and Huberman's framework for qualitative data analysis (1994) to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data analysis. Data was analysed both inductively (from the data) as the research did not provide definitive explanation for how parents, senior primary students and teachers in New Zealand perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning' and deductively to test theories as they emerged from the data.

Coding

Firstly, coding was conducted on the short answer data from the quantitative phase and the process was repeated with the transcriptions of the interviews. The data was then analysed using:

- Data reduction
- Data display
- Drawing and verifying conclusion

Data reduction involves the editing, chunking and summarising of data gathered in a research study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2009). Coding is part of this process and is when the researcher assigns tags, names or labels (codes) to the data allowing for the

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

attachment of meaning (Punch, 2009). Codes can contain the word, phrase or paragraphs of the participant's own words or a topic code that contains similar thoughts or themes.

Codes in this study were discovered in the data (open coding) rather than using pre-established codes, and frequencies were noted for both codes and categories to identify the strength of each. Topic codes were created to include comments that were similar (topic codes such as "support school learning" contained activities like following up learning from school, ensuring the completion of assignments) (see Appendix D). These words were then grouped by the researcher under categories (Axial coding) to identify relationships between the data (see Figure three). Quotes from questionnaire and interview data were allocated codes that identified what group it came from (Parent, Student or Teacher), if it was from interview (no letter) or Questionnaire data (S), the number of the respondent and the question it relates to. For example, 'SP5Q3' means questionnaire data (S) from parent number 5 (P5) for question 3 (Q3).

Although a range of categories created by the researcher emerged across questions and groups, three in particular reoccur in the data. The first category "*learning that is based around school*" contains codes that focus on learning that is set and directed by the school, relationships between home and school and the supporting and enforcing of school policies and rules. The second category "*relationship with child*" encompasses the actions that parents take to connect and bond with their child, as one participant explains "Establish good relationship with your child. Have time for them and let them know that you are always there for them" (SP8Q10). "*Providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning*" is the third category and contains codes that relate to the valuing and supporting of both the child but also their learning (that is not school based). One respondent described this as "Being interested and valuing the importance of

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

education. Education is a life-long journey that opens up opportunities and experiences and sharing this with our child is seen as a high priority and privilege." (SP4Q10). Interview data were used to provide rich descriptions to the quantitative data in Chapter Five and combined in the descriptions to help explore issues identified in the first stage of research.

Figure 4.1.B Parent responses for all schools "what is parental involvement in learning"?

Category	Total Frequency	Total Percentage	Code	School A frequency	School B frequency	School C frequency	Total frequency
Learning that is based around school	46	40%	Supporting school learning	8	1	3	12
			Knowing their child's academic status	7	0	1	8
			Knowing what is happening at school	4	2	1	7
			Communication with school	2	0	4	6
			Being involved with school activities	2	1	2	5
			Helping with homework	2	1	2	5
			Ensuring completion of homework	2	0	1	3
Having a strong relationship with your child	18	16%	Talking with child	4	0	1	5
			Spending time with your child	3	0	1	4
			Know their child's strengths and weaknesses	3	0	0	3
			Being supportive	2	0	0	2
			Be encouraging of child	2	0	0	2
			Know child's interests	0	0	1	1
			Help child	1	0	0	1
			Focus on learning wider than school drive learning	5	2	5	12
Providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning	50	44%	Involved with child's learning	4	3	0	7
			Supporting child with learning	2	1	3	6
			Encouraging further learning	2	2	1	5
			Providing learning opportunities	1	2	1	4
			Reading with and to child	3	0	1	4
			Help children with learning	2	1	0	4
			Being an active part of child's learning	3	0	0	3
			Interested in child's learning	3	0	0	3
			Learn from parent	1	0	0	1
			Provide conditions suitable for learning	1	0	0	1

Figure 3: Example of process of coding from each school

These themes were then connected to create theoretical themes to create possible explanations for what the data displayed (Punch, 2009) (see Figure four).

Coding process example from parental questionnaire responses.		
Codes to categories	Themes	Theories
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Providing conditions suitable for learning-2</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Help child with learning-5</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Support child with learning-3</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Read to and read with their children-4</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Being interested in child's learning-2</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Being an active part of a child's learning-3</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Being involved in child's learning-6</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Encourage child to learn-6</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Focus on learning wider than school driven learning-12</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"> Providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning-43 codes </div> </div> </div>	<p>Learning is schooling</p> <p>School and government set what is classed as learning</p> <p>Parents lost power (or ability) to follow wider view of learning</p> <p>Parents are the Police for school- ensuring children follow school expectations and learning</p> <p>One-way flow of information- where is parental voice?</p>	<p>A view that learning is mainly schooling. Schools and teachers are the expert in this area- so instructions for what learning a child should be doing and how this learning is to be completed is to be given by the school and enforced by parents.</p> <p>This view has created a disempowerment of the parental role in a child's learning</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Spend time with their child-2</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Talk with their child- 5</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Know their child's strengths and weaknesses-3</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Be supportive of their child- 2</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Be encouraging of their child-2</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"> Having a strong relationship with your child- 14 </div> </div> </div>	<p>Valuing and knowing "all" of the child- not just one based on the school side</p> <p>No mention of this knowledge being shared with school</p> <p>Importance of a strong connection with the child</p>	<p>A view that schooling is a part of learning but is not ALL a child's learning.</p> <p>This means that parents still have the majority of the ownership and power over nurturing a love of learning and actual learning in their children.</p>

Figure 4: Example of process from open coding to axial coding

Analysis

Data displays were used throughout the analysis to condense, organise and arrange the information into ways that assisted sense making (Punch, 2009). As the data were analysed, broad themes began to emerge and were recorded in memos that assisted the researcher with later, more sophisticated analysis. The three steps- data reduction, data displays and drawing and verifying conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994) did not happen in isolation but often overlapped and built on each other. These data strategies were employed to assist with data validity. Checking for representativeness ensured that the data gathered reflected the range of people and contexts studied. The variety of settings

and methods of data collection used by the researcher in this study helped to ensure the data gathered represented the people studied. As discussed in Chapter Three, triangulation of data sources, data types and data collection methods were also used to ensure inherent biases and limitations of one method was moderated by the use of another (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). The results from this study are discussed in more depth in the next chapter, Chapter Five.

4.4 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted in three New Zealand primary schools and consequently data was gathered from a small sample. Quantitative data from the questionnaire informed the qualitative stage of the study and the short answer questions provided invaluable information. However, the small sample size limits the generalisability of the finding. Teachers were somewhat reluctant to participate, and the researcher wondered if perhaps this topic was a risky one for teachers to openly discuss despite parental involvement being known as an important factor in a child's success. Although a range of meeting places and times were offered, the small size of the schools may have created concerns amongst teachers that they would be easily identifiable and so chose to avoid the risk by not participating. This lack of involvement had a flow on effect to the small number of students involved. Although small in number, this study provides useful insights about 'parental involvement in a child's learning', especially about how definitions of learning influenced each group's view of parental involvement. The next chapter discusses the findings in more depth.

5. Results Chapter

This chapter presents the results from the questionnaire and interviews conducted with parents, teachers and senior students from the three participating schools. It examines how each group (parents, teachers and students) understood the notion of 'parental involvement in learning', how they perceived parents to be currently involved and the barriers and enablers of this involvement. The researcher analysed the data from the questionnaires and interviews by identifying common categories (refer to Chapter 4.3.2 in the methodology section). The three key categories to emerge about factors that influence 'parental involvement in learning' were: learning that is based around school, the parent's relationship with their child and providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning. Completed questionnaires were collated, and analysed to find convergent and divergent themes. Emerging trends from the questionnaires informed development of interview questions for individual and group interviews held with the parents, students and teachers who volunteered to participate. This chapter presents the findings of this research starting with how each group understood parental involvement, their current actions, what they value and then moves into discussing the factors that impacts parental involvement.

5.1 Understandings about parental involvement

Each group (parents, students and teachers) in the study understood the notion of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' differently (see Figure 5).

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

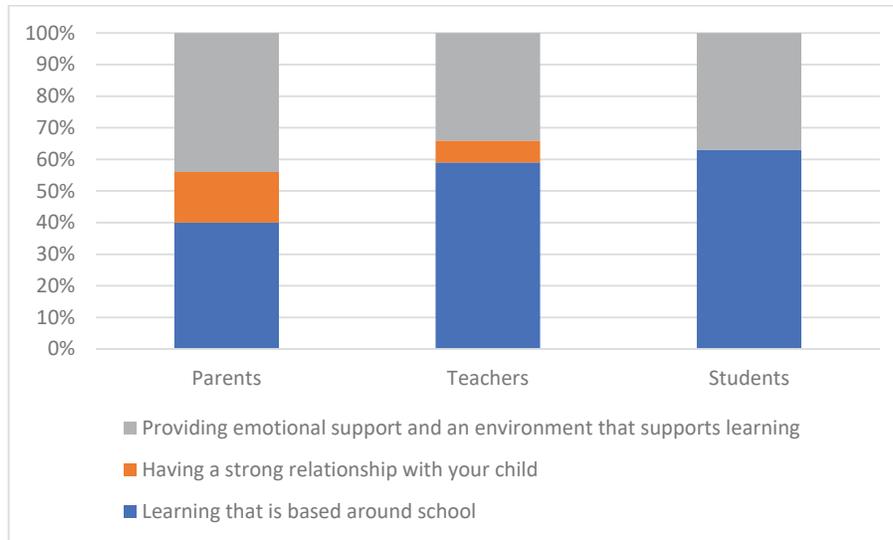


Figure 5: Understandings about 'parental involvement in learning'

Parents

Almost two thirds of all parent respondents defined parental involvement as actions that centred around creating a supportive environment for their child and fostering positive parent-child relationships. As one respondent described "I think parents are constantly involved in children's learning- all interactions and activities in day-to-day life are potential learning activities" (SP5Q3). 'SP5Q3' describes the origins of the quote: questionnaire data from parent number 5 for question three. The definition of parental involvement as learning that is based around school reflected a parental desire to be informed about their child's academic needs, the learning occurring at school and continuing this learning at home (see Appendix D for more detail on the types of activities described).

Teachers

In contrast, teachers predominantly understood 'parental involvement in a child's learning' as actions that supported school based learning. Teachers indicated that this school based learning included parental actions such as parents being informed about learning that is occurring at school, reinforcing this at home, supporting the school and teachers and being

involved in the school community. As one teacher described, "supporting their child to reinforce what is taught at school i.e. reading, maths, writing, inquiry etc "(ST5Q3). Unlike the parent's data, the teacher's responses did not suggest a valuing of the relationship between parent and child.

Students

Students in the study, clearly understood parental involvement as focusing on the connection between parents and school but this differed when the data was separated by year group (see Figure six). Various ways to form and maintain that connection were described and the most prominent were those that focused on parents being informed about their child needs and what and how they learn at school. When separated into year groups the difference was quite marked with Year Six students defining parental engagement as connections with school whereas Year Eight student valued more highly the environment their parents created.

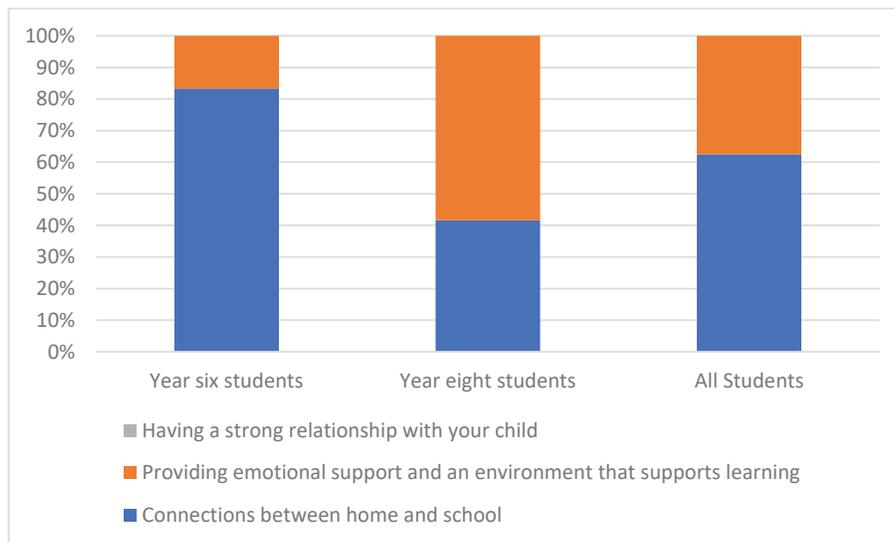


Figure 6: Student Responses "what is 'parental involvement in learning?'"

5.2 How are parents currently involved in their child's learning?

When asked how parents are currently involved in children's learning both teachers and parents described interactions focused around school whilst students defined the involvement as the creation of an environment that supported them and their learning (see Figure 7).

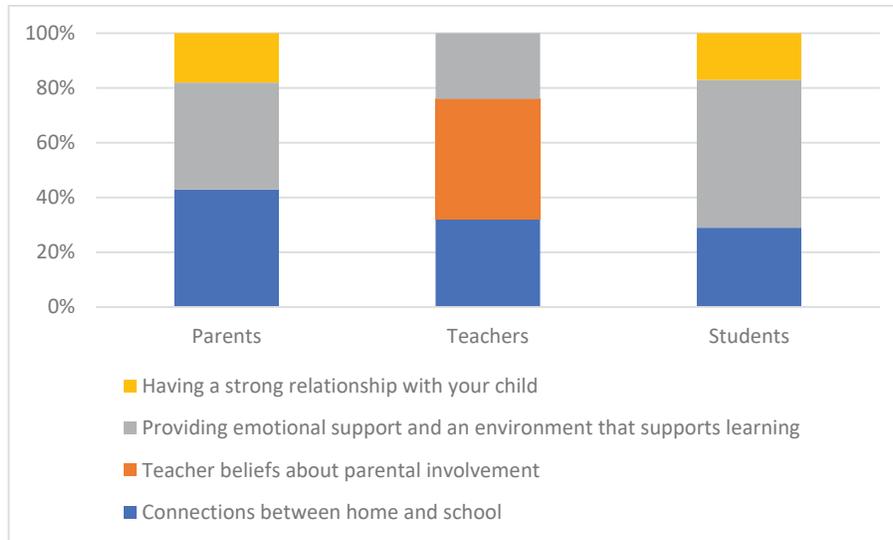


Figure 7: How are parents currently involved?

Parents

Parents described almost half of all actions they undertook to support their child's learning as those associated with being at school and supporting their child's learning at school. Interviewed parents also focused on connections with their child's school (see Figure 8) and the creation of a supportive environment for both the child and their learning with an emphasis on providing learning at and beyond school. As one participant described:

"At the same time, we're doing learning in a different way- whether it be cooking dinner, whether it be -we've got to go to this street- how do we get there? It's just talking. We play cards- its counting. Learning to lose." (P5Q2)

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

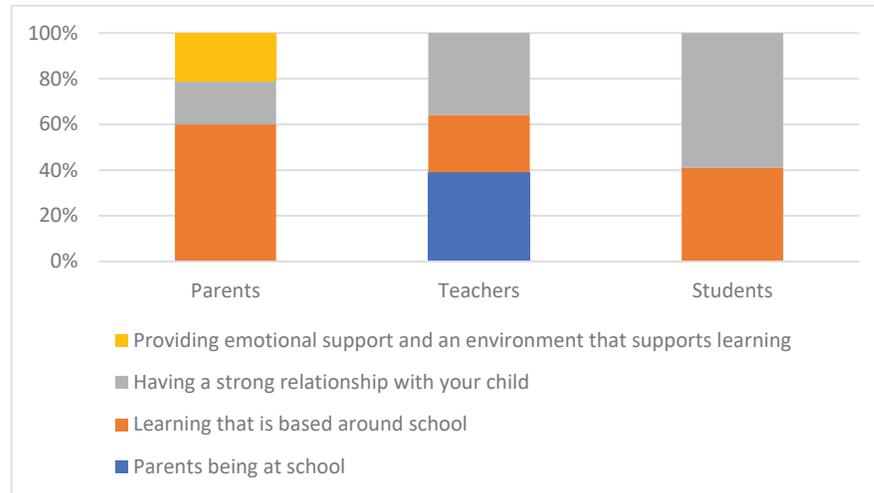


Figure 8: How are parents currently involved in their child's learning? Interview data

Teachers

When teachers were asked how parents are currently involved in their child's learning two thirds of questionnaire respondents focused on parents either being physically present at school or on supporting school based learning such as completing set work or homework. The top overall category that teachers felt best described current parental involvement was based on parents being physically present at school. Interestingly the data from the teacher's interviews was quite different, with the largest category of response related to how teachers felt about this involvement rather than how parents were involved. Teachers' views varied from feeling parents were too involved, "you've got your parent who wants to make something of their child that they're not because of whatever void they're trying to fill in their life" (T6Q2) to teachers feeling parents were not involved enough "I've got other parents who I have never even spoken to because you try to call and make contact and they just don't answer or if they answer they say that they're busy" (T1Q2). Therefore, teachers appear to make inferences about parents' involvement in learning according to their perceptions about 'appropriate levels' of parental presence at

school.

Students

In comparison, students in both questionnaire and interview data described parents being currently involved in their learning by supporting them and providing an environment that supports learning (see figure 9). As one student explained; "They sometimes ask if I need help. They see that I'm doing any learning and then ask me questions" (S1Q3). When the data was classified into year groups, the Year Six students placed more emphasis on school based learning whereas the Year Eight students defined it most commonly as the supportive environment that their parents created for them.

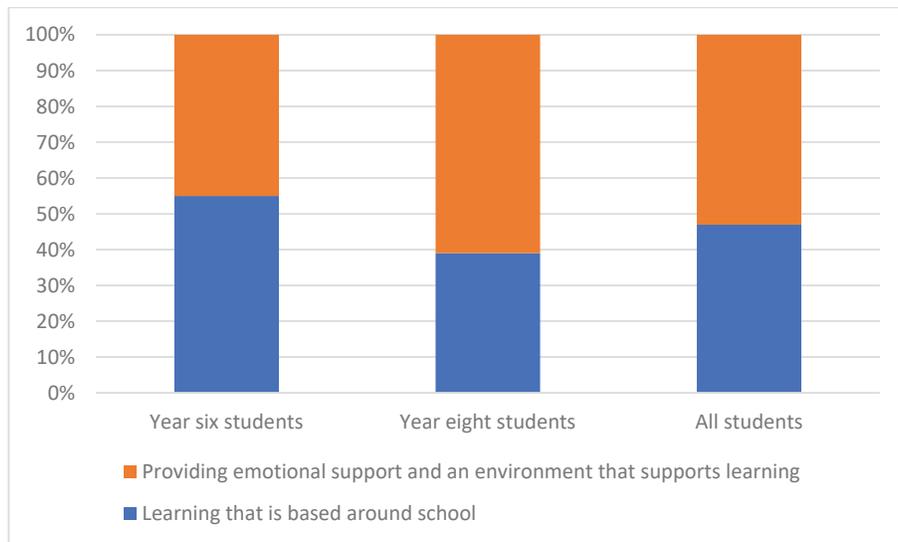


Figure 9: How are parents currently involved? Student Questionnaire answers

5.3 Most important thing a parent can do to support a child in their learning

Parents and students

Parents and students both identified actions that created an environment that supported the child and their learning as the most important act of parental involvement (see Figure 10). Parents and students attributed over half of all responses to this category. When the student data was categorised in age groups the trends from the first two questions continued with Year Six students labelling learning that is based around school as the most important thing a parent can do whilst Year Eight students focused on the environment that their parents created to support them and their learning.

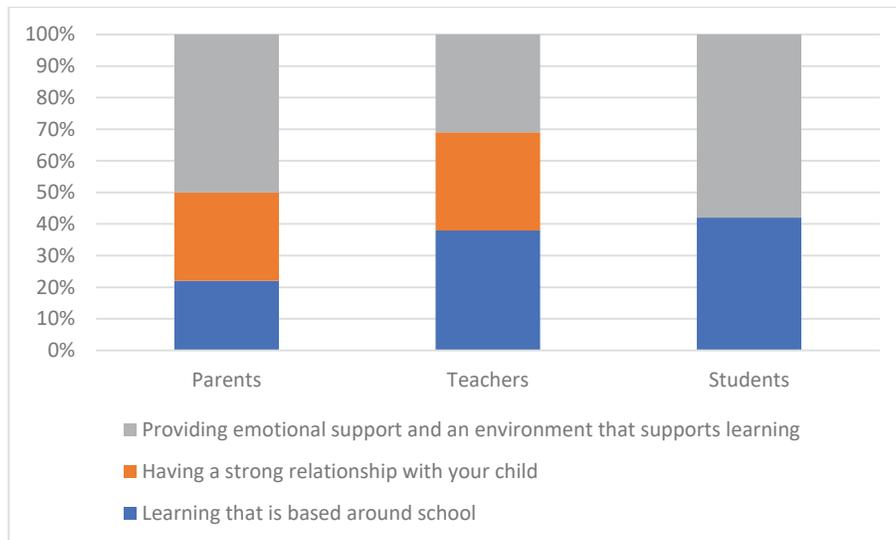


Figure 10: What is the most important thing a parent can do to support a child in their learning? Questionnaire data

Teachers

In contrast teachers' responses yielded mixed results for this question. Although learning based around schooling was the top category the results were almost evenly split between all three categories (see Figure 10).

5.4 What do parents value most about being involved in their child's learning?

Parents

Parents were asked in interviews what they loved most about being involved in their child's learning. A focus on providing an environment that supported both their child and their learning was evident (see Figure 11). The individual code that occurred most frequently was sharing a love of learning with their child. As a parent explained "It is quite exciting; learning is the life long journey, you're never too old to learn something, and just giving her the tools and the confidence as well" (P1Q1). Connecting to school received the least amount of codes and those responses reflected a desire to understand their child's needs and to support this learning in the home (see Appendix D).

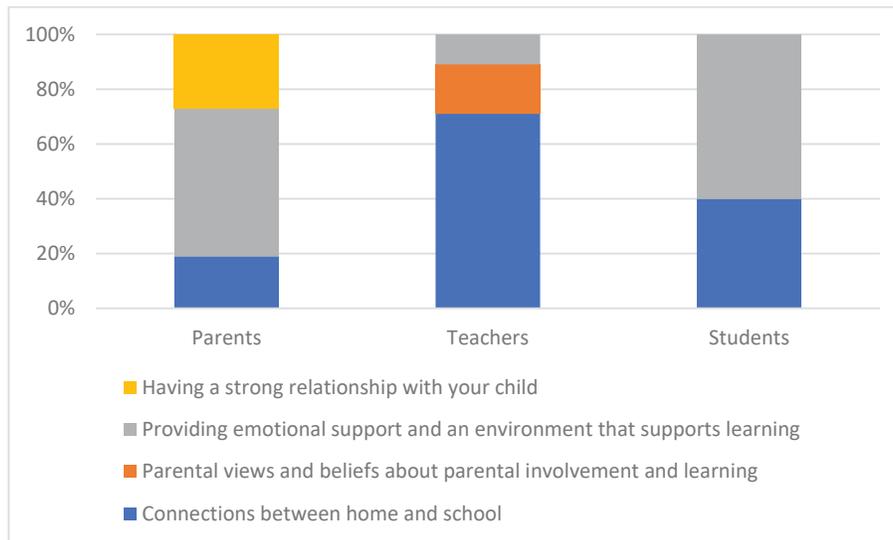


Figure 11: What do you love most about parental involvement?

Teachers

Teacher interviewees most frequently mentioned parental connections to school as the preferred component of 'parental involvement in learning' with actions like completing homework, helping at events mentioned by participants. A focus of this category was parents' valuing teacher's professional knowledge. As a participant explained,

"When you have parent interviews and you say- this is what they need to work on, this is their goal, this is how you can help at home, parent's involvement is when they then actually go and do that and back you up as a teacher and support that" (T2Q1).

Students

Students interviewees appreciated the help that their parents gave them, both in learning and wider life and viewed this assistance as being the best part of their parent's involvement in their learning. As one student explained, "They are just there to help and help me do work" (S1Q1).

5.5 Impact of parental involvement on a child's learning

Questionnaire data showed that parents and teachers both rated the impact highly whereas most students rated it as slightly less important (see Figure 12). These responses were gathered by the use of a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (negative effect) to 5 (large positive difference).

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

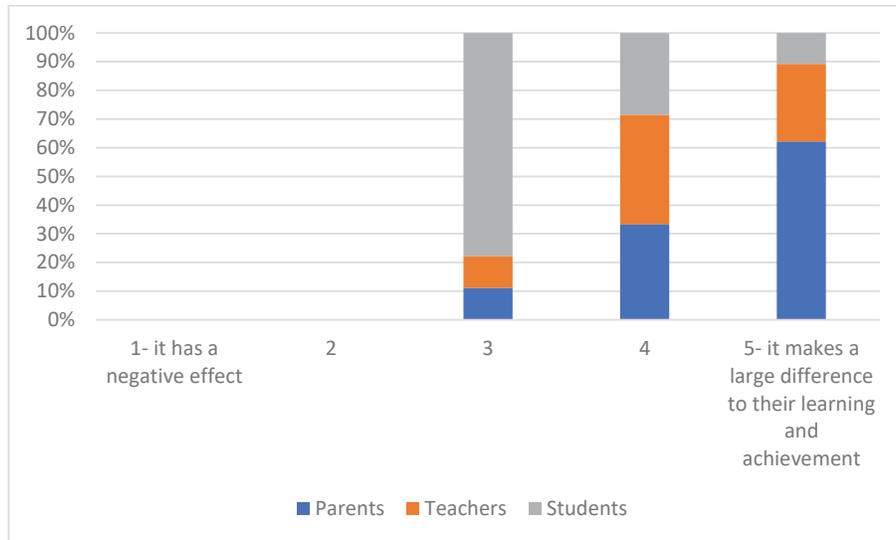


Figure 12: Importance of Parental involvement in a child's learning

5.6 Activities associated with Parental Involvement that help a child's learning

Each respondent group who completed the questionnaire was asked to select the top five examples from a provided list of activities they felt made the most difference to a child's learnings (see Figure 13). The results were consistent across groupings with a focus on activities that either supported school learning or showed the value of education (by setting goals or talking about its importance).

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

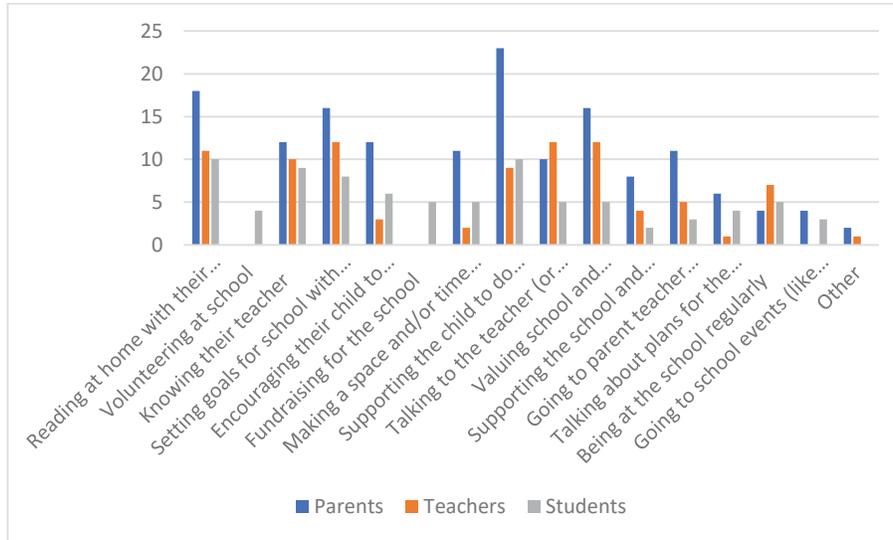


Figure 13: Top five types of Parental involvement

Parental involvement outside of school

When questionnaire respondents were asked to select the top five ways parents were involved outside of school results from all groups focused on parents spending time, doing activities and talking with their child (see Figure 14).

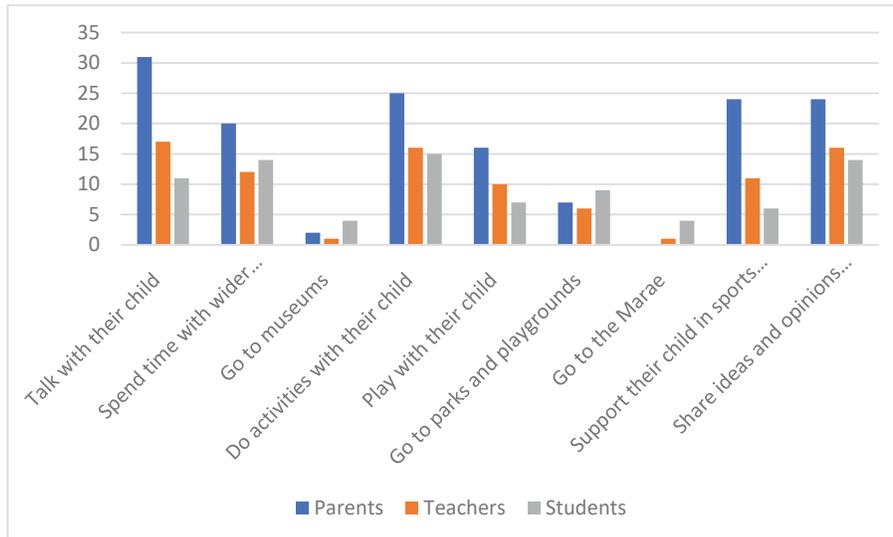


Figure 14: Top 5 types of Parental involvement out of school

5.7 Enablers for 'parental involvement in a child's learning'

A range of categories were identified from the responses to the question, "what makes it easy to become involved in a child's learning?" (see Figure 15).

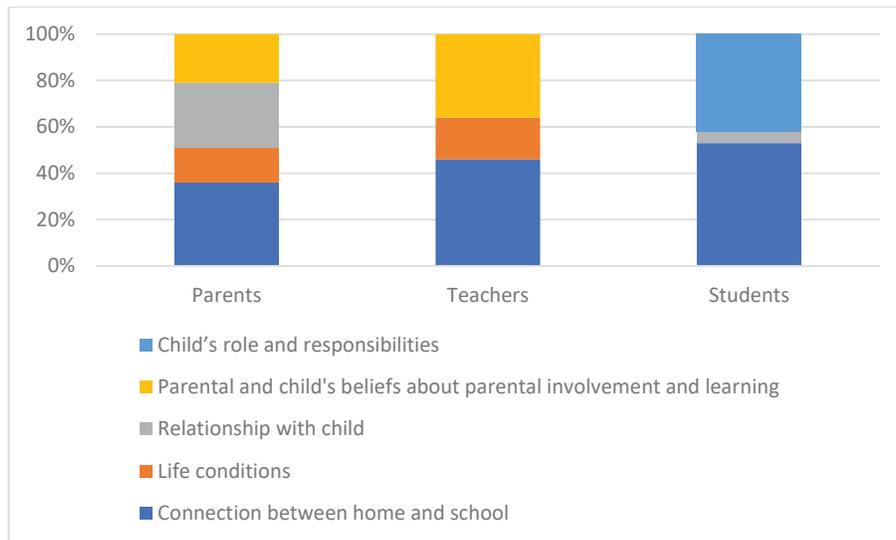


Figure 15: Enablers of parental involvement in a child's learning

Parents

Parents, teachers and students all identified the actions that support a positive relationship between home and school as the strongest enabler of parental involvement (see Figure 16). The relationship between parent and child was the next most powerful facilitator of parental involvement according to the parents in the study with comments such as "establish good relationship with your child. Have time for them and let them know that you are always there for them" (SP26Q10).

Teachers

Teachers, in contrast, felt that the parents' values and own schooling experiences were the next most positive factor. As one respondent explains, "When they want the best education for their child" (T15Q10) and another "I think there are some parents who are

intimidated by a school because of their own experiences "(IT2Q10). Whilst parents identified that their own attitudes to learning and parental involvement could positively impact their involvement, both teachers and parents viewed the child's attitude towards parental involvement in their learning as having less influence.

Students

Students also identified the connection between their parents and school as the most important but when the data were split into year groups the results were markedly different. Year Eight students identified their own role in encouraging or discouraging parental involvement as the biggest enabler of parental involvement whilst Year Six students felt that the connections between home and school were the biggest factor.

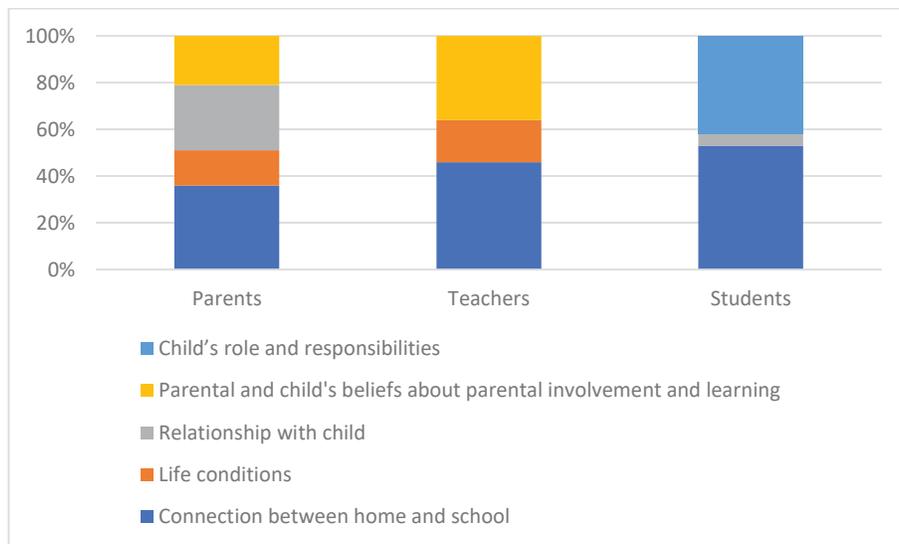


Figure 16: Enablers of parental involvement in a child's learning

5.8 Barriers for 'parental involvement in a child's learning'

Parents and teachers

Both parents and teachers identified the demands of day to day life as the biggest barrier affecting a parent's ability to become involved in their child's learning (see Figure 17). Over

three quarters of parental responses and three fifths of teacher responses related to the pressures of life, especially a lack of time and the demands of working.

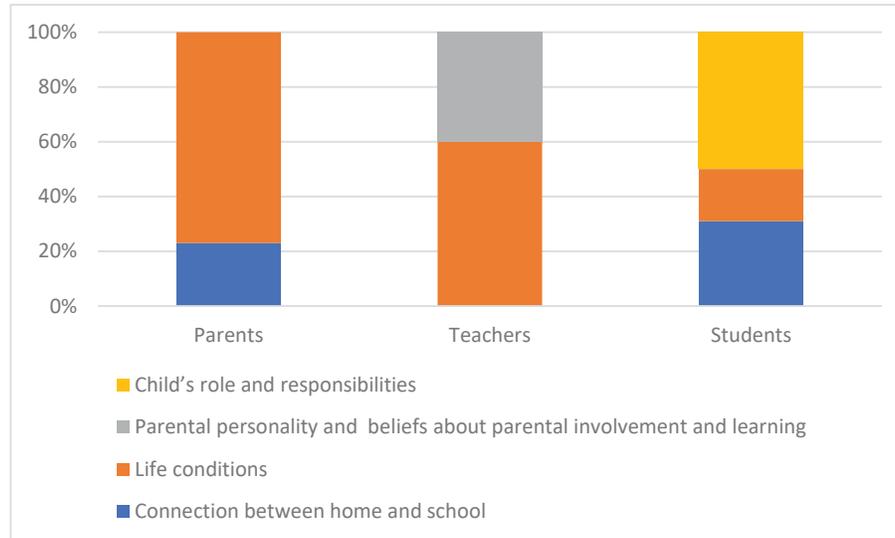


Figure 17: Barriers to parental involvement in a child's learning

Teachers

Whilst connections between home and school were a possible barrier for both parents and students, this did not emerge from the teacher data. Instead teachers identified beliefs parents held about learning and their children as obstacles to parental involvement. As one teacher explained, "if they have struggled with learning themselves. If they have had a negative experience with teachers and school" (T4Q10).

Students

Students identified their role as the most important factor creating barriers to 'parental involvement in learning'. One student described their role as, "Me not asking for help and not sharing my work or my achievements" (S8Q11). This result was markedly different once analysed in year groups (see Figure 18). Year Six students felt that the day to day life conditions were the biggest impact on their parent's ability to become involved whilst Year

Eight students put the responsibility on their own shoulders as one student explains, "If I don't tell them about what I'm learning" (SS10Q9).

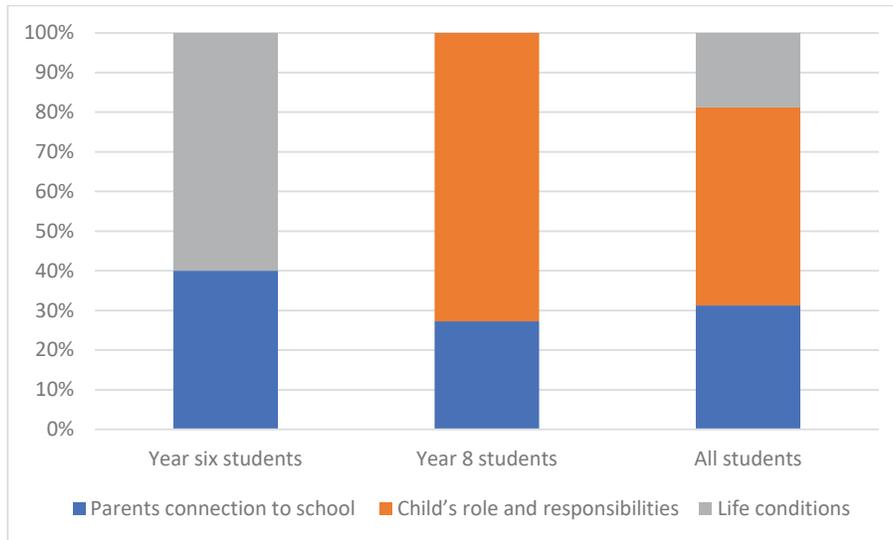


Figure 18: Enablers for parental involvement. Students.

5.9 Definitions of learning

When participants were asked during interviews to define learning, each respondent group expressed varying understandings about learning (see Figure 19).

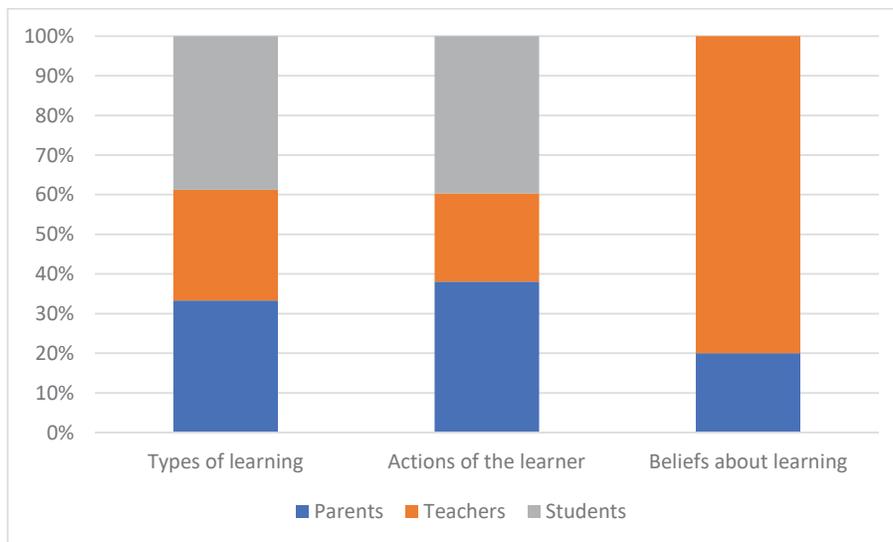


Figure 19: What is learning?

Parents

Parents focused their definition of learning on the actions of the learner and how this changed their knowledge base. One parent described it as, "learning can take many forms but they have, if you like, something has changed in their wiring in their brain, something has a realisation of something that is new." (P11Q3). The largest code from the parental data was learning that is wider than formal or school based learning "Learning is done every day. It's done by different ways. It's not just sitting in front of a teacher being told how to do a science experiment. It's actually, that's only part of learning" (P9Q3).

Teachers

Interviewed teachers explained learning in a variety of terms with little consistency amongst the definitions. Learning categories ranged from the actions a learner undertook while learning, "learning is always questioning really" (T3Q3) to a focus on learning wider than school based learning,

"So, you know from the smallest thing like taking your shoes off and putting them in the right space to learning to read your first book to learning how to ask for something and share. It's really... its, there's opportunities all the time wherever you are, whoever you are, whoever you are with." (T6Q3)

to beliefs about learning "It's done wherever, with whoever, about whatever" (T6Q3).

Students

Students interviewees were evenly split between a definition of learning that focused on school driven learning "Maths, writing, reading" (SFGQ3), and one that focused on the actions of the learner "Putting things into our brains" (SFGQ3).

5.10 Purpose of learning

Preparing for the future and personal growth were seen by all three groups of

interviewees as the main purpose of learning.

Parents

Becoming well rounded people and continuing to grow and develop were important codes for parents, as participant twelve describes "it's growing yourself so you have enough to give. It would be so you can then give knowledge, give time, give your energy and wisdom" (P12Q4).

Teachers

Teachers identified personal growth as the main purpose of learning followed closely by preparing children for the future. As one teacher described it the purpose of learning is "growth not only intellectually, but also physically, managing themselves, learning is the whole gamut." (T3Q4)

Students

When interviewed students saw the purpose of learning as predominantly being a way to prepare oneself for their adult life and future. As one student explained the function of learning was "to get a good education, to get a good job, to get a good life" (SFGQ4).

5.11 Role of teachers, students and parents in a child's learning

Role of teachers and schools

Interviewed parents, teachers and students were unified in their belief that the classroom role and especially the delivery of the formal curriculum, was the main responsibility of schools and teachers in a child's learning. As one parent explained, "but then as far as the educational side I trust them to cover the bases of the maths, English and whatever they're going to need for their next stage" (P7Q5). Teachers knowing their students was also identified by parents as an important component of the teacher's role, "I just think it's

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

good if they, well I guess you get to know every individual kid if you have them long enough. Highs and lows and what they're better at and what they're not." (P5Q5).

Role of parents in a child's learning

Parents, teachers and students all described a parent's role in a child's learning as creating the kind of environment where a child feels supported and where learning is encouraged.

As one parent explained,

"To assist them at home, it shouldn't be defined as homework but there's nothing wrong with you taking your child along to the supermarket and doing maths or reading out road signs as your walking down the street or driving down the car, getting them to look at a map, this is where we are, where we have to go, work it out, how's long's it going to take us?" (P9Q6)

This definition is followed closely by having strong connections with their child's school through effective communication and support at home for learning set by school, "That's my role- learning and making sure that he has got the homework and the teaching that he needs to be learning from the teacher" (P6Q6).

Teachers view

The interviewed teachers identified providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning as the main role of parents in a child's learning. As one teacher explained,

"So, parents just need to, the key thing is they shouldn't look at it as supporting their formal learning, its giving them life skills, making them laugh that's really all it is. I think sometimes you get bogged down- oh I've got to help them with their formal learning times table etc" (T5Q6)

Encouraging and valuing learning was also seen by teachers as an important part of a parent's role,

"I think the parent's responsibility is modelling to kids how they should be looking at their learning. If a parent can show their kids that learning is fun and the value of learning, where it can get them and what it can help with-if a

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

parent can show them that it reinforces it for us at home." (T1Q6)

Students view

When interviewed, students identified the provision of an environment that supported both them and their learning as the most important role of a parent. As a focus group extract explained "To help you, to encourage you, make you do your homework, encourage you to do your work keep you focused, need to be more on to it- both of us." (FGQ6).

Role of children in their learning

Parents view

Parents felt that children needed to have a positive attitude towards their own learning, be interested and want to learn. As one parent described it,

"I want my child, my children, to learn, to listen, to learn and to grow into good human beings really so their role is to learn as much as they can and take on board as much as they can at school. Be ready to receive it" (PFGQ7)

Parents also wanted their children to develop into learners who took ownership over their learning by becoming responsible, self-managing and self-motivated:

"They have to, have to enjoy it and if they enjoy it they start to manage it themselves. They shouldn't be just told all the time, "you need to do this, you need to do this, you need to do this" (P11Q7).

Teachers view

Taking ownership over their learning was identified by the interviewed teachers as the primary role of a child in their own learning. As one teacher explained,

"Their role is to also lead their learning- what do they want to learn and go down that track. So, for an inquiry they get to choose what they want to choose, its them leading it, not me, they have to come up with what do they want to learn" (T2Q7).

Students view

Students interviewees identified the behaviours they exhibit as indicators of responsible learning. Focusing and managing their learning were important to the students, "To listen, focus, not muck around, help ourselves" (SFGQ6).

5.12 Barriers to teacher encouragement of parental involvement.

Teachers were asked in the questionnaire to identify the barriers that hinder their encouragement of parental involvement in the learning of the children they teach. Teachers identified the views and beliefs that they felt parents held about involvement and learning as the main barrier (see Figure 20). Parental beliefs about learning and schooling were perceived by teachers as the biggest obstacle. One teacher illustrated the point in this way, "a belief by some parents that all the child learning happens at school and the parent does not have to support/ reinforce learning at home" (ST1Q12). As displayed in Figure 20, teachers recognised the impact the life conditions of parents had on their ability to encourage parents to become involved. The third factor related to connections between home and school.

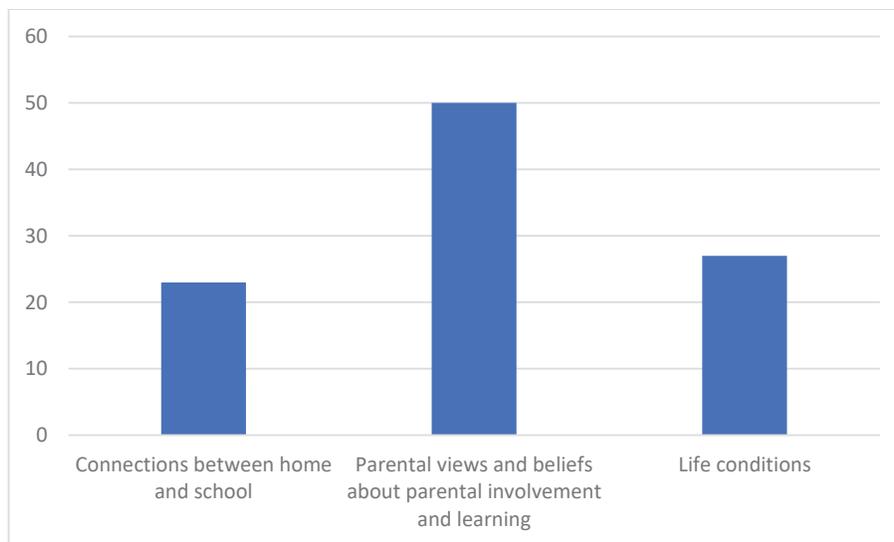


Figure 20: "what makes it hard to encourage 'parental involvement in a child's learning'"

5.13 What makes it easy for teachers to encourage parental involvement?

Teachers identified connections between home and school as the most powerful enabler of their encouragement of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' (see Figure 21). One teacher explained the connection as, "when the teacher has a good relationship with the parents" (ST20Q13). Relationships and communication between parents and school were important factors in whether teachers felt able to encourage parents to become involved. One teacher explained it as, "positive relationships. Fluent and frequent communication" (ST13Q13).

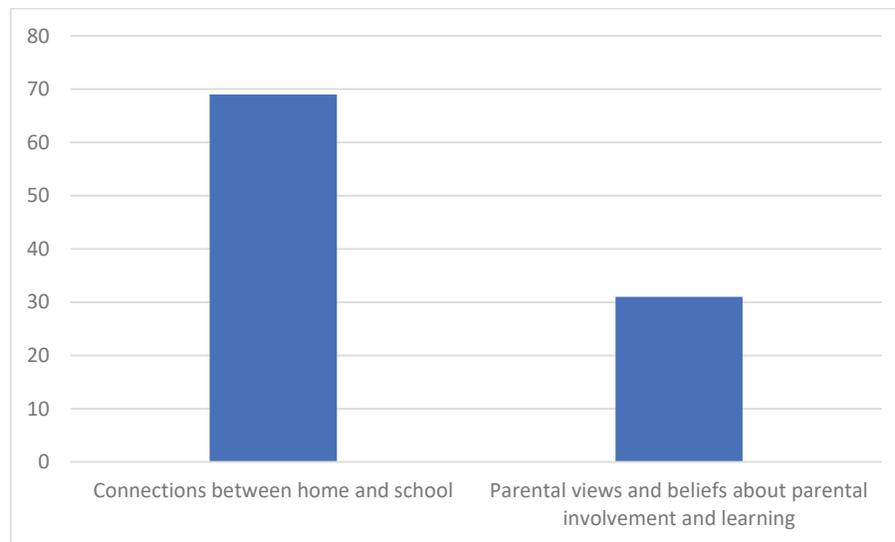


Figure 21: What makes it easy to encourage parental involvement

5.14 Dream example of 'parental involvement in a child's learning'

Parents, teachers and students

When asked to imagine their dream vision of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' (in a world with no barriers or impediments) interviewed parents, teachers and students all dreamt of parents becoming more involved in the school.

Teachers

Teachers described a dream image of parental involvement as one that was centred around parents' regular physical presence in the school and improved connections between home and school.

"I know as a teacher that if you see a parent they become foremost in their mind but if you don't see a parent well, if you see a parent and see they are interested you think- ohh yeah and you take more an interest maybe cos you see that they are putting themselves out." (T3Q8)

Parents

Parents also dreamt of both their children and the school they attend being more open to parental involvement at intermediate and high school,

"Now at high school, they don't- I'll say- "oh I'll come watch"- "NO!" they don't even want you to come and watch and I don't actually know if there are any parents who do go.... I'd still like to go and support the but maybe they get to that stage where they're embarrassed, too cool. You don't take your kids to high school so even [named child] at Highschool [named school] you don't even get to meet their teacher" (P5Q8).

5.15 Barriers to the dream

The demands of day to day life were identified by interviewed parents, teachers and students as having the biggest impact on the actuality of the dream occurring (see Figure 22).

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

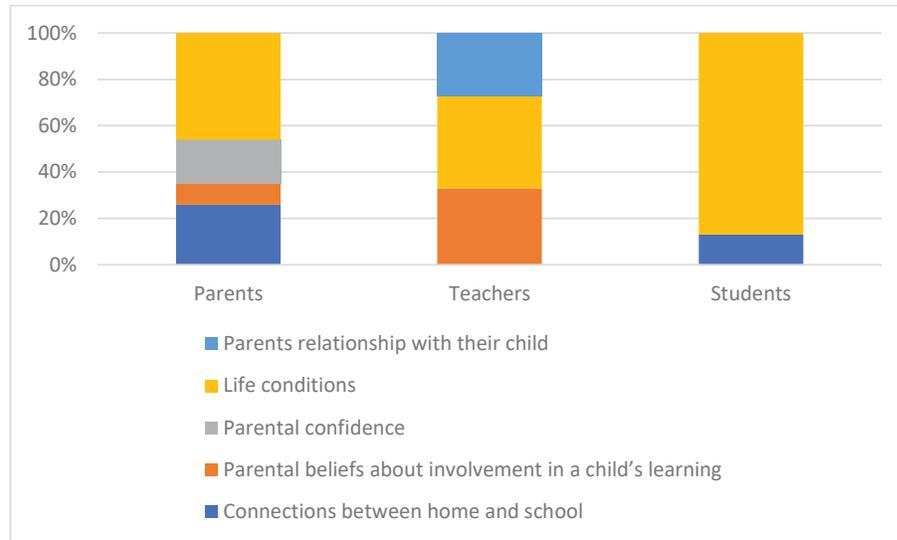


Figure 22: Barriers to the dream

Parents

A lack of time and unsuitable work hours were barriers to parents becoming involved. As a parent explained,

“It means I don’t spend a lot of time in the school. I don’t have a lot of contact with the teachers and therefore I don’t really know, to be honest, in depth, what they’re doing to be able to support them” (P11Q9).

Some of the interviewed parents also felt that the classroom was closed to them and that their involvement at school was narrowed to joining school trips,

“I don’t think we have a culture that encourages that interaction at all other than field trips or maybe when they need someone or extra bodies. So, I think that is something that we could certainly work on. I know that its idealism as so many of us do work ... but that whole thing of actually- if you want to drop into the class for an hour- do it- we don’t really have that culture” (P7Q9).

Teachers

In contrast, teachers identified parental beliefs about a child's learning as a barrier. One teacher explained her perspective:

“One- the parents don’t see a value in education. That’s a big thing. I think the parents, I’m not sure why they don’t see a value in it but you can definitely tell that they, I don’t want to say they don’t care but that’s probably

accurate, they don't because if they did they would be here or answering the phone" (T1Q8).

5.16 What needs to change to make the dream possible?

Parents and teachers both held the other party accountable for making the changes needed to make their dream image of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' a reality (see Figure 23). Neither party held themselves accountable for this change.

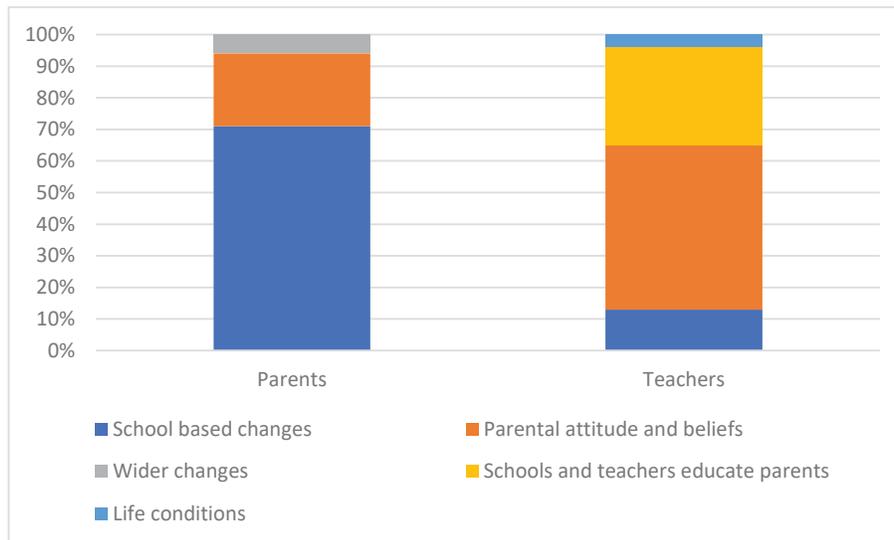


Figure 23: Changes needed for the dream to occur

Parents

When interviewed, parents felt the schools had the power to make the biggest impact on the dream image of parental involvement occurring. Parents identified a desire to have more information and guidance from the school about how they could be involved in their child's learning,

"It's great to be able to say at parent teacher interviews this is where they're at and encourage them to do more- but without any structure around it, it makes it easy to let it slide- from all the best intentions on doing the work from a parent who's well educated and studies- it just slides in the busyness of life but when there's a book and you've got to sign on the line... so it's

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

easier if school send home books" (P7Q10).

Teachers

When interviewed, teachers did not identify any changes they themselves needed to make to create the dream version of parental involvement. Instead they focused on changes parents could make and ways that schools educate parents about this. Teachers identified a change in parental beliefs and attitude towards 'parental involvement in a child's learning' as being the biggest area of change needed for their dream to be reached,

"they see it separate. Their parents are busy and I think parents don't want to help them and it's not cos parents don't love them ... but some parents see school as you go to school from 9-3 and that's it you're done and they don't want to give the time. You should have done all your learning in that time is their mentality. (T2Q9)

Teachers also identified a need for schools to educate parents about the impact of parental involvement on a child's learning. One teacher explains,

"So, the first thing we need to do is make it relevant for the parents- how is this help them and help their child. If we can change their mindset on that and get them to really value it then I think you would see a lot of changes" (T1Q9).

5.17 Chapter Summary

This study set out to explore:

- How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?
- What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

Data analysis revealed that the parents, senior primary students and teachers involved in

this study understood and conceived of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' differently. The crux of these differences were the varying conceptions about learning each group held. These differences affected the expectations each group had for each other and also how their actions were perceived.

What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

Parents, teachers and students understood the restrictive impact the day to day life conditions of parents had on a parent's involvement in their child's learning. Despite this unanimity parents and teachers deemed the other partly responsible for the creation of barriers. A range of changes were suggested by all groups with schools being allocated a prominent role in the promotion of 'parental involvement in a child's learning'.

The discussion chapter will examine key findings from this research in more depth and explore links to research literature. It will identify the implications of differing conceptions of learning and how this variation impacts parental involvement and the relationships between home and school. The Discussion chapter examines where the findings of this study supports or differs from research literature.

6. Discussion

'Parental involvement in a child's learning' has long been promulgated by experts and governments as an important factor in a child's academic success but the gap between the rhetoric and practice in schools is wide (Crozier, 2000; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). Parental involvement is a complex and diverse process that is understood differently by those involved (Crozier, 2000; Lareau & Muñoz, 2012).

The phrase 'parental involvement in a child's learning' was used in this study to describe the actions parents take to support their child and their learning. This phrase covers a range of terms that are used to describe these actions in both practice and research, including whānau connections, home-school partnerships, 'parental engagement in learning' to name a few (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Goodall, 2013; Herrell, 2011; McKinley, 2000; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Monroy Ochoa, 2011).

Although 'parental involvement in a child's learning' is referred to in a variety of terms its definition is generally one that is set, defined and controlled by the school (Crozier, 2000; Durie, 2006; Goodall, 2013; Herrell, 2011; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; McKinley, 2000; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Monroy Ochoa, 2011; Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011; Schnee & Bose, 2010).

This study examined the differing perceptions parents, teachers and senior students at three New Zealand primary schools had about 'parental involvement in learning'. Although this was a small research study these results reflect many of the issues raised in current research and produces more questions and possible areas for future study.

This chapter will discuss the study findings in relation to research literature. The main areas to be discussed are: differing perceptions about 'parental involvement in learning',

parental and school barriers, enablers, and suggestions for practice and future research (see Figure 24).

Research Question	Themes	Sub-themes
How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?	Differing perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement versus engagement • Creation of an environment that support both the child and their learning
What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?	Parental factors influencing parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental role construction • Views about learning
	School factors influencing parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficit thinking • Valuing what is seen • Language and deficit thinking • Power dynamics • Protection
	Enablers for parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking ownership for making a change • A move towards 'parental engagement in learning' • Advice and guidance • Students • Communication

Figure 24: Themes and sub-themes

6.1 Differing perceptions

Research shows that each group involved in a child's learning (parents, teachers and students) define their role and the associated actions (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Goodall, 2013; Harris & Goodall, 2008). This variance in beliefs arises from each group holding different goals for the children involved. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) explain, "the PI rhetoric that exists is not merely a function of a simplistic desire to benefit children, but

also the result of these differing and sometimes opposing goals and agendas "(p.44).

The current study reflects this difference and highlights how teachers, parents and senior primary students viewed 'parental involvement in learning'. The results support Harris and Goodall's findings (2008) that teachers generally define parental involvement as the reinforcing of the teacher's practice and school expectations at home. Teachers in the study held distinctive views of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' compared to parents and students. Their definition was one that revolved around a parent's presence at school, support of school learning, actions seen by teachers and a conception of learning that was based on the formal curriculum teachers delivered to students.

In comparison, parents in the study valued creating a supportive learning environment for their child as an action of parental involvement. This finding supports published research that highlighted a parent's focus on the overall support for a child, not one just based on schooling (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). The actions described by parents in the study focused on offering of learning wider than that which is given at school, encouraging and supporting a child's learning and creating a home where learning is valued and promoted. Results from the students in the study showed that they too felt these were important components of parental involvement in their learning.

6.2 Involvement versus engagement

Whilst 'parental involvement in a child's learning' has been shown to positively impact on children's achievement and progress (Epstein et al., 2002; Fan & Williams, 2009; Herrell, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014), parents engaging with their child's learning is increasingly identified as having the largest impact on student's learning and achievement (Eagle, 1989; Fan & Williams, 2009; Goodall, 2013, Harris & Goodall, 2008; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Goodall and Montgomery (2013) describe a continuum of involvement to engagement that contains three levels- parental involvement with the school, parental involvement with schooling and 'parental engagement in learning'. This continuum moves from parental actions that are predominately focused on connecting with the school to parents fully engaging in their child's learning, reflecting a shift in power and agency from the school to the parent. Actions that parents undertake to become engaged in a child's learning focus on the many behaviours that create an environment that supports learning- the setting of goals, making time and space for study, talking about the future and valuing education (Clinton, & Hattie, 2013; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Goodall, 2013; Harris & Goodall 2008; Hartas, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

The results of the current study reflected how each group's definition of parental involvement was at different stages of Goodall and Montgomery's continuum. In this study, teachers focused their definition on 'parental involvement in school' (the first stage of involvement) whereas parents and students identified actions that are best described as 'parental engagement in learning'- the third stage according to Goodall & Montgomery, (2013). Defining parental involvement as actions that focus on involvement with the school by teachers in the study, ensured that the locus of power and authority in the home-school relationship remained with the school. At the lowest stage of the continuum the focus is on schools 'informing' parents of their child's learning and learning needs, and communications and actions are driven by the school. It is a relationship judged on the seen rather than unseen, where actions that occur in engagement in learning are often not valued or acknowledged (Schnee & Bose, 2010). This dynamic creates tensions in the home school relationship and excludes many parents and parental actions.

6.3 Creation of an environment that support both the child and their learning

Research, both nationally and internationally, reflects the importance and impact of 'parental engagement in learning', especially the creation of an environment that supports the child and their learning. This action has the largest impact on a child's achievement regardless of race or socio-economic status (Clinton, & Hattie, 2013; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Goodall, 2013; Harris & Goodall 2008; Hartas, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Hartas (2015) and Goodall (2013), identified the creation of a home that actively encourages and values learning as a crucial action of 'parental involvement in a child's learning'. It is an action that all parents can undertake regardless of previous educational experience, connection with the school or knowledge of the curriculum. Instead of a narrow focus on the teaching of numeracy and literacy skills (which some parents find challenging) it is the broadening of students' view of the world, the discussion of life goals, the development of critical thought and love of learning that parents can provide which has a real impact on their child's educational success (Hartas, 2015; Goodall, 2013).

The results of this study show that parents and students place large importance on this component of parental involvement (engagement with learning) whilst the teacher's definition is located solely in the realm of involvement with the school. Valuing and supporting of learning in the home are actions parents can take without being involved in the school, removing many barriers that limit parental involvement such as work hours, previous parental school experiences or a perceived lack of parental ability. In contrast, valuing connections between home and school by teachers ensures schools retain the role of expert and disseminator of information in the home school relationship. Teachers'

current valuing of actions seen and valued by the school creates misconceptions amongst teachers about the level of involvement parents truly have in their child's learning and results in a discourse of disinterested and disengaged parents amongst teachers (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Durie, 2006; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lightfoot, 2004).

6.4 Parental factors influencing parental involvement

Parental role construction

Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) describe parental role construction as "parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the patterns of parental behaviour that follow those beliefs" (p.107). The current study highlights the impact that both teachers and parents felt this construction had on a parent's ability to become involved in their child's learning. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) found that when parents believe that intelligence is fixed and born out of luck or genetics they are less likely to value being involved in their child's learning. Parents in the study showed that their own beliefs about their ability to help their children impacted on the level of parental involvement. Parents in the study also identified, in both interviews and questionnaires, that their confidence had been impacted by what they describe as the new ways of teaching. They now feared teaching their child incorrectly,

"They [children] ask us to help them and we're showing them how we're doing it and we're being told we are wrong. When in actual fact we're not wrong it's how we were taught and if teachers are saying that the way mum and dad are doing it is wrong, teachers need a slap on the hand" (P9Q1).

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) and Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) found that parents who lack confidence in their own ability to help their children learn. perceive themselves to lack self-efficacy (the ability to succeed and make the desired impact). Low levels of efficacy

often lead to parents avoiding contact with school as they feel that they have little to offer that is of benefit to their child. This lack of contact does not mean that they do not value being involved in their child's education, rather that they are making a conscious decision to avoid actions that would be detrimental to their child's learning (Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). The current study adds to the research by showing that both teachers and parents acknowledge the impact of parental role construction, but also highlights the impact that schools can have on this construction.

Views about learning

Both McLean (2001) and Hager (2004) identified that the beliefs about who is responsible for a child's education influences 'parental involvement in a child's learning'. If learning is defined as schooling or the acquisition of knowledge that is imparted by an expert, then the responsibility for learning remains with the expert-the trained teacher (McLean, 2001; Hager, 2004). The current study highlights the different concepts of learning held by the teachers (school-based) and parents (broader, life learning). Interestingly it is the teachers in this study who base their conceptions of learning as that revolving around formal education. Parents indicate a valuing of learning that is wider than school based where as teachers in this study consistently focused on the formal curriculum and learning defined by school. This view of learning allows the locus of power to remain with the educational institution and its staff (who are trained in delivering this curriculum). This belief, as identified by a range of researchers including Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) and Hornby and Lafaele, (2011), shifts responsibility and ownership of learning to the school rather than parents, who may view their role as one of providing for their child and ensuring they attend school.

If learning is based around schooling then the parents' perceived academic abilities, or lack

thereof, can be a large barrier to involvement in their child's learning. If schooling is viewed as a part of learning then teachers only provide a small component of this and the power and expertise is shared with parents (Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). In this study participating teachers viewed learning as schooling with the expertise and knowledge remaining in their hands whereas the parent's conception of learning was that formal education is only a component of learning. These differences in beliefs can create misconceptions, and power differentials in the parent- teacher relationship.

6.5 School factors influencing parental involvement

Schools have long been identified as possible enablers or barriers to 'parental involvement in learning'. There is a wealth of research on school based factors that affect parental involvement (Bishop et al, 2003; Clinton, Hattie & Dixon, 2007; Lareau, 1992; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Muñoz, 2012; Schnee & Bose, 2010) and many have been discussed in more detail in the literature review earlier in this thesis. This study reinforces many of those findings and highlights the beliefs that teachers in the study hold that impact directly on parental involvement.

Deficit thinking

Teacher definitions of parental involvement in this study revolved around parents' presence at school, support for school learning, parental actions seen by teachers and as discussed above, a conception of learning that was based on the formal curriculum learning teachers delivered to students. This narrow definition reflects the findings of earlier studies and creates a discourse amongst teachers of disengaged, disinterested parents who 'do not care' about their child's education and learning (Crozier, 2000; Education Review Office, 2015; Goodall, 2013; Hartas, 2015; Herrell, 2011; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Bishop et al (2003)

found that these beliefs often engender a feeling of helplessness amongst teachers placing them in non-agentic roles where they feel powerless to change parental attitudes. This belief leads to their own attitude towards parents becoming increasingly negative. These findings were reflected in the comments made by teachers in this study about a perceived lack of care or interest parents held for their child's learning and their child in general. Yet, parents in this study cared deeply for their child and their learning.

Hartas (2015) examined 'parental involvement in a child's learning' at age five and age fifteen in seven OECD countries and found that New Zealand parents were either first or second in almost all forms of parental involvement. The current study supports those findings with all groups rating the impact of parental involvement highly with the interviews of parents showing a parental passion for being involved in their child's learning. The results from Hartas' research and the data from this study, highlight that teacher beliefs about parental valuing of being involved in their child's learning are often mistaken.

Valuing what is seen

Often this negative perception is created by teachers judging parental involvement as actions that they can see parents undertake at the school. This study aligns to research literature that shows that schools define a limited range of parental involvement behaviours that are deemed acceptable and 'normal' while excluding and invalidating many others (Bishop et al, 2003; McDowall, & Schaughency, 2016; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Comments from teachers in the study about why parents are involved and what makes it easy for them to be involved included, "They actually care about their children" (T5Q10,) "When they care. When they are interested." (T4Q10) and "Well, probably the biggest thing I appreciate when you can see that they care" (T1Q1).

These judgements are based on what teachers see at school and precludes many actions and choices parents make for their children at home. Lareau (1992) and other writers, describe this definition as a predominantly white middle class construct that emphasises the importance of the school and activities revolving around it, while excluding many interpersonal actions that support learning in the home (Crozier, 2000; Goodall, 2013; Goodall & Montgomery, 2013; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Olivas, Jimenez-Castellanos & Monroy Ochoa, 2012; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). The current study showed that parents who were regularly seen at school by teachers were often judged to be more engaged and 'better' parents but, as McDowall, & Schaugency (2016) found, this perception is not always accurate. As Goodall (2013) described, the teachers in this study and in wider education, may just be seeing parents who feel comfortable at school as their social capital most closely matches the dominant culture of the school.

Language and deficit thinking

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.4) language is a powerful factor that shapes our creation of meaning (Lightfoot, 2004). In this study teachers tended to speak in a frustrated and somewhat negative manner about parents. Judgements were made about the level of care parents felt for their children and their perceived motives behind their actions. This deficit thinking can affect the relationship between parent and teacher and influence how a teacher interacts with parents when they do meet.

As Bishop et al (2003) discusses, this deficit thinking can result in teachers growing frustrated at a perceived lack of parental interest and reaching out less to parents, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of disengaged and disinterested parents. Schnee & Bose (2010) describe this narrow construct of parental involvement, that is based on the 'seen', as nullifying many parental actions and creating incorrect perceptions amongst teachers

about the choices that parents make to support their child's learning. This construct is further evidenced by the current study's findings and highlights that this view introduces tension into the relationship between parents and school.

Power dynamics

Parents and teachers are working in a school system very different from the one they experienced as children, where each of their roles and what is expected of them has radically altered from their childhood. Addi-Racah and Arviv-Elyashiv (2008) describe politics and policy changes as impacting on schools and education with neo liberal marketisation policies creating a client- consumer relationship between parents and teachers. Crozier (2000) adds that this shift has combined with a policy of 'self-helpism' where, in times of financial hardship, governments decrease cost by providing information and resources to families enabling them to take more responsibility for areas like health and education. This development of citizen expertise and assumption of professional knowledge creates tension in the teacher-parent dynamic resulting in teacher actions and practices being placed under increased scrutiny while increased involvement is expected of parents (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Crozier, 2000; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011; Whyte & Karabon, 2016).

This tension was evident in this study with teachers feeling conflicted about whether parents were sufficiently involved (failing as the 'expert parent') or were too involved (the demanding consumer). Parents and students were very aware that there were boundaries around their presence at school or in the classroom. One student asked "Are they even allowed to come to your school? Are they allowed to sit in your class and sit next to you?" (SFGQ7). These findings highlight the confusion amongst the three groups (parents, students and teachers) about the roles and responsibility each of them play in supporting a

child's learning.

Protection

As discussed in the literature review, both nationally and internationally, research reveals that teachers are working in an era where overt criticism of teachers and schools is common, assessment data are publicised, and parents have increased choice over where they school their children. This uncertain environment leads to teachers feeling the need to protect their professional standing and reputation (Crozier, 2000; Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). This 'protective' belief leads to teachers feeling that they should be viewed as the trained professional who, therefore, has more voice and power in the learning process than parents (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008). Although this belief helps to protect teachers from criticism or attack, Crozier (2000) argues that it also creates distance in the parent teacher relationship, between 'expert' and 'consumer'. Such distance and misunderstanding of each party's role was evident in this study where teachers developed strategies to protect their professional standing in order to manage challenging parents.

One interviewed teacher explained the tension:

"We also have seesaw (an educational app)-which is new.... I had one parent that wasn't on board and I reminded her- cos she was a parent who always wants to come in "I want to watch you teach" and I'm like, well actually we've got see-saw and I'll send you work....So hopefully that will help sort her out.. and I hooked her cos I thought I need her off my back and this was good way of doing it." (T3Q2)

Parents too, were often aware of this distancing by teachers and understood that helping in school activities was preferred to in class assistance. As one parent explained,

"I have liked the time where I have been able to interact with the school- things like being in the classroom- often it's just school trips but I would like

the opportunity at primary school age group to interact more but often there's a bit of perception that this is our space don't come in here. ... I don't think we have a culture that encourages that interaction at all other than field trips or maybe when they need someone or extra bodies." (P7Q6).

The views expressed by teachers in this study raises questions about why teachers may hold negative feelings towards both parents and parental involvement.

Behaviours that created a distance between parent and teacher, and home and school, were often used by teachers to help maintain- their professional standing. A possible contributor to this distancing between home and school may be the increasing public accountability teachers experience, due to standardised testing and league tables, and the effects of school choice adding pressure and increasing work load on already over stretched professionals (Crozier, 2000; Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011).

6.6 Enablers for parental involvement

Supporting a child's learning is a task shared amongst teachers, parents and students but it is one where schools have the power to create the most change for the better. As the New Zealand Office of the Auditor General (2015) describes "the balance of responsibility resides with the school" (p.4) and the current study identifies some strategies that could be utilised to move from a paradigm based on 'parental involvement in school' to one that focuses on 'parental engagement in learning'. These strategies will be discussed in more detail below.

Taking ownership for making a change

For parental involvement to occur in a child's learning all groups need to come to understand that they each have a role to play in its success or failure. Whilst both parents and students acknowledged schools could create impediments to parental

involvement, teachers in the study did not identify the school as creating any obstacles. Teachers instead identified the parent's personality and values as the second biggest factor that could impede parental involvement, reflecting other research such as Durie (2006) and Bishop et al (2003). Once teachers can see the positive AND negative influence they have on parental involvement in their schools they have the potential to modify or adapt their practice. This change of view positions them in a more agentic role to make a positive change to the home school dynamic.

A move towards 'parental engagement in learning'

The understanding that schools and teachers can positively or negatively impact parental involvement allows for the development of a relationship that moves away from one based on 'teacher knows best' and 'parents don't care' towards one focused on the learning of the child (Education Review Office, 2015). As ERO recommended (2015) schools and families need to move to a relationship based on mahi-tahi, a deliberate reciprocal relationship focused on improving student achievement. This change in relationship also reflects a shift from 'parental involvement in schooling' to 'parental engagement in learning'. There are some simple actions the studied groups identified that could aid with this movement.

Advice and guidance

Parents in this study were clear that they would like support and guidance from the school to help them be involved in their child's learning. Many spoke of a lack of confidence, uncertainty about how to best support their child and a fear of 'doing it wrong'. They were concerned with matching the expectation and 'way of doing things' that the school expected and sometimes chose to avoid helping their child to

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning ensure that they did not negatively impact their child's learning. Schools could help bolster parental confidence by sending home specific suggestions for parental involvement, rather than generic ideas like "practice basic facts" that a parent could choose to utilise if they wished. Notices in newsletters or notices about the impact parents can make by creating an environment that supports learning would also allow parents to see that teachers value these unseen actions.

Students

Students in this study appreciated their parent's involvement in both their learning and school. This valuing of parental involvement by students at both stages in primary schooling highlights an often un-tapped asset that schools could use to bridge the current divide between home and school (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Crozier, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Invitations and prompts from students connect to a parent's desire to support and encourage their children and are a powerful tool that could be harnessed more by both teachers and schools (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Communication

In both interviews and questionnaire data parents expressed a desire to be involved in their child's learning and to communicate with their child's school. Once the definition of parental involvement in a child's learning is widened to value those actions that occur out of school, communication will be a crucial tool to empower parents. Too often communication is used as a one-way tool where a school shares its message with parents with no right of reply (Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011). When communication becomes truly multi-directional, relationships are created where the knowledge of both parties is acknowledged and valued. The use of technology to create

these collaborative discussions could provide a vehicle for those parents who are unable or unwilling to come into the school to build the connection with their child's teacher and school.

6.7 Summary

The findings of this research resulted in convergent data for each group across the different sites of study and the two stages of research (quantitative and qualitative stages).

The findings aligned with much of the research literature about the differing beliefs each group held about 'parental involvement in a child's learning' and the effects of power, judgement, school expectation and parental role construct.

This research study also added to the research literature on parental involvement. It contributed to research about differing definitions of 'parental involvement in a child's learning' by explaining how parents, senior primary students and teachers in this New Zealand study understood it. The research also discovered that these differences centred around different notions of learning which had a large impact on how each group defined parental involvement. The study also contributed to the research on school created barriers by finding that teachers in the study were only able to identify the school as an enabler of change for parental involvement and never a barrier, impacting their awareness of the effect of their own actions. The study also contributed to the research on parental role construct as it found that the fear of teaching their child 'wrong' (as judged by the school) has caused some families to disengage from their child's learning.

The next chapter discusses how these findings could be used to move from 'parental involvement in school' to 'parental engagement in learning' and provides recommendations for practice.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Parental engagement in a child's learning has a positive impact on a child's social, academic and emotional wellbeing; yet many schools continue to operate at a level of 'parental involvement in the school' rather than 'parental engagement in learning' (Eagle, 1989; Fan & Williams, 2009; Goodall, 2013, Harris & Goodall, 2008; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). A shared vision for parental involvement and responsibilities of the groups involved (parents, students and teachers) appropriate for each school setting would reduce misunderstandings and optimise 'parental engagement in learning' (Goodall, 2013, Harris & Goodall).

This study set out to better understand the differing perceptions of parents, teachers and senior primary school students in three New Zealand schools, and to investigate;

- How do parents, teachers and senior primary students perceive 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?
- What factors do parents, teachers and senior students encounter that impact 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

The findings highlighted how differently each group understood 'parental involvement in a child's learning' and how their understandings of 'learning' impacted this. The study also found many barriers that both parents and schools experienced and sometimes created, which impacted 'parental involvement in a child's learning'

These findings could be used by school leaders to:

- help their staff uncover their implicit and explicit views about learning and parental involvement to create a school culture that values the unseen parental actions that support children's learning
- empower parents to become more involved in the home through the creation of an environment that supports and values learning
- co-create a shared vision with teachers, parents and students of 'parental engagement in learning' rather than 'involvement in school'

7.2 Recommendations for practice

Examination of beliefs

Beliefs are often tacit, and this study shows that each group held some of these tacit beliefs about learning and the role of parents, teachers and students in a child's learning. If honest and open discussion can be had in a safe environment, teachers will be able to discover their true beliefs about learning, views of parental involvement, the responsibilities of each group and what these judgements are based upon. It is only when we encounter our often-unacknowledged beliefs that we can begin to critique and evaluate them (Crozier, 2000).

Empowering parents and teachers

Open and honest discussion could empower teachers and parents to better understand their beliefs and perceptions about parental involvement and their respective roles. Opportunities to collaboratively value the learning actions parents undertake at home and at school would allow schools to empower parents in their role (Harris & Goodall). Once communities realise that it is the continuation of what

many are already doing in the home then more parents will feel able to become involved as many of the barriers have been removed (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Lareau, 1992). These changes in the home school relationships are not the sole responsibility of the school, as issues arise on both sides, but the school has the ability to make the biggest shifts in the parental involvement paradigm and to help lead their community to make a real difference for their students' learning (Office of the Auditor-General, 2015).

Involvement versus engagement

If the conception of learning held and shared by schools was widened to value more than just formal education, and actions such as talking to their child, setting goals and valuing learning were respected, then many barriers in the current parent teacher relationship would be removed. This change in focus would open pathways for a shift on the parental involvement spectrum that Goodall and Montgomery (2013) describe, from one focused on 'parental involvement in school' to 'parental engagement in learning' - the most impactful version of parental involvement. This view of 'parental engagement in learning' recognises and values the actions that happen in the home and those in the school. It shifts the locus of power from the 'experts' (school and teachers) to the parents allowing for a more balanced relationship and a deeper understanding of what each party contributes to a child's education (Bishop et al, 2003; McDowall, & Schaughency, 2016; Schnee & Bose, 2010; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

7.3 Areas of future study

Parental involvement is described and encouraged by governments internationally as an important factor in a child's educational success, yet trainee teachers receive

little, if any training about how to negotiate this complex interaction (Crozier, 2000; Lightfoot, 2004). The creation and study of a course helping student teachers to examine their own beliefs and the complex process of parenting and schooling could be beneficial. This course would allow teachers to enter the profession with a different understanding about learning and parental involvement and the role of each in this process. The effects of increased workload and public scrutiny on teachers appeared to influence their views towards both parents and parental involvement in learning. This possible connection would benefit from more exploration to investigate if there was a casual link between the two.

This research study was located in one New Zealand city and contained a small sample from three local primary schools. Conducting a similar study with a bigger sample in different geographical locations would help to overcome the limited generalizability of the study. It may also be useful to examine how decile rating may impact parental involvement as, although a range of deciles was involved in this study, the small size of the sample limits its generalisability.

7.4 Value of this research

This study added to research literature by demonstrating that the differing understandings about learning held by parents, senior primary students and teachers in this study influenced how each group understood and defined 'parental involvement in a child's learning'. These differences influenced relationships between home and school and created an often negative discourse from teachers about the involvement level of parents in their school.

This study also highlighted the lack of confidence many parents felt about helping their children in the 'right' way (as defined by the school). This study showed the consequence

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

of the locus of power remaining with the school and the effect this had on parent's confidence and feelings of self-efficacy. The review of research in this study highlighted the impact of teachers not understanding the value of learning in the home as indicators of 'parental involvement in learning' (Fan & Williams, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014; Harris & Goodall 2008; Goodall, 2013).

It is hoped that this study stimulates conversations in staffrooms and principal offices about the nature of learning and the role of parents, teachers and students. Such discussions might start a shift in staff understanding from 'parental involvement in school' towards 'parental engagement in learning'.

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Appendix A: Questionnaires

Parent questionnaire

**What is parental involvement in a child's learning?
Parent questionnaire**

My name is Caroline Transon and I am a primary school teacher who is finishing my Masters of Education this year. I am doing a study at your school so I can understand what parent/caregivers, teachers and senior students think parental involvement in learning looks like. I would love to get your thoughts and opinions about this.
Please fill in the below form by Friday 26 May and if you are completing the paper copy can you please return it to the school office and place in the box marked "Massey research" by this date.

1. What are the ages of your children?

2. What do you think parental involvement in a child's learning is?

3. What things do parents or caregivers do to be involved in a child's learning?

4. How much impact do you think parental involvement in a child's learning has on their learning?
(Mark only one oval.)

1 2 3 4 5

It has a negative effect It makes a large difference to their learning and achievement

5. What do you think is the most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to support a child in their learning?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1S-vG2j3PP3h_nYK0F1g235G6uL6iPdGgeedJ03BsdYiedt 1/4

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Parent questionnaire

6. Please tick which of these you think are examples of parental involvement in a child's learning.
Tick all that apply:

- Reading at home with their child
- Volunteering at school
- Knowing their teacher
- Setting goals for school with their child and helping the child reach them
- Encouraging their child to go to school
- Fundraising for the school
- Making a space and/or time for the child to do homework at home
- Supporting the child to do homework and helping if needed
- Talking to the teacher (or emailing/texting) about concerns
- Valuing school and education at home and talking about how important it is
- Supporting the school and teacher with behaviour concerns
- Going to parent teacher interviews
- Talking about plans for the future (including jobs or study)
- Being at the school regularly
- Going to school events (like sports, cultural or arts events)
- Other: _____

7. Please pick the top 6 items you think make the most difference to a child's learning
Tick all that apply:

- Reading at home with their child
- Volunteering at school
- Knowing their teacher
- Setting goals for school with their child and helping the child reach them
- Encouraging their child to go to school
- Fundraising for the school
- Making a space and/or time for the child to do homework at home
- Supporting the child to do homework and helping if needed
- Talking to the teacher (or emailing/texting) about concerns
- Valuing school and education at home and talking about how important it is
- Supporting the school and teacher with behaviour concerns
- Going to parent teacher interviews
- Talking about plans for the future (including jobs or study)
- Being at the school regularly
- Going to school events (like sports, cultural or arts events)
- Other: _____

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/12-vG31PP1h_nYKPF1g432G4uL6rPd2IgeadJ03BsdVed1 2/4

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Parent questionnaire

8. What do parents or caregivers do when they are involved in their child's learning outside of school?
Tick all that apply:

- Talk with their child
- Spend time with wider family and whānau
- Go to museums
- Do activities with their child
- Play with their child
- Go to parks and playgrounds
- Go to the Marae
- Support their child in sports or cultural activities (Kapa Haka, choir, music etc)
- Share ideas and opinions with their child

9. Please pick the top 6 items you think makes the most difference to a child's learning
Tick all that apply:

- Talk with their child
- Spend time with wider family and whānau
- Go to museums
- Do activities with their child
- Play with their child
- Go to parks and playgrounds
- Go to the Marae
- Support their child in sports or cultural activities (Kapa Haka, choir, music etc)
- Share ideas and opinions with their child

10. What makes it easy to become involved in your child's learning?

11. What makes it difficult to become involved in your child's learning?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13-vG53PP1h_nY0F1g88G6uL8wPd2geedJ05BndYed8 2/4

10/14/2017 What is general involvement in a child's learning? Parent questionnaire

12. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Parent focus group or individual interview.
Please fill in below if you are interested in talking more about your thoughts on parental involvement in learning.

13. Name:

14. Best way to contact you:

15. How would you like to share your thoughts?
Tick all that apply:

Focus group with other parents from your school

Individual interview

16. When would you prefer to meet?
Tick all that apply:

8.30 am

9 am

2 pm

3 pm

4 pm

After 5 pm

Other: _____

17. What day would you prefer?
Tick all that apply:

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

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 Google Forms

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Student Questionnaire

What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Student questionnaire

My name is Caroline Transom and I am a primary school teacher who is finishing my Masters of Education this year. I am doing a study at your school so I can understand what parent/caregivers, teachers and senior students think parental involvement in learning looks like. I would love to get your thoughts and opinions about this.
Please fill in the below form by Friday 26 May and if you are completing the paper copy can you please return it to the school office and place in the box marked "Massey research" by this date.

1. What year group are you?

Mark only one oval.

- Year 5
 Year 8

2. What do you think parental involvement in your learning is?

3. What do your parents or caregivers do when they are involved in your learning?

4. What difference does it make to you when or if your parents or caregivers are involved in your learning?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

It has a negative effect

It makes a large difference to my learning and achievement

5. What do you think is the most important thing your parent or caregiver can do to support you in your learning?

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1HfUZ72u/Phyyp9WUK3HrZb9nsHQ3eKaD3rs0ht4FD/edit>

10/14/2017

What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Student questionnaire

6. Please tick which of these you think are examples of parental involvement in your learning.

Tick all that apply:

- Reading at home with me
- Volunteering at school
- Knowing my teacher
- Setting goals for school with me and helping me reach them
- Encouraging me to go to school
- Fundraising for the school
- Making a space and/or time for so I can do homework at home
- Supporting me to do homework and helping if needed
- Talking to my teacher (or emailing/texting) about concerns
- Valuing school and education at home and talking about how important it is
- Supporting the school and teacher with behaviour concerns
- Going to parent teacher interviews
- Talking about plans for the future (including jobs or study)
- Being at the school regularly
- Going to school events (like sports, cultural or arts events)
- Other: _____

7. Please pick the top 5 things you think the most difference to your learning

Tick all that apply:

- Reading at home with me
- Volunteering at school
- Knowing my teacher
- Setting goals for school with me and helping me reach them
- Encouraging me to go to school
- Fundraising for the school
- Making a space and/or time for so I can do homework at home
- Supporting me to do homework and helping if needed
- Talking to my teacher (or emailing/texting) about concerns
- Valuing school and education at home and talking about how important it is
- Supporting the school and teacher with behaviour concerns
- Going to parent teacher interviews
- Talking about plans for the future (including jobs or study)
- Being at the school regularly
- Going to school events (like sports, cultural or arts events)
- Other: _____

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FNUZP6uP1ryy9nUK5HrEh0naH93eKaD3ra3hx4FD/edit>

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Student questionnaire

8. What makes it easier for my parents or caregivers to get involved in my learning?

9. What makes it hard for my parents or caregivers to get involved in my learning?

10. What do your parents or caregivers do outside of school when they are involved in your learning?
Tick all that apply:

Talk with me

Spend time with wider family and whanau

Go to museums

Do activities with me

Play with me

Go to parks and playgrounds

Go to the Marae

Support me in sports or cultural activities (Kapa Haka, choir, music etc)

Share ideas and opinions with me

11. Please pick the top 5 things you think the most difference to your learning
Tick all that apply:

Talk with me

Spend time with wider family and whanau

Go to museums

Do activities with me

Play with me

Go to parks and playgrounds

Go to the Marae

Support me in sports or cultural activities (Kapa Haka, choir, music etc)

Share ideas and opinions with me

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1YhUZP5luP1yy@4UK2Hr2h9neH93eKaD3rsJht4PQ/edit>

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Student questionnaire

12. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Interest in Group interview
Please fill in below if you are interesting in talking about how you parents are involved in more detail.
Your parents **MUST** sign this.

13. Name of student :

14. Name of parent/caregiver:

15. Signature of parent/caregiver to allow student to be involved in a focus group

16. Phone number or email (which ever is the best way to contact your family)

Powered by
 Google Forms

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1HUZF2uPrjy@6UK3HnE@nsHQ3eKaD3ms6hd4FQ/edit>

6/4

Teacher Questionnaire

What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Teacher questionnaire

My name is Caroline Transom and I am a primary school teacher who is finishing my Masters of Education this year. I am doing a study at your school so I can understand what parent/caregivers, teachers and senior students think parental involvement in learning looks like. I would love to get your thoughts and opinions about this.
Please fill in the below form by Friday 26 May and if you are completing the paper copy can you please return it to the school office and place in the box marked "Messey research" by this date.

1. What year group do you teach?

2. What do you think parental involvement in a child's learning is?

3. What things do parents or caregivers do to be involved in a child's learning?

4. How much impact do you think parental involvement in a child's learning has on their learning?
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
It has a negative effect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It makes a large difference to their learning and achievement

5. What do you think is the most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to support a child in their learning?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PjggCofF_n6v6JNcLTvnl6adP3Yss_dNUnTrRd/edit 1/5

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Teacher questionnaire

6. Please tick which of these you think are examples of parental involvement in a child's learning?
Tick all that apply:

- Reading at home with their child
- Volunteering at school
- Knowing their teacher
- Setting goals for school with their child and helping the child reach them
- Encouraging their child to go to school
- Fundraising for the school
- Making a space and/or time for the child to do homework at home
- Supporting the child to do homework and helping if needed
- Talking to the teacher (or emailing/texting) about concerns
- Valuing school and education at home and talking about how important it is
- Supporting the school and teacher with behaviour concerns
- Going to parent teacher interviews
- Talking about plans for the future (including jobs or study)
- Being at the school regularly
- Going to school events (like sports, cultural or arts events)
- Other: _____

7. Please pick the top 5 items you think makes the most difference to a child's learning
Tick all that apply:

- Reading at home with their child
- Volunteering at school
- Knowing their teacher
- Setting goals for school with their child and helping the child reach them
- Encouraging their child to go to school
- Fundraising for the school
- Making a space and/or time for the child to do homework at home
- Supporting the child to do homework and helping if needed
- Talking to the teacher (or emailing/texting) about concerns
- Valuing school and education at home and talking about how important it is
- Supporting the school and teacher with behaviour concerns
- Going to parent teacher interviews
- Talking about plans for the future (including jobs or study)
- Being at the school regularly
- Going to school events (like sports, cultural or arts events)
- Other: _____

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PjggCotF_m6v6JNcLThn16adP5Yss_dNUjzThR6/edit 2/5

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Teacher questionnaire

8. What do parents or caregivers do when they are involved in their child's learning outside of school?
Tick all that apply:

- Talk with their child
- Spend time with wider family and whanau
- Go to museums
- Do activities with their child
- Play with their child
- Go to parks and playgrounds
- Go to the Marae
- Support their child in sports or cultural activities (Kapa Haka, choir, music etc)
- Share ideas and opinions with their child

9. Please pick the top 5 items you think makes the most difference to a child's learning
Tick all that apply:

- Talk with their child
- Spend time with wider family and whanau
- Go to museums
- Do activities with their child
- Play with their child
- Go to parks and playgrounds
- Go to the Marae
- Support their child in sports or cultural activities (Kapa Haka, choir, music etc)
- Share ideas and opinions with their child

10. What makes it easy for parents to be involved in their child's learning?

11. What makes it difficult for parents to be involved in their child's learning?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Pjgg2orF_m6v6JNzLThn0adP3Vaaq_4NlJn1TrR0/edit 2/5

10/14/2017 What is parental involvement in a child's learning? Teacher questionnaire

12. What do you think makes it hard to encourage parental involvement in a child's learning?

13. What do you think makes it easy to encourage parental involvement in a child's learning?

14. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Teacher focus group or individual interview.
Please fill in below if you are interested in talking more about your thoughts on parental involvement in learning.

15. Name:

16. Best way to contact you:

17. How would you like to share your thoughts?
Tick all that apply:

Focus group with other teachers from your school

An individual interview

Other: _____

18. When would you prefer to meet?
Tick all that apply:

7.30 am

3.20 pm

4 pm

Other: _____

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PjggCoF_miv6JNe5LTvnl8dP9Vaac_4Nl/n7nR0/edit

6/5

Appendix B: Guiding Interview Questions

Parents

- What do you love about being involved in your child's learning?
- How are you involved in your child's learning currently?
- How would you define learning?
- What do you think is the purpose of learning?
- What role does school and teachers have in learning?
- What role do you think parents have in their child's learning?
- What role does the child have in their learning?
- If you could describe your dream example of you being involved in your child's learning- with no barriers or things hindering it- what would it look like?
- How is this different than what is happening now?
- What needs to change for this to happen?
- What do you think the difference is between 'parental involvement in learning' and 'parental engagement in learning'?

Student Questions

- What do you love about your parents being involved in your learning?
- How are your parents involved in your learning now?
- How would you define learning?
- What do you think is the purpose of learning?
- What role does school and teachers have in learning?
- What role do you think parents have in their child's learning?
- What role does the child have in their learning?
- If you could describe your dream example of your parents being involved in your learning- with no barriers or things hindering it- what would it look like?
- How is this different than what is happening now?
- What needs to change for this to happen?
- What do you think the difference is between 'parental involvement in learning' and 'parental engagement in learning'?

Teacher Questions

- What do you love about parents being involved in their child's learning?
- How are parents involved in their child's learning currently?
- How would you define learning?
- What do you think is the purpose of learning?

- What role does school and teachers have in learning?
- What role do you think parents have in their child's learning?
- What role does the child have in their learning?
- If you could describe your dream example of parent being involved in their child's learning- with no barriers or things hindering it- what would it look like?
- How is this different than what is happening now?
- What needs to change for this to happen?
- What do you think the difference is between 'parental involvement in learning' and 'parental engagement in learning'?

Appendix C: Ethical requirements

Parents Information Sheet

What is 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Caroline Transom and I am a primary school teacher who is currently completing my Masters of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership). This letter is to let you know about the research I am conducting at your child's school and to ask you to consider participating. The study aims to gather information from teachers, senior students and parents about what they think 'parental involvement in learning' looks like.

Why am I doing the project?

There is evidence, both in classrooms and research, that having parents involved in their child's education and school has an impact on children's learning. Teachers, parents and students sometimes have different views about 'parental involvement in learning' which makes it challenging to create a shared vision between home and school.

Your views would contribute to our understanding about 'parental involvement in learning'.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?

If you would like to contribute your ideas, please fill in the questionnaire (or complete it online) and return it to the school office. A private labelled 'Massey research box' will ensure your responses are kept confidential.

If you are willing for your child (if they are a senior student) to complete the survey or being part of a senior students focus group please return their form to the office in the private labelled 'Massey research box'.

If you would like to discuss your ideas further, you might like to join a focus group of parents OR with me in an individual interview.

- All families, teachers and senior students of _____ are being sent this anonymous questionnaire in a paper and online format to fill in if they chose.
- If you chose to participate please complete either the online questionnaire, or paper questionnaire (and return the paper questionnaire to the school office by _____)
- On this questionnaire you will also be asked if you are interested in becoming involved in either a focus group or individual interviews. Just fill in the form and return it with the completed questionnaire if you would like to be involved.

- If you are willing for your child to become involved, please return their permission slip.
- I will contact those participants to set a convenient time for all in the group to meet (or individual times for those who prefer one on one interviews) and conduct ONE focus group session or interview per person.

How much of your time will participation involve?

The focus group and interview will be one session of between 30 minutes to one hour.

The student focus group will be one session of between 15-30 minutes.

What are the advantages of taking part?

You might enjoy sharing your thoughts about 'parental involvement in learning' and whatever helps or hinders this. Once the study is finished it could provide helpful information to teachers and schools.

Are there any disadvantages of taking part?

It could be that you feel uncomfortable talking about 'parental involvement in learning'.

Do you have to take part in the study?

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

If you decide to participate in the focus groups or interviews, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within the first 4 weeks
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

Your participation in this study is confidential and all of your responses to the questions will only be used for the purpose of this study. I will take all possible steps to ensure your privacy and remove any identifying information. The data from this

research will be processed and stored securely. Access will be password protected and restricted to myself and thesis supervisors. A summary of the sheet will be available for all who wish to read it at the end of the study.

What happens now?

If you interested in being involved you can:

- Fill in the questionnaire online at: OR
- Return the completed paper questionnaire to the school office
- Fill out the questionnaire and also complete the focus group or interview form to indicate your interest in being part of these
- Fill out the permission slip for your child to be involved in the study.

Once I have all the slips I will make contact to meet at a time convenient to you.

If you decide you do not wish to participate then no further action is required.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application / (*insert application number*). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Project Contacts

Caroline Transom, Masters of Education(Educational Administration and Leadership) student at Massey University carolinetransom1@gmail.com ph: 0272258527

Supervisors: Karen Anderson K.F.Anderson@massey.ac.nz. Phone 06 356 9099 extn 84451

and Dr Jenny Poskitt j.m.poskitt@massey.ac.nz Phone 356 9099 ext 83070

Students Information Sheet

What is 'parental involvement in a child's learning'

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Caroline Transom and I am a primary school teacher who is finishing my Masters of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership) this year. I am doing a study at your school so I can understand what parent/caregivers, teachers and senior students think 'parental involvement in learning' looks like.

Why am I doing the project?

Teachers, students and parent/caregivers sometimes have different ideas about 'parental involvement in learning'. I want to know what you think about it.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?

- If you would like to be involved please complete the questionnaire either online or on paper. If you do the paper version, please put the completed questionnaire in the 'Massey Research Box' at the school office by _____
- If you would also like to talk to me about your ideas, you might like to join a group interview with other students. If so, fill in the **blue** form and return it with the completed questionnaire if you would like to be involved.
- I will need to check with your parent/caregivers if they agree for you to talk to me with a group of other students. If your parent/caregivers agree that you can be involved, I will organise a meeting time at school.

How much time will the research take?

The questionnaire is expected to take about 10 minutes to complete. If you also choose to be part of the group interview it is likely to take between 15 to 30 minutes.

What are the advantages of taking part?

You might enjoy sharing your thoughts about what you like and dislike about parent/caregivers being involved in your learning, and how they might be more involved.

Are there any disadvantages of taking part?

You might feel a little uncomfortable talking to a researcher about parent/caregivers being involved in your learning.

Do you have to take part in the study?

You DO NOT HAVE TO BE INVOLVED.

Only do the questionnaire if you want to do it. You do not have to answer all the questions - just do the questions you want to do.

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

If you decide to participate in the group interviews, you can:

- choose not to answer any particular question;
- change your mind and not participate;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be sure that your name will not be used on any written documents;
- have a copy of the summary findings at the end of the study (if you want one).

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

No one will know what your answers were or who said which bit of information in the report. I will do everything I can to protect the privacy of the answers you give me and to make sure that no one else can see the data I gather.

What happens now?

If you are interested in being involved you can:

- Fill in the questionnaire online at: _____ OR
- return the completed paper questionnaire to the school office
- You are also welcome to fill in the **blue** form if you would also like to join in a group interview with other students.

Once I have all the slips I will make contact to meet at a time that works for you.

If you don't want to be part of the research then you don't have to do anything.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application / (*insert application number*). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Project Contacts

● *Caroline Tansom, Masters of Education student at Massey University* carolinetransom1@gmail.com **ph: 0272258527**
Supervisors:

● *Karen Anderson* K.F.Anderson@massey.ac.nz and *Dr Jenny Poskitt* j.m.poskitt@massey.ac.nz **ph: 356 9099 ext 83070**

Teacher Information Sheet

What is 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Caroline Transom and I am a primary school teacher who is currently completing my Masters of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership). This letter is to let you know about the research I am conducting at your school and to ask you to consider participating. The study aims to gather information from teachers, senior students and parents about what they think 'parental involvement in learning' looks like.

Why am I doing the project?

There is evidence, both in classrooms and research, that having parents involved in their child's education and school has an impact on children's learning. Teachers, parents and students sometimes have different views about 'parental involvement in learning' which makes it challenging to create a shared vision between home and school.

Your views would contribute to our understanding about 'parental involvement in learning'.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?

If you would like to contribute your ideas, please fill in the questionnaire (or complete it online) and return it to the school office. For paper (hard copy) questionnaires, a private labelled 'Massey research box' will ensure your responses are kept confidential.

If you would like to discuss your ideas further, you might like to join a group interview of teachers from your school OR with me in an individual interview.

- All families, teachers and senior students of _____ are being sent this anonymous questionnaire in a paper and online format to fill in if they choose.
- If you choose to participate please complete either the online questionnaire, or paper questionnaire (and return the paper questionnaire to the school office by _____)
- On this questionnaire you will also be asked if you are interested in becoming involved in either a focus group or individual interviews. Just fill in the form and return it with the completed questionnaire if you would like to be involved.
- I will contact those participants to set a convenient time for all in the group to meet (or individual times for those who prefer one-on-one interviews) and conduct ONE focus group session or interview per person.

How much of your time will participation involve?

The focus group and interview will be one session of between 30 minutes to one hour.

What are the advantages of taking part?

You might enjoy sharing your thoughts about 'parental involvement in learning' and whatever helps or hinders this. Once the study is finished it could provide helpful information to teachers and schools. The findings may be published in education journals or shared at conferences so other teachers and people in education can improve schools for students and families.

Are there any disadvantages of taking part?

It could be that you feel uncomfortable talking about 'parental involvement in learning'.

Do you have to take part in the study?

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

If you decide to participate in the focus groups or interviews, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within the first 4 weeks
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used, unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

Your participation in this study is confidential and all of your responses to the questions will only be used for the purpose of this study. I will take all possible steps to ensure your privacy and remove any identifying information. The data from this research will be processed and stored securely. Access will be password protected and restricted to myself and thesis supervisors. A summary of the sheet will be available for all who wish to read it at the end of the study

What happens now?

If you are interested in being involved you can:

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

- Fill in the questionnaire online at: OR
- Return the completed paper questionnaire to the school office
- Fill out the questionnaire and also complete the focus group or interview form to indicate your interest in being part of these

Once I have all the slips I will make contact to meet at a time convenient for you.

If you decide you do not wish to participate then no further action is required.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 17/02. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Project Contacts

Caroline Transom, Masters of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership) student at Massey University carolinetransom1@gmail.com ph: 0272258527

Supervisors: Karen Anderson Phone 06 356 9099 extn 84451 K.F.Anderson@massey.ac.nz and Dr Jenny Poskitt j.m.poskitt@massey.ac.nz Phone 356 9099 ext 83070

Example of a letter to the Board of Trustees

27 March 2017

Caroline Transom

carolinetransom1@gmail.com

Phone: 027 255 8527

Dear _____ Board of Trustees,

My name is Caroline Transom and I am a primary school teacher who is completing her Masters Of Education in Educational Administration and Leadership. I am writing to ask your permission for your school to become involved in a research study in term two that I am undertaking called "***What is 'parental involvement in a child's learning'?***".

Evidence indicates, both in classrooms and research, that having parents involved in their child's education and school influences children's' learning. Teachers, parents and students sometimes have different views about 'parental involvement in learning' which makes it challenging to create a shared vision between home and school. The study aims to gather information from teachers, senior students and parents about what they think 'parental involvement in learning' looks like.

If you give your permission for the study to be conducted in your school I would send a questionnaire (in hard copy and an online version) to all families, teachers and senior students that they can complete anonymously if they wish. Hard copies will be returned to a box in the office marked 'Massey research box' to ensure responses are kept confidential. On a separate sheet accompanying the questionnaire, parents and teachers can choose to also participate in either group or one on one interviews. Senior students will be invited to also participate in a group interview.

Your views would contribute to our understanding about 'parental involvement in learning'. At the end of the study you will be given a one page summary of the findings which you can use (if you wish) to further strengthen and develop your home- school relationships. If you participate I would also be willing to deliver a brief presentation of the results at your school, to which all participants would be invited.

Thank you for offering the time to consider this,

Caroline Transom

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application ___/___ (*insert application number*). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Project Contacts

Caroline Transom, Masters of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership)
student at Massey University carolinetransom1@gmail.com ph: 0272258527

Supervisors: Karen Anderson Phone 06 356 9099 extn 84451 K.F.Anderson@massey.ac.nz
and Dr Jenny Poskitt j.m.poskitt@massey.ac.nz Phone 356 9099 ext 83070

Appendix D: Analysis of data

Examples of the first steps of coding

Question Five: What do you think is the most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to support a child in their learning?	
1. Communicate with the child about what they're interested in, and also ask what they struggle with. Find ways to extend these interest at home	Caroline Trans... Talk w child Caroline Trans... Know child int Caroline Trans... Academic stat.
2. A parent should provide relaxed support by guiding their child to accomplish what needs to be completed without interfering with their own solutions.	Caroline Trans... Further learn
3. Show interest, encourage them to think for themselves.	Caroline Trans... Provide learn opportu
4. Take an interest and be actively involved eg, reading at home from a young age. Spending time together	Caroline Trans... Support learning
5. Give them plenty of opportunity to play, specialise, rest and experience challenges	Caroline Trans... Encourage independe
6. Asking how their day was. Doing things with them at home or making them read etc.	Caroline Trans... Ensure complete of H
7. Being their advocate when they need it. Ask their teachers what help I can do as a parent.	Caroline Trans... Interest in child
8. Encourage them to go to school and not to give up even when it get hard.	Caroline Trans... Encourage independe
9. Ask questions	Caroline Trans... Interest in learning
10. Reading to them before bed, going over there homework with them	Caroline Trans... Reading tog
11. Be encouraging and helpful, ask the teacher is they are unsure of how to help with activities that have been sent home	Caroline Trans... Spend time
12. Be involved, encourage with learning, encourage them to read, be positive towards them and set goals with them	Caroline Trans... Provide learn opportu
13. Being intentional and available in their learning.	Caroline Trans... Spend time
14. Listen and talk with them, Encourage and support them, Focus on their strengths and be positive.	Caroline Trans...
15. Be actively involved and encourage them to "give it a go". Inspire them to try.	Caroline Trans... Talk w child
16. Show that you're interested and listen to how their day was and what they did for the day. Also praising them for it and again asking questions etc.	Caroline Trans... Wider learn
17. Encouraging in a less structured environment like the classroom.	Caroline Trans... Spend time
18. No answer	Caroline Trans... Contact w scbl Caroline Trans... Support scbl learn

Second step of coding

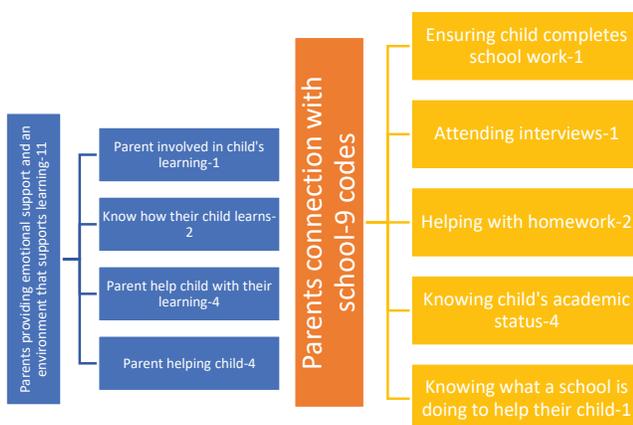
Figure 4.1.B Parent responses for all schools "what is parental involvement in learning"?

Category	Total Frequency	Total Percentage	Code	School A frequency	School B frequency	School C frequency	Total frequency
Learning that is based around school	46	40%	Supporting school learning	8	1	3	12
			Knowing their child's academic status	7	0	1	8
			Knowing what is happening at school	4	2	1	7
			Communication with school	2	0	4	6
			Being involved with school activities	2	1	2	5
			Helping with homework	2	1	2	5
			Ensuring completion of homework	2	0	1	3
Having a strong relationship with your child	18	16%	Talking with child	4	0	1	5
			Spending time with your child	3	0	1	4
			Know their child's strengths and weaknesses	3	0	0	3
			Being supportive	2	0	0	2
			Be encouraging of child	2	0	0	2
			Know child's interests	0	0	1	1
			Help child	1	0	0	1
Providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning	50	44%	Focus on learning wider than school drive learning	5	2	5	12
			Involved with child's learning	4	3	0	7
			Supporting child with learning	2	1	3	6
			Encouraging further learning	2	2	1	5
			Providing learning opportunities	1	2	1	4
			Reading with and to child	3	0	1	4
			Help children with learning	2	1	0	4
			Being an active part of child's learning	3	0	0	3
			Interested in child's learning	3	0	0	3
			Learn from parent	1	0	0	1
			Provide conditions suitable for learning	1	0	0	1

Themes to theories

THEORIES AND THEMES OF STUDENTS

Q2- WHAT IS 'PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN A CHILD'S LEARNING?'



Q2- WHAT IS 'PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN A CHILD'S LEARNING? THEMES AND THEORIES

Category	Frequency	Themes	Theories
Parents connection with school-9 codes	9	Learning is schooling Students expect parents to keep in contact with school to know their learning and to attend their events. School has knowledge of them- parents don't	A view that learning is mainly schooling. Schools and teachers are the expert in this area- so instructions for what learning a child should be doing and how this learning is to be completed is to be given by the school and enforced by parents. This view shows how students' view of learning is narrowed to schooling and that they value school's opinion of them and expect their parents to obey the rules.
Parents providing emotional support and an environment that	11	Children do want help from their parents- for learning, school work and for life.	Students value the support their parents give them. It not based

Parent, student and teacher beliefs about parental involvement in a child's learning

supports learning			on their knowledge of schooling or ability to answer questions, students value the emotional support and guidance that they give.
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What parents love about being involved in their child's learning codes

Interviews of parents of all schools				
Category	Total Frequency	Total Percentage	Code	Frequency
Parents connection to school	13	19%	Supporting school learning	4
			Knowing their child's academic status	4
			Knowing what is happening at school	3
			Keeping school accountable	1
			Being in partnership with the school	1
Having a strong relationship with your child	19	27%	Spending time with child	5
			An opportunity to be proud of child	3
			Know all aspects of your child	3
			Watching child develop and grow	3
			Being supportive	2
Providing emotional support and an environment that supports learning	38	54%	Sharing a love of learning with child	8
			Learning with child	5
			Focus on learning wider than school drive learning	5
			Helping child with learning	4
			Seeing progress of child's learning	4
			Watching child learn	4
			Seeing the impact of parental involvement	4
			Seeing the child excited about learning	3
			Provide conditions suitable for learning	1