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Last revised: January 2020
EXPLORING PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AT A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL IN FIJI

by

Sachin Deo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

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School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE)

The University of the South Pacific

August, 2021
DECLARATION

Statement by Author

I, Sachin Deo, declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published, or substantially overlapping with material submitted for the award of any other degree at any institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text.

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Statement by Supervisor

The research in this thesis was performed under my supervision and to my knowledge is the sole work of Mr. Sachin Deo.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to my father, late Mr. Deo Narayan and to my brother (Salendra Deo) and sister in law (Pratika Devi) for their patience, understanding, sacrifices, and support throughout the process.
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ABSTRACT

Parental engagement is defined as the co-operation between parents, teachers and school in supporting and improving the learning, development and health of children. It is an essential component of effective school-family and community partnership and offers many opportunities for improvements in student’s attitude, morale, and behaviour across school and subject areas. However there are reports of increasing behavioural issues which indicates limited parental engagement and is a major concern in Primary schools throughout Fiji. This research study aimed to explore perceptions on parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji.

A case study of a rural primary school (referred herein by pseudo name Dee Primary) was undertaken using mixed methods approach (Qualitative and Quantitative). Data was gathered by means of questionnaires, interviews and Talanoa with parents (N=20), teachers (N=10) and year 7 students (N=23). The data was analyzed thematically to identify perspectives of parents, teachers and students towards parental engagement and identify some of the difficulties encountered.

The results showed that majority of the parents/guardians (> 65% N=13) were actively engaged with their child’s learning by ensuring children go to school with needed materials, encouraging better behaviour through moral support, checking homework, attending PTI, and providing space for learning. Teachers maintained a two-way communication through Parent Teacher Interviews (PTIs), use of social media/phone calls/text messages, providing newsletters, encouraging parents/guardians in school based activities, and home visits to maintain communication with hard to reach parents. Students also played an important role by relaying information and encouraging their parents/guardians to participate in school based activities.

Parents encountered difficulties such as inflexible work hours (75%), child’s attitude to school work (65%), insufficient level of income (50%), illiteracy and challenging school curriculum (35%), and family background (30%); which hindered engagement towards their child’s learning. Teachers mentioned difficulties such as parents not attending PTIs/CAPS, limited parental support towards home study, shortage of time, hard to reach parents, child’s/parent’s attitude and language
barriers. Meanwhile students mentioned parent’s level of education, household chores and home disturbances as factors affecting their learning at home.

The findings from this study suggest that a partnership approach between parents, teachers and students is necessary for effective parental engagement. Further research on parental engagement with larger sample size from both rural and urban settings is recommended to identify and address challenges to effective parental engagement in Fijian primary schools.
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<tr>
<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Community and Parental Support Program</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>FEG</td>
<td>Free Educational Grant</td>
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<td>FEMIS</td>
<td>Fiji Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>MoEHA</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Heritage and Arts</td>
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<td>NCF</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

This research study investigated perceptions of parents, teachers and students on parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Research over the recent years has shown that children’s success very much depends on a real partnership between parents/guardians, teachers and the communities (Audrey, 2018; Epstein, 2010; Harris & Goodall, 2008). Empirical findings have shown that engaging parents/guardians in a child’s education increases the motivation of students to perform well and helps teachers to understand more about the child (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Minke, 2010).

A widely accepted hypothesis is that all parents are interested in the progress and development of their children in the contemporary years of teaching (Blackwell & Hornby, 2018). Parental engagement is defined as the co-operation between parents and school in supporting and improving the learning, development and health of children (Booth & Dunn, 2013). In the context of the current study, the term parental engagement also includes situations where a child is living with guardians, or relatives. Parental engagement is essential towards every student-teacher-school academic endeavors and is linked to improved student motivation, behaviours, and performances (Lingam, Lingam, & Sharma, 2017; Sapungan, 2014; Townsend & Elder, 1994). When parents are engaged in their children’s school lives, children have the home support needed not only to prepare for examination, but also develop a lifelong love for learning. Educators often notice a profound change in their classrooms when parents are engaged in their child’s learning (Audrey, 2018; Fraser-Thill, 2020; Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Parents, schools (teachers) and communities are the three overlapping spheres of influence to parental engagement and must form partnerships to meet the needs of the child (Epstein, 1995). Parent’s expectations are to communicate effectively with child, help their children at home, take an active role in school based activities and demonstrate good parenting skills. Communities’ expectation is to show positive
attitude towards the school. School’s role towards parental engagement is to create a good flow of communication between the school and the parent.

Encouraging parental engagement is more than common courtesy as it is one of the best ways of creating an effective learning environment for every child. However, the reality becomes different when a classroom environment is challenged by children with limited parental support towards their learning. This becomes a stern issue among the child, the teacher and the whole school setting. Parental engagement is not a term that is used to criticize parents but it is about encouraging and supporting children’s holistic development. Parents who monitor their children at home and school, tend to have fewer disciplinary issues compared to those children whose parents are least involved (Caplan, 2000; Salin, 2017).

Schools in Fiji face many challenges to parental engagement towards their children’s education (Chand, 2012). Although published statistics is not available for the situation in Fiji, anecdotal evidence suggests there are children who are deprived of educational achievements due to lack of or poor quality parental/guardian support. The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MoEHA) emphasizes that schools need to recognize the primary role of the parents/guardians in education and advocates working in partnerships. Of all the factors affecting a child’s education, the home influence in terms of parental support and intervention, ranks amongst the highest (MoEHA, 2016).

Educators and MoEHA have expressed that lack of parental supervision and monitoring as a major concern for educational reforms. The lack of parental engagement is observed in various school based activities such as poor turnout during Parent Teacher Interview (PTI), few parents visiting school to check the performance of their child, few parents discussing issues with teachers and other indicators such as no letters or calls to inform teachers of reasons why their child missed school. Limited parental support is a major concern for teachers which hinders student’s education and these students have a tendency to engage in disruptive behaviours (Audrey, 2018; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018).

Furthermore, limited parental engagement also contributes to school dropouts which can also affect career prospect of students (Chandra, 2009). The Fiji government
since 2014, provides assistance in form of Free Educational Grant (FEG) which covers tuition, textbooks and bus fare scheme for children attending primary and secondary schools up to year 13. The FEG is aimed at minimizing the financial burden on parents sending their children to school. Yet there are students who drop out of school due to family problems and limited parental support. There are a number of reasons for school dropouts and parental engagement is one of the area which needs investigation. Thus it becomes vital to investigate factors affecting parental engagement in the Fijian school context.

1.2 Context of the Study

Labasa is the main town in Vanua Levu which is located in the province of Macuata. It is the center for government agencies, major business house and three tertiary education providers. The total population of Labasa is approximately 27,900. It is surrounded by farming communities which contributes to the economy of Labasa. The largest crop grown is sugarcane. However recently, due to political changes and loss of overseas market, sugarcane farming has steadily decreased and people migrated to urban and main island of Viti Levu, in search of better employment opportunities.

The school chosen for this research study is a rural primary school referred by pseudonym Dee Primary School throughout the research. This pseudonym has been given to ensure anonymity. The school is located 9 kilometers from Labasa Town and caters for students from 6 villages. The school has a total student roll of 180 students of which 60% of the students are I-Taukei. The houses in the areas are scattered in farmlands and there are limited bus services available to school. Students’ travel to school by bus, rural service vehicles, and some students walk to reach school.

1.2.1 Socio-economic Context

Majority of people in the area are engaged in sugarcane farming, while some are doing jobs in shops and towns. The past political upheaval, natural disasters and recent COVID-19 pandemic has weakened the socio-economic status of many people in the area. Many people who were employed in towns and shops lost their jobs as a result of this pandemic. Due to low level of education, people of the area are heavily
reliant on sugarcane and agriculture production as main source of income. A small
number of people are in casual employment and provide needs for the family during
non-cane harvesting season. These socio-economic status influences parents’
engagement towards their child’s learning.

The case study school has undergone developments over the years to ensure
that children are provided quality education. However, at present the school
continues to face a number of challenges while improving and increasing parental
engagement towards child’s learning. It is therefore imperative to explore factors
affecting parental engagement at Dee Primary School.

1.3 Brief History of Education System

Formal education in Fiji began in 1835 with Methodist missionaries setting up
informal education system (Thomas, 1993). Arithmetic and reading made up the
basic curriculum. The main aim of the informal education system during pre-colonial
decade was to establish various groups of students who could read and interpret the
bible and act as evangelists by spreading the message of God to the local people
(Thomas, 1993). Later missionaries set up mission schools starting with primary and
moving to secondary. However, in 1879 schools in the towns of Levuka and Suva
accommodated mostly European children.

The Fijian education system was set up in the year 1916 to undertake provision for
all educational requirements in Fiji. The department started to register all schools and
centralized all educational services from the curriculum to recruitment of teachers
(Thomas, 1993). Ownership of the education system was left with various
communities. Due to hardship in education system, communities dedicated
tremendous physical and human resources to collect funds in educating the children
of the nation. Parents/guardians made a huge contribution towards building of
schools and took an interest in their children’s education. This aspect has been
acknowledged worldwide as strength of the education system in Fiji (Thomas, 1993).

Furthermore, there was an increase in demand of primary and secondary education in
the mid 1960’s, as student enrolment increased over time. Examination was
introduced as a formal means of elimination. After independence in 1970, Fiji
adopted New Zealand’s Curriculum and students in Years 11 and 12 sat for the New
Zealand Certificate and Entrance Examinations. Meanwhile Years 7-10 were offered UNDP and UNESCO’s curriculum. During 1980’s local prescriptions were developed and students first sat for their Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination in 1989.

Fiji developed its National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2005 which changed the emphasis from prescriptive to outcome based and change the perspective from teacher centred to child-centred learning. In 2013, the Ministry mandated the revised NCF to meet needs of the learners, society and the job market. In 2014, one of the major government initiative was Free Education that ensures parents and guardians do not have to bear the cost of paying tuition for their children attending primary and secondary schools. Over the past years a lot of educational reforms had taken place to build a knowledge-based society and to ensure greater productivity. The government is providing assistance to reduce financial burden on the parents in an effort to ensure that all Fijian children have access to quality education (MoEHA, 2016). To date, there are altogether 874 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centers, 736 Primary Schools and 172 Secondary Schools with 17,912 students in ECE centers, 154, 206 in primary school and 67,547 students in secondary schools.

**Figure 1: Number of Schools and Students.**

(Source: [www.femis.gov.fj](http://www.femis.gov.fj))
1.4 Educational Reforms

Based on the act “Education for All”, the major importance of educational reforms is to provide and improve quality of education and give equal access to education to all children regardless of race, age and gender. This is part of Sustainable Development Goal 4 which ensures “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (MoEHA, 2016). Educational reforms ensure that Fijian students have equal access to quality education which is a fundamental key in life (MoEHA, 2016). These educational reforms also aim to reduce the financial burden on parents and guardians in sending their children to schools. Few of these reforms are as follows:

1.4.1 Free Supply of Textbooks

A very effective initiative by Ministry of Education is the provision of free educational resources to aid parents and guardians to overcome the financial burden of having to buy school textbooks and other basic educational materials needed to properly grasp the school curriculum (MoEHA, 2016). Providing free educational resources to students emanates from Fiji’s constitutional requirements that government must take reasonable measures within its available resources to provide quality education in ECE, primary, secondary and further education (Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, 2013) and Pillar 9 of the people’s Charter of Change, Peace and Progress towards making Fiji a knowledge based society. Free supply of school textbooks allows parents/guardians to send their children to schools without been burdened with buying school textbooks. This initiative allows parents and guardians to ensure that their children work harder in schools and complete their education.

1.4.2 Bus Assistance

In an effort to reduce the financial burden on parents, the Ministry of Education in October, 2009 was given approval by the government to implement the free bus fare scheme to students whose parents and guardians combined salary was below $15,600 (MoEHA, 2016). Through free bus fare scheme, parents and guardians are able to send their children to school without any financial burden. Parents/guardians are now able to use their income for other expenses of their children’s education.
1.5 Pillar 4 (Parental Engagement)

The reforms implemented in Fiji’s education system were mostly based on three key pillars which were; content review, teacher delivery and infrastructural development. These pillars mostly focused on improving the services provided to teachers and students and improving the learning environment. In 2015, MoEHA launched “Parental Engagement” as the fourth pillar of educational reforms. The new initiative aims to ensure that learners progress academically, engage actively in school based activities, aspire to further their educational achievements and skills from institutions of higher learning, and contribute positively towards a brighter and smarter Fiji (Reddy, 2016). The parental engagement framework is intended to prepare and empower the young people to reach their full potential as productive members of the society (MoEHA, 2016). It emphasizes that schools need to understand and recognize the pivotal roles parents play in their child’s education. The reform highlights that effective parental engagement is not just participation in school fundraising and meetings, but engaging themselves effectively with the child both in school and home based activities. MoEHA has introduced the framework to assist teachers and parents to increase and improve their engagement towards child’s education. Since the introduction of the framework in 2015, there are few studies
conducted on how well the strategies are being implemented at the school and community level. Thus this research study is being undertaken to explore the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji.

1.5.1 Role of Parent

Parental Engagement Framework by the Ministry of Education highlights that recent changes in the roles of school have a great impact on the lives of child, parents and family as a whole. Roles played by parents/guardians and families in a child’s education is said to be a most vital component for successful performance at school. When parents become aware of their child’s learning needs, they are in a better position to provide support and encouragement both at home and in school. Research over the years has highlighted that parents and guardians should be made to understand that their part is central to child’s education and be aware that their contribution small, or large remains significant towards their child’s education (Townsend & Elder, 1994).

Too often parents/guardians are blindfolded by an obsolete belief that schools can alone make a difference in child’s learning. Pillar 4 highlights that encouraging and engaging parents can make much difference. It is therefore important for parents and guardians to realize that they have some special knowledge and skill that can be used to improve teaching and learning. This also helps create a positive attitude among parents/guardians that their support is valuable.

1.5.2 Role of Community

Parental Engagement Framework also shows that the community should never be regarded as in isolation when it comes to parental engagement. Based on Harvard Family Research Project (2010), partnership with community serves to strengthen, transform and support individuals resulting in efficient use of resources, effective quality of program and better curricula. Community partnership plays pivotal part in child’s education. Community partnership is the best place to start when it comes to engaging greater number of parents/guardians in child’s education. Communities across the country have invested considerable amount of money to establish and maintain school, thus they should be given chance to participate actively in the life of school and should become a resource for it to use in the quest to
improve the quality of education (Lingam et al., 2017). A connected school and community in education promote shared learning goals and collaboration with shared responsibility. Therefore, community partnership creates a conducive learning environment where everyone is both a learner and teacher.

1.5.3 Role of School

School plays a pivotal role in child’s education. It promotes and empowers children with opportunities to become successful individuals. A school must embrace that parent/guardians contribution towards their child’s education is valuable. Parental engagement framework suggests that schools are responsible for creating awareness on the importance of parental engagement in a child’s education through CAPS and Annual General Meetings. It also encourages the widest possible circle of engagement whereby schools help parents to work cooperatively in ensuring joint decisions for the benefit of effective communication.

Schools play an important role in engaging parents in child’s education and making them aware that their input and participation is foremost important in the learning and teaching process. When schools and parents work in partnership, firstly parents will have a sense of pride for their child’s education, for the school and community at large. In addition to this, parents will have an insight into how the school operates with its educational decisions and process. Secondly parental engagement framework suggests that parents will have an understanding and sound idea of the roles and responsibilities of a classroom teacher with the requirements of the new curriculum. Studies have shown that through an effective partnership between the school and parents, parents will become more aware of what the child is learning and would be in a better position to help the child with home studies (Lingam et al., 2017).

Furthermore, schools have the responsibility of having a two-way communication with parents and guardians in order to strengthen their relationship. Parental engagement framework highlights that schools can interpret communication through school and class newsletters highlighting on important events and activities that would unfold in various weeks (MoEHA, 2016). Parents who maintain regular and direct contact with teachers demonstrate positive parental engagement (Epstein, 2010). To add on, schools need to unite parents and guardians through Community and Parental Support (CAPS) gatherings to discuss about school based activities and
highlight on issues affecting children’s education in terms of unattended homework & school work, indiscipline problems, truancy and how all these could be minimized using effective school and parental strategies. Parental engagement framework encourages parents to work with the school to positively affect student’s learning outcomes.

1.6 Proposed Impacts of Parental Engagement on Teaching and Learning

The active engagement of parents and guardians in school based activities offers improvements in children’s learning journey. First and foremost, student’s academic attainment will improve as children will achieve higher test scores. In addition to educational attainment, children will thrive towards excellence knowing that their parents are engaged in their learning and are very much particular about their education.

Secondly, children will always try to complete their home studies and school work as they know that their teachers are frequently in touch with their parents. Through a two-way communication between teachers and parents, teachers are better able to understand about their student’s ethos, culture and values which is a key aspect in planning effective teaching strategies for their students. This is supported by Lev Vygotsky’s Cultural Historic theory which highlights that knowledge from children’s background and culture should be used to form basis of teaching and learning process (Kozulin, 2003).

Moreover, parental engagement at school would enable parents to rectify their child’s weakness using remedial lessons at home. Together with this, it allows parents to know more about activities that would be unfolding in the school. This assists parents and guardians to prepare their children for the upcoming school based events. At the same time parents and guardians will have knowledge about school events and can assist organizing (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Lingam et al. (2017) highlights seeing how some parents’ are effective in their child’s education would build interest in parents who have limited engagement towards their children. Parents and guardians would feel a sense of ownership towards their child’s education. In addition to this, it will help a school to be more productive and encourage underperforming students to succeed. Finally, parental
engagement in school based activities allows parents’ to monitor their children’s classroom activities and build a strong enduring partnership between the teacher and the parent. A true partnership needs to exist between the families and school in order to achieve better student outcomes. When the gap between the culture at home and culture at school is bridged, children from diverse ethnic background will achieve better results (Audrey, 2018; Boonk, 2018; Lingam et al., 2017)

1.7 Problem Statement

In this research study, the problem is that there is limited parental engagement that hinders parents’ participation towards their child’s education in a rural Fijian school. Lack of parental engagement is becoming a serious issue in schools throughout Fiji. The parental engagement framework has been proposed however how well it is implemented at the school and community level has not been investigated. As a current teacher in the system, the researcher has observed challenges associated with behaviour problems and poor academic achievements which indicate poor quality of parental engagement. There is lack of literature available on effective strategies for parental engagement in the Fijian context. This study will explore perceptions of parents, teachers and students on Parental engagement at Dee Primary School. This study also investigates the challenges affecting parents, teachers and students when it comes to parental engagement at Dee Primary School. The findings will provide baseline information which could be used to suggest strategies to improve the quality of parental engagement especially in rural Fijian communities.

1.8 Nature and Scope of the Study

With the provision of FEG and resources by the MoEHA in Fiji, education has been made much more accessible to children in both rural and urban areas; yet there are problems associated with limited engagement from parents and guardians towards their child’s education. To support this, reviews of relevant literatures on parental engagement in child’s education both from Fiji as well as internationally has been undertaken. This is a case study of one school in a rural community in Fiji. It is by no means an exhaustive study and therefore audience need to keep in mind the delimitations. This is a preliminary study on parental engagement in a rural primary school which could then be used for further investigations.
1.9 Research Aim

The aim of this research study is to explore parents, teachers and students perceptions on parental engagement at Dee Primary School. The study will also identify the strategies and challenges to parental engagement and suggest directions for future research.

1.10 Objectives

The objectives of this research study are to:

a) Explore parents, teachers and students perceptions on parental engagement.
b) Identify strategies used to support parental engagement.
c) Explore factors affecting parents’ engagement towards their children’s education.

1.11 Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to assist in guiding the research study.

1. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on Parental engagement at Dee Primary School?
2. What strategies are used to support Parental engagement at Dee Primary School?
3. What are the challenges affecting Parental engagement at Dee Primary School?

1.12 Assumptions

The assumptions in a research study allow the researcher to draw conclusions from the results. Leedy & Ormrod’s (2010), highlights that “assumptions are so basic that, without them, the research problem could not exist” (p.62). In this research study it is assumed that there is a connection between academic achievement and parental engagement. It is also assumed that limited parental engagement will have a problematic effects on educational achievements of children in future if it is not strengthened. Another assumption is that research participants will be honest in their responses to questions asked during interviews in the study.
1.13 Significance of the Research

The research study intends to gather information on the perceptions of teachers, parents and students on parental engagement at a rural primary school. The baseline information will provide information on the current status and quality of parental engagement. This can be used to plan for future more detailed studies. Teachers would benefit from the findings when conducting school events that involve parents in children’s education. Teachers, parents and students can use the research findings to develop strategies to enhance parental engagement in education. The responses obtained from the research questions would provide insights to parents, guardians and teachers about their role in providing quality education to children.

The findings of the study may also inform MoEHA on issues relating to professional preparation of teachers and head of schools in the area of collaboration and coordination with parents/guardians pertaining to children’s education. Additionally, the findings will assist the policy makers and education practitioners to generate more relevant policies and plans to improve and increase parental engagement in child’s education. The study could also assist in the review of Pillar 4 parental engagement framework considering the hardships that some parents/guardians go through. Finally, the findings of the study could add to the existing literature on parental engagement.

1.14 Theoretical Framework

The research study revolves around a model established by Joyce Epstein, Professor of Education at Johns Hopkins University. The model is known as the theory of overlapping spheres of influence that recognizes the importance of effective partnership and communication between schools, families and the community. The model outlined by Epstein (1995) recognizes that children succeed in their education when school, home and community work together and play their supportive roles in a child’s learning (Epstein, 1995; 2010; 2018). Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006) also supports that education is represented as a shared responsibility between schools, families and communities rather than being the exclusive domain of schools.

The model puts the child in the center of the learning. Schools, families and communities should all play their expected roles and responsibilities to positively
support child’s learning. The evidence is clear that when parents and guardians get involve in their child’s schooling, child get better outcomes, and have more positive attitudes towards school and home based activities (Epstein, 2018; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lingam et al., 2017; Townsend & Elder, 1994). The strategies of this model are discussed in more detail in the literature review (Chapter 2).

This model is very relevant and applicable to the research study. In using this model, teachers and parents develop conducive learning environment that support child’s education. As a result of this model, teachers and parents can design effective forms of communication to increase and improve parental engagement in child’s education. Consequently, parents will have opportunities to input into school policies that affect their child’s education. Additionally, children will develop positive attitudes towards school.

1.15 Organization of the Study

The research study is presented in six (6) different chapters which are as follows:

**Chapter One – Introduction and Overview**

The chapter presents an overview on the importance of parental engagement in a child’s education. The chapter also offered; contextual background, a brief history of education system from pre-colonial era and relevant educational reforms. The chapter also presented on Ministry’s parental engagement framework (Pillar 4) with its proposed impact on teaching and learning, and expected roles of schools and parents towards child’s education. This is followed by the problem statement, nature and scope of the research study, research aim, objective, research questions, assumptions, significance of research and theoretical framework and ends with an outline of the thesis structure.

**Chapter Two – Review of Literature**

A review of relevant literature used to guide the research study is presented in Chapter 2. The review includes a range of ideas on parental engagement in a child’s educational attainment, challenges faced by parents’ that limits their engagement, review of Epstein’s (1995) model, and effective strategies used to improve the quality of parental engagement at school level.
Chapter Three- Research Methodology

The chapter describes the research design, methodological approach and methods used in the research study. It presents the data analysis method using thematic analysis. The chapter also provides step by step details regarding the ethical consideration of the research study.

Chapter Four – Research Findings

The chapter presents the overall research findings of research study based on gathered data from questionnaires, interviews and Talanoa.

Chapter Five – Discussion of Research Findings

The chapter discusses the research findings that were gathered from fifty-three participants. The key findings of this research are critically discussed and integrated with reference to the review of literature. The findings are presented under the themes derived from data analysis.

Chapter Six – Conclusion and Implications

A summary of the research findings, implications and recommendations are presented in Chapter 6. Future research opportunities for other researchers doing similar study is discussed.

1.16 Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the research study, importance of the topic to child’s education, contextual background and a brief history of education system in Fiji. The chapter also highlights the Ministry’s parental engagement framework focusing on the pivotal roles of parents and schools in child’s education.

The chapter has also provided with problem statement, nature and scope of the study, research aim, objectives, research questions, and significance of the research study.

Finally, the chapter discusses Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence model (1995) used as the theoretical framework to guide the study. It has also provided the overall outline of the research study. The next chapter provides a review of literature on parental engagement.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The current research study aimed to explore the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji. This chapter discusses the conceptual linkages between parental engagement and education in general and in the context of Fiji. This chapter focuses on the perceptions of parental engagement, factors affecting parental engagement, and the role of parent, school and community towards Parental engagement. The chapter also highlights Epstein’s six (6) types of parental engagement strategies, and effective school strategies to improve and increase parental engagement. From the literature, a conceptual framework is also drawn and adopted for the present study. There is paucity of detailed research studies on parental engagement in the Fijian context. Much of the literature available includes news articles, media reports, and speech from Ministry. The review of the relevant literature is organized into themes as follows;

2.2 Value of Parental Engagement

Parental involvement and engagement is deeply associated with children’s educational achievement (Bunijevac, 2017). Based on a study of 150 students of 9th class of four secondary schools in Lahore, Pakistan; the value of parental engagement includes: higher expectation of students, lower behaviour issues, students achieves more, less exposure to drugs, and bridges the gap between the culture at home and the learning environment (Rafiq et al., 2013). Parental engagement also extends to providing a comfortable home learning environment where children learn the basics of living a healthy lifestyle (Bunijevac, 2017; Bolatagici, 2016). Education for holistic development requires parents, schools and the Ministry to work collaboratively in achieving its mission and vision. Students whose families are involved in their learning process have better academic performances, complete homework, better attendance and exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviours. (Allen, 2013; Audrey, 2018; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Epstein, 2010). In a qualitative study of sixty students and ten school principals amongst Form 4 secondary school students in Fiji, revealed that children tend to have
lesser behavioural problems and perform well academically, when their parents regularly support and are involved at schools and home (Chand, 2012). Numerous studies have shown that schools and families also benefit from parental engagement (Esptein, 2018; Audrey, 2018; Montgomery, 2014). Schools will acquire a better understanding of families’ cultures and diversity, and they form deeper respect for parents/guardians abilities and time. When schools have a high percentage of parental engagement in child’s education, teachers are more likely to experience higher morale and job satisfaction (McNeal, 2014; Montgomery, 2014). Consistent parental engagement leads to improved communication and relations between parents and teachers (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Esptein, 2018; Shute, 2011). Parents/guardians will have stronger ties and commitment towards child’s education, and a better understanding of the teacher’s role and school curriculum (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hussain et al., 2018). When parents/guardians are aware of what their children are learning, they are more likely to help when they are requested by teachers to become more involved in their child’s learning (Audrey, 2018; Guan & Duan, 2018; Prasad, 2016). Benefits of parental engagement are well stated in this review of literature, therefore there is a reason to believe that high level of parental support contributes towards effective learning in children and helps develop a healthy mind, and a successful future.

2.3 Factors Affecting Quality of Parental Engagement

Student performance is dependent on many different factors including parental engagement, thus, it is pivotal to identify the potential factors limiting parents/guardians participation in their children’s learning. Studies have shown that parents encounter many forms of challenges when engaging in their child’s education (Banswal, 2014; Sapungan, 2014; Wilson, 2011). For example some parents feel that they are illiterate and innumerate, so they can not help their children. There are numerous barriers to parental engagement which includes (socio-economic status, in-flexible work hours, Illiteracy, Family Background, teacher’s, parent’s/guardian’s and student’s attitude) which are explained as follows:

2.3.1 Socioeconomic Status

Socio-economic status is measured by composite variable based on parents’ education attainment, job and household income (Chohan & Khan, 2010). A study
grounded in Epstein’s overlapping spheres of influence theory employed 40 participants of 4 schools in Masvingo district in Zimbabwe, revealed that despite attempts to encourage parental engagement in school-based activities, factors such as parents’ occupation, education level, income, place of residence, and lack of supportive family structure remains as hinderances (Magwa & Mugari, 2017). Numerous studies have shown that parents with poor socio-economic background typically practice low levels of academic supervision with their children (Banswal, 2014; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018; Sapungan, 2014; Williams, 2008). Families with high level of socioeconomic background usually have greater parental engagement towards their child’s education. Socio-economic status of a family has significant effect on student learning. In terms of poverty and education in the context of Fiji, parental income makes a direct and indirect impact on child’s education (Chandra, 2009). Based on the data from Fiji Poverty Report, 2019 & 2020 indicated that 29.9% of the Fijian population lives below the national poverty line, and that rural people are much worse off than urban. The level of family income for many rural families influences a child’s level of educational attainments; for example, high family incomes enable parents to purchase and provide their children with extra educational resources, such as educational videos on the internet, educational aids, and supplementary textbooks compared to those children from low family incomes (Chandra, 2009).

Empirical studies (Banswal, 2014; Guan & Duan, 2018; Harris & Goodall, 2008) indicate that the level of parental education, also considered as a major hindering factor towards limited parental engagement in child’s education. Studies indicate that higher parental education levels provide quality education to their children and enables more parental support towards child’s learning (Amponsah et al., 2018; Shute, 2011). However, parents with low level of education find it quite difficult to guide child’s learning (Bunijevac, 2017). Children whose parents have low level of education are more likely to drop out of school (Chandra, 2009). Similar findings have also been reported in United States, where children who do not complete their education are mainly those with less involved parents (Shute, 2011). In the Fijian context, for example, the work of Reddy (2016) has shown that parents with high level of education have higher aspirations and commitments towards their child’s learning which in turn help children to complete their education. Astone & McLanahan (1991) in a qualitative study found out that parents with low education
level can not guide their children with homework or other school issues, because their knowledge is limited. Therefore, the higher the income and socio-economic status, the more engaged the parents become, whereas parents with poor socio-economic status are less likely to be engaged in the children’s education.

2.3.2 Inflexible Work Hours

Time is another factor affecting parental support in many families in Fiji. Numerous studies have shown that parents’ are often burdened by inflexible work hours (Allen, 2013; Boonk, 2018; Chand, 2012; Omolade et al., 2014). Most parents are either employed or are casual employers and these kind of jobs leave parents with very limited time to spend at home with children and they are therefore unable to help their children with their homework (Allen, 2013; Boonk, 2018; Chand, 2012; Epstein, 1995). Rural people in Fiji are mostly engaged in day time job, some are engaged in overtime and shift work. People who are engaged in menial jobs like sewing, farming, catering among others, are more likely to have less contact hours with their child’s learning (Omolade et al., 2014). Fijian parents with lack of time due to overtime and shift work do not offer much conditioning in their child’s learning. These children are often left on their own and are not usually supervised or encouraged to study (Chandra, 2009). Studies have highlighted that hours spend on child’s learning differed for parents who were from low socio-economic status, as this took away time from their child’s education (Audrey, 2018; Omolade at al., 2014). Due to inflexible working hours, parents/guardians find difficulties in engaging themselves with child’s education.

2.3.3 Illiteracy

Illiteracy is another major hinderance to parents participation in education of their child (Matshe, 2014). Parents often report the level of illiteracy due to lack of reading and writing abilities as a barrier to parental engagement (Matshe, 2014; Salin, 2017). Fiji has a literacy rate of 99.08% for the year 2017. Despite the fact, people in rural communities find difficulty in comprehending texts either because of complicated vocabularies or incomprehensible texts (Chand, 2017). In a rural community where parents’ literacy level is low, children’s learning is greatly hindered (Blackwell & Hornby, 2018; Ogunsola et al., 2014). A survey conducted in New Caledonia on parental engagement and student’s academic achievement, Fan
(2001) found that some parents considered the information provided by school and in written texts to be incomprehensible either because of complicated vocabularies or parents’ inability to read. A parent who is illiterate can not read and write as a result can not assists the child with anything that requires reading and writing (Garbacz, 2019; Matshe, 2014; Salin, 2017; Shute, 2011). However, literate parents can better communicate with their children regarding information and activities being taught in schools (Banswal, 2014; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Minke, 2010). Thus, parents/guardians with high literacy level try effectively to get engaged with their child’s education than parents with low literacy level.

2.3.4 Family Background

Family background in terms of parental supervision and guidance determines the discipline conduct and academic performances of a child when it comes to schooling (MoEHA, 2016). Students coming from broken family where parental support is weak are likely to show less interest in school work resulting in poor academic performances and indiscipline acts (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). In a qualitative study of sixty students and ten school principals amongst Form 4 secondary school students in Fiji, (Chand, 2012) found that students coming from broken families, children tend to engage themselves with unethical behaviour which is of concern to the school. In a similar study on American families, Caplan (2000) found that single parent household, especially those who were poor, worked significantly longer hours daily to provide family's needs. In this analysis, single parents in many cases spend less time in monitoring and supervising their child’s school work (Caplan, 2000). In many rural communities in Fiji, single parents who do not have spousal support reduces the level of parental engagement in child’s education (Chandra, 2009). The work of Jafarov (2015) involving American children in single parent household showed limited parental engagement and supervision than children who lived in two-parent household. In a study, Astone & McLanahan (1991) revealed that marital disruption in the family can lead to poor assistance by reducing the amount of time parents’ spend in child’s education. Children whose parents are involved in the process of imparting education; were more likely to excel academically and become productive and responsible members of the society compared to those children who lacked supportive family background (Epstein, 1995; Rafiq et al., 2013). In addition to this, parents need to have a regular
communication with their child in order to strengthen the relationship between them. This will ensure that children are more involved in the learning process. Parents/guardians need to spend quality time with children at home so that children find a sense of trust.

2.3.5 Teacher Attitudes

Another factor affecting parental engagement is the teacher’s attitude. A qualitative study on American families on the barriers to parental engagement, Banswal (2014) found that teacher’s attitude should be caring, consider parent’s background and help with developing parenting skills. Some teachers lacked knowledge of what they need to do to initiate and welcome parents. Majority of the teachers have a belief that parents have a limited impact on the academic achievement of their children (Audrey, 2018; Boonk, 2018; Wilkinson, 2000). Teachers’ believe that neither parents support the school nor discipline their child when there has been a problem in school. When teachers lack parental support, they often believe it is a waste of time to communicate with parents (Blackwell & Hornby, 2018). Teachers are increasingly being required to collaborate with parents in the pursuit of the academic achievement of all students. Teachers are being held accountable for, not only the academic success of their students, but also for collaborative measures in communicating these, and should be aware of their professional obligations in partnership with parents (Blackwell & Hornby, 2018; Kanesan, et al., 2011; Wilson, 2011). Many teachers perceive poor academic performances and indiscipline acts among students as an issue that begins at home due to parental negligence. Parents on the contrary, tend to accuse the school environment as a factor contributing towards indiscipline acts and poor academic results. Therefore, teachers’ positive attitude towards parent can be considered as a good indicator towards parental engagement.

2.3.6 Parents/guardians Attitudes

A meta analysis on barriers to parental engagement found that a few parents are inactive in their child’s learning process and have a ‘I don’t care attitude’ towards their child’s education (Chohan & Khan, 2010). These parents are neither visible during the school based activities nor get involved with the home based activities. Parents have a belief that teachers are solely responsible for teaching their children.
and they can not be of any help to the school. A study carried out by Sapungan (2014) revealed that parents are less motivated to interact with the school and teachers if they have a perception that their child is a low performer and has little chance of succeeding in education system. Numerous studies have shown that parents with low self-esteem and did not experience success in school themselves; lack the knowledge or confidence to help their children with studies (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Minke, 2010; Robinson, 2016; Salin, 2017).

2.3.7 Student’s Attitude

Another factor affecting effective parental engagement in child’s education is the child themselves. Parents likely to get engaged when students and teachers work in collaboration with them (Banswal, 2014; Baker et al., 2016; Robinson, 2016). In a study of 40 participants in Masvingo Districts, findings revealed that students feel that their parents/guardians do not have required knowledge to support them with their school work (Magwa & Mugari, 2017). Parents’ low socio-economic backgrounds make students ashamed of inviting their parents to school events (Guan & Duan, 2018; Magwa & Mugari, 2017; Taylor, 2015). Students can deliberately fail to inform their parents of events in the school where parents are to participate (Harris & Goodall, 2008). In agreement with above findings, Hornby & Lafaele (2011) assert that age of children also determines the engagement of parents in the learning process. As children grow older, they feel the desire for freedom and that homework responsibility should shift from parents to themselves. However, Minke (2010) identified that although children want freedom in their education, most students value their parental support and find it beneficial. Therefore, it is possible to say that a child’s own attitudes also contributes to parents/guardians not getting engaged in children’s learning.

2.4 Epstein’s Types of Parental Engagement Strategies

Joyce Epstein developed a framework to help children learn and grow through the three overlapping spheres of influence; family, school and community to best meet the needs of the child (Epstein, 2010). However not all parental engagement leads to improved student achievement. There is a need for effective partnership between the school, community and family. Such partnership strengthen families, improve schools and increase student motivation and success (Boonk, 2018; Epstein, 1995;
Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Robinson, 2016). Six types of parental involvement strategies based on the relationship between the school and the family are as follows:

2.4.1 Parenting

Parents/guardians play a pivotal role in the development and progress of their children (Epstein, 2010; Rafiq et al., 2013; Salin, 2017; Sapungan, 2014). School must assist parents/guardians with the creation of positive home environment that promotes child development and assist them with child related issues such as child’s health, attainment and discipline (Epstein, 2018; Harris & Goodall, 2008). This will improve student’s attendance, behaviour and create awareness on the importance of schooling. On the other hand, the role of parents/guardians are to assist educators and schools in the understanding of family backgrounds and goals for children. Supportive learning at home reinforces school curriculum and enhances better understanding of, and respect for their educators (Epstein, 1995).

2.4.2 Communicating

A two way communication between homes and schools need to be developed for improved parental engagement. Schools need to develop procedures as how to communicate with parents’ and guardians’ about their child’s progress. Schools should take special steps to ensure that parents and guardians are invited to the school early in the academic year, before students develop behavioural problems (Epstein 1995; Jafarov, 2015; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Reddy, 2016). Numerous studies have revealed that a strong aspect of parental engagement is an effective communication between teachers and parents (Prasad, 2016; Shakur, 2012; Townsend & Elder, 1994). Personal contact with educators in an educational setting is the most functional factor towards improved child’s education (Booth & Dunn, 2013; Epstein, 1995). A context friendly environment needs to be created so that parents are welcomed in the educational process of their children. Therefore through an effective and two way communication, parents/guardians are well versed with class and school policies, develop a greater sense of responsibility for monitoring their children’s progress and responding to their problems in a friendly manner.

2.4.3 Volunteering
Volunteering aims to create means for families to participate actively in school based activities. Parents’ who volunteers to take part in the school based activities, become more aware and comfortable with their child’s teachers. Volunteering is the contribution and help of parents/guardians in school activities. Numerous studies have shown that volunteering enables teachers to work with parents/guardians who assist children and school (Allen, 2013; Prasad, 2016; Wilson, 2011). Through parent’s/guardians volunteering, teachers are able to give more individual attentions to students. Therefore, parents’ and guardians should play a leading role in their child’s education by voluntarily participating in educational settings.

2.4.4 Learning at Home

Parental engagement in a child’s education begins at home with parents/guardians providing a safe and healthy environment, support, and a positive attitude about school. Families can be a great educational resource personal to their child’s learning journey. Numerous studies have shown that schools benefit from what parents’ and guardians’ are doing such as connecting learning at school with learning at home, supports homework and revision, and a improved parental engagement towards child’s learning (Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Epstein, 2010; Jeynes, 2010; Montgomery, 2014). Learning at home encourages parents’ and guardians to assist their child’s homework that enables them to share and discuss interesting tasks. Studies have shown that giving voluntary reading and other activities can help parents’ and guardians ensure that their children have ways to learn outside of the classroom (Cojocariu & Mares, 2014; Epstein, 2018; Harris & Goodall, 2008). When parents’ and guardians’ are actively engaged with home learning, students are more likely to view themselves as learners and see their parents as facilitators of the learning. Therefore, assisting children with home learning activities help them to develop positive study habits and skills that will assist them well throughout their lives (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Hafiz & Farik, 2017; Jeynes, 2010).

2.4.5 Decision Making

Studies have shown that engaging parents’ and guardians’ in decision making is an essential component towards improved parental engagement towards child’s
education. Numerous studies have shown that when families are engaged in decision making, help make schools more accountable and conducive to learning (Chandra, 2009; Esptein, 2018; Fan, 2001; Jafarov, 2015). Schools need to strategize ways as how to engage families in decision making as many families don’t know how to become engaged or they feel frightened with the past schooling experience (Rafiq et al., 2013). Schools should consider parents’ and guardians’ as equal partners as educators by providing them with opportunities to voice ideas and concerns during decision making. An important aspect of effective parental engagement towards child’s education is by keeping parents well informed about school related activities and encouraging a two way friendly communication.

2.4.6 Collaborating with Communities

Research has shown that families and schools must coordinate with community groups to make an educative community. The educative community comprises of home, school, worship places, libraries and business (Audrey, 2018; Boonk, 2018; Epstein, 1995; 2010; 2018; Fraser-Thill, 2020). Effective collaboration between school, family and community will take place when members from each respective entities work together as equal to help students succeed in the classroom. In a work of Kedrayete (1999) found out that when school, communities and families work together to support learning, children achieve more in school, enjoy the experience more and stay in school longer. High parental engagement backed with community support have a direct and positive influence on child’s learning and achievement in all areas (Audrey, 2018; Epstein, 2018; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Kedrayete, 1999). Therefore, through respecting and acknowledging each others contribution, we can create a positive environment for learners and teachers.

2.5 The Role of Parents’ in Parental Engagement

Research have shown that when parents are actively engaged in the learning process, the child develops holistically. Children whose parents’ or guardians are engaged are also more motivated to learn (Banswal, 2014; Caplan, 2000). Parents’ are the learning model for their children. Parents’ attitudes demonstrate in the learning process encourage and inspire children to become responsible for their own educational attainment. Parents supporting their children in home and school based activities uplifted the morale of children (Jafarov, 2015). In a study of Fijian schools,
Kedrayete (1999) found out that as parental engagement increases, so do child’s learning; as students perform better in school, parents/guardians further increases their engagement which, in turn, increases further child’s motivation towards learning. There is a wealth of evidence from numerous studies that parents, adults, siblings and family members contribute significantly to various components of personality of the child particularly in improving his/her behaviour and achievement (Banswal, 2014; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hussain et al., 2018; Montgomery, 2014; Prasad, 2016; Wilkinson, 2000). Parental engagement in the education of students begins from home, therefore it is vital for parents’ to provide a safe and healthy environment conducive to learning. Parents and guardians have an influential responsibility in monitoring the learning of their children at home as well as in the participation of organized school based activities. It is well established by numerous studies that parental engagement is evidently correlated with school achievement of learners (Amponsah et al., 2018; Epstein, 2010; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Willns, 2000). Therefore the pivotal role of parents’ and guardians is still recognized as one of the essential component for holistic development and success of their children.

2.6 Community Contribution to Parental Engagement

Community partnership is the third sphere. It is a crucial resource for student achievement, school improvement and promoting school cultures that supports all children (Kedrayete, 1999; Robinson, 2016; Townsend & Elder, 1994; Wilson, 2011). Families and schools are responsible for raising and teaching children and need to reach out to a wider community for their support. Learning is reinforced when children get connected to the school community and wider world (Esptein, 2018; Harris & Goodall, 2008). Community is all who are interested and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools (Epstein, 2010). Parents/guardians and the wider community have intact knowledge essential for effective child’s learning. Schools must be inclusive in its approach in engaging the community to help and provide resources to bridge the gap between home and school cultures (Kedrayete, 1999). In a study of seven primary and secondary schools in New Zealand, the empirical study found that community partnership in child’s education lifted their achievement and was effective (Bull et al., 2008). Numerous studies have highlighted that community engagement and involvement as a crucial factor affecting the success of individual students and the school environment itself.
Volunteering is one of the most common ways of community engagement in schools. A newspaper article by Prasad (2016) highlighted that whether it is attending a school concert, cheering school team, scouts or guides camping, or participating in school activities, community engagement can foster a sense of togetherness with families and schools. School-based activities may not have a direct impact on student achievement, but they can be fun and engaging way to build a stronger school community (Bull et al., 2008; Townsend & Elder, 1994). Thus, based on the literature findings, community engagement can provide opportunity for parents and schools to connect and support each other.

2.7 Role of School in Building Trust between Teachers and Parents

Trust between teachers and parents play a vital role in effective parent-teacher relationship. Good parent-teacher relationship is the strongest foundation of a child’s education (Cojocariu & Mares, 2014). A number of researchers have recognized that if parents/guardians feel valued by teachers for their role in learning, they are more likely to be involved in their child’s education (Epstein, 1995; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018). Schools can build trust between families by: actively welcoming families, improving communication, showing respect, and working together with families. When there is a trust between teachers and parents, you can learn more about students’ needs and home environments. The stronger the trust, the more motivated the parents’ become (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Schools can give positive encouragement to parents/guardians and establish an atmosphere of trust and support through a friendly working relationship with parents and communities (Baker et al., 2016; Savacool, 2011; Townsend & Elder, 1994; Epstein, 2018; Kedrayete, 1999). When an atmosphere of caring and love is created, parents/guardians and community can benefit greatly.

2.8 Effective School Strategies to Strengthen Parental Engagement.

Many researchers have agreed that schools play an important role in the effectiveness of parental engagement (Allen, 2013; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jafarov, 2015). At present school relies on several techniques which overlaps between the spheres – example communication, decision making,
collaboration, and volunteering to boost and improve parental engagement towards students’ achievement which are discussed as follows;

2.8.1 Effective Communication

Effective communication between parents and the school is an influential component parents recognize school to be family-friendly. Schools need to develop pathways for proactive two way communication between the school and families. When schools communicate more consistently and frequently, the students do better in school based activities, and parents’ feel they are highly engaged by being informed (Baker et al., 2016; MoEHA, 2016; Taylor, 2015). Studies have shown that proactive communication would allow parents to become involved prior to a major discipline offence or before the child falls behind academically (Baker et al., 2016; Epstein, 2018; McNeal, 2001; Prasad, 2016; Williams & Fan, 2010). In addition to this, schools need to increase the frequency of communication through multiple mediums such as emails, newsletters, SMS text, and even through phone calls. Parent/teacher communication need to be positive and welcoming to build a bridge of communication between the teacher and the parent to better serve the child (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lingam at al., 2017; Minke, 2010). Schools need to establish trusting relationship between the educators and parents/guardians to be effectively engaged in a child’s learning.

2.8.2 Welcoming Environment

Welcoming school environment can contribute towards an improved parental engagement towards a child’s education. Schools need to welcome families and community members and create an atmosphere of respect and acceptance (Astone & McLanahan , 1991; Fan, 2001; Matshe, 2014). Studies have shown that a welcoming and friendly environment at school is important, valued and expected by parents (Banswal, 2014; Harris & Goodall, 2008). Welcoming invitation from teachers encourages and reinforces parents that they are a valuable contributor to their child’s learning. Parents sitting in their child’s class is a way of getting engaged by connecting with the child’s teacher, and helping the school (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Hornby & Lafaele, (2011) argues that if children are to be interested and value their education, parents must also show interest in their work. Parents are full partners in a child’s education. Therefore, welcoming and friendly
environment plays a decisive part in the likelihood of a parent/guardian becoming consistently engaged in their child’s education.

2.8.3 Decision Making

Another useful strategy for promoting parental engagement in a child’s education is by involving parents in the decision making for overall functioning of the school. This is through seeking parental input in school planning. In addition to this, schools must provide opportunities for parents/guardians to communicate honestly and openly. Parents should feel free to voice any concern, opinions and questions without feeling judged inferior (Cojocariu & Mares, 2014; Epstein, 2010; Shakur, 2012; Townsend & Elder, 1994). Parents’ believe that they will be directly affected by an important decision being made and they wish to have control over it (Kedraveto, 1999; Magwa & Mugari, 2017). Involving parents’ and guardians’ in the decision making will probably result in a better decision and quicker solving of problem. The literature supports the assertion that involving parents will gain massive support for the school than it would have had from a decision taken alone (Audrey, 2018; Baker et al., 2016; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Matshe, 2014). While involving parents in the decision making, schools must schedule meetings at a time convenient for parents. In light of this, schools need to show respect towards parents’ perspective in decision making.

2.8.4 Regular Parent Teacher Interviews

To strengthen parental support in a child’s education, a strong teacher-parent-student relationship needs to be established. It is evident through literatures that connection between teachers and parents’ is an influential element in improving a child’s attainment and happiness, both inside and outside of the classrooms (Banswal, 2014; Caplan, 2000; Epstein, 1995; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Savacool, 2011). Studies have shown when parents are engaged with the teacher, they are able to understand the progress of their child better. Educators need to make parents’ believe they are important and their contribution is valuable through CAPS and PTI (Reddy, 2016). CAPS and PTI allows and encourages the widest possible circle of engagement: helping parents’ to work together effectively for the benefit of the child (MoEHA, 2016; Reddy, 2016). Regular PTI also informs parents about class/school matters and the progress of their child. Numerous studies
stressed out that information of the school and the progress of the child must be given regularly to parents through; newsletters about class matters, informal consultation between teachers and parents, a comprehensive class progress and achievement record, and special interviews between parents and teachers (Blackwell & Hornby, 2018; Minke, 2010; Townsend & Elder, 1994; Taylor, 2015; Williams & Fan, 2010). These conversation between the parent and teacher provides parents with information on how to support their child academically at home. Parent Teacher Interview are often a good starting point in providing an initial encounter in which parents can get engaged (Hafiz & Farik, 2017). Therefore regular CAPS and PTI’s will ultimately have the greatest positive impact on child’s education.

2.8.5 Encouraging Parental Engagement in learning at Home through Collaborative Homework

A number of studies have recently suggested that active parental engagement in a child’s learning at home is positively related to the child’s achievement at school (Cojocariu & Mares, 2014; Taylor, 2015; Townsend & Elder, 1994). Significant and consistent improvements in student achievement were observed when parents actively engaged with their child and worked collaboratively with homework and schoolwork (Baker et al., 2016; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Savacool, 2011). This is not surprising as teachers, students and parents all report that parental support in home-based activities has an influential impact on child’s education. Teachers can contribute towards creating a positive home environment by providing students with collaborative homework that requires support. When children and parents work together for a desired outcome, it motivates and creates a positive attitude of learning. Parents should be made a central part of student learning and they should be aware of their responsibilities (Baker et al., 2016). A supportive and conducive home learning environment therefore will offer a loving relationship that gives children the sense of responsibility and confidence in their learning.

2.8.6 Volunteering and Participation in School Based Activities

Parents/guardians participation in school based activities can bridge the gap between home and school environment. Volunteering opportunities in school based activities gives a sense of belonging in the school and their child’s education (Audrey, 2018; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018; Matshe, 2014; Townsend & Elder, 1994;
Williams & Fan, 2010). School must provide opportunities for parents to participate in school based programs such as religious programs, sports activities, celebrating national and international days, and work in partnership to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation (MoEHA, 2016). Some authors have suggested greater the parental engagement in school activities, the lower the achievement gaps becomes (Epstein, 1995; Kedrayete, 1999; Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Magwa & Mugari, 2017). Volunteering in school based activities is one way in which parents/guardians can become directly involved in their child’s school.

**Figure 3: Conceptual Framework: School, Family and Community partnership**

Figure 3 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study. This is derived from theoretical framework and the review of relevant literature. It demonstrates the strategies that could be adopted by schools, families and communities to improve and increase parental engagement in child’s education. Evidently, school-family-community engagement in child’s education play a vital role in child’s academic success.
2.9 Summary

Literature reviewed highlights that parental engagement has a positive effect on a child’s education. The chapter has highlighted several major areas of research on parental engagement. It is generally accepted that in order to improve student achievement, support from parents and guardians needs to be prioritized. Researchers over the years have also suggested that parental engagement could be hindered by factors such as level of socio-economic status (level of income and education), inflexible work hours, illiteracy level, family background, and teacher, parent and child attitudes. Serious considerations have also been made with different school strategies that could increase and improve parental engagement in child’s learning. Schools and families need to work in tandem support for the holistic development of the child. MoEHA emphasizes that schools need to recognize the pivotal role of parents in child’s learning and advocate them to work in partnership. The emergent shift to a more ‘child centered’ learning requires parental engagement.

Despite the voluminous body of research studies on parental engagement to date, there are still a number of issues that need further research investigation. There is limited research and literature on parental engagement in Fiji. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on parental engagement in the local Fijian context. The literature review has highlighted numerous benefits from parental engagement however evidence from local Fijian school context is lacking. This study is focused around this gap and will provide information on parental engagement at a rural Fijian primary school. The next chapter discusses the methodology and the methods that were used to collect the data for this study.
CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the research methodology and approach adopted for this study. The chapter describes the mixed method approach used in this study to guide three research questions as stated in chapter 1. This chapter also provides details on sampling size, method of data collection and data analysis used in the research study. To provide a reliable view of parental engagement in a Fijian context, the method of data triangulation is used in the study. The research limitations and ethical considerations are also mentioned.

3.2 Research Method

The study used a mixed method research design. Mixed method research design refers to an emergent methodology using qualitative and quantitative data within an investigation (Creswell, 2007). Using both forms of data allows researcher to simultaneously generalize results from a sample to a wider population, and at the same time gain a deeper understanding of phenomenon that is under investigation. Mixed methods design gave a voice to study participants and ensured that study findings were grounded in participant’s experiences. One of the major benefits of using mixed methods is that it enables confirmation, cross validation and elaboration of research outcomes (Creswell, 2007). The method was appropriate and included a broad range of responses from the major stakeholders (parents/guardians, teachers and students) regarding parental engagement towards child’s education.

3.3 Case Study

The research study was carried out using a case study of parents, teachers and students of a rural primary school in Fiji which hereafter is referred to as Dee Primary School. This is firstly, because of the researcher’s interest on the increasing occurrence of limited parental engagement towards child’s education and secondly, the personal experience of teaching students with limited parental/guardian support. A case study approach was used to ensure that data can be gathered in a timely and meaningful manner relevant to the rural Fijian context.
Case studies are strategy of inquiries whereby the researcher explores in depth certain scenarios bounded by time and activity (Chilisa, 2012). In addition to this, it allows the researcher to collect comprehensive data using variety of data collection procedures over a period of time (Creswell, 2007). Using a case study approach is rich and of a great depth relying on the lived experiences of people (Chilisa, 2012). Therefore, considering all these all the reasons, the researcher chose case study approach for the research study.

3.4 Approach

A purposive sampling technique was used in the research study. Participants recruited in the research study were the parents, teachers and students of year 7 at Dee Primary School. Approvals were obtained from the Head Teacher, USP Research Committee and MoEHA before commencing the case study (Please refer to appendix E). The school’s name was withheld to maintain confidentiality. The anonymity of teachers, students and parents were ensured in all written and verbal responses to the study. Only participants who have consented to take part in the study were interviewed and given questionnaires. Research participants were approached through questionnaires, interviews and Talanoa session. Both parental and student consent were sought for student participation (Please refer to appendix B for sample consent letters). All responses were confidential and did not require participant to give their names. All data (printed/electronic) collected were stored securely on a password protected laptop accessible only to the researcher and thesis supervisor. All the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the process.

3.5 Participants

The research participants for the research study included; 23 students, 20 parents and 10 teachers. All participants agreed to participate in the present study. Consented students, parents and teachers were interviewed and given questionnaires to find out quality of parental support provided and factors affecting parental engagement to each focus group. All the research participants were assured that the information provided will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

3.5.1 Students
For this case study, 23 students of year 7 including 13 males and 10 females which make up the complete class roll of Year 7 at Dee Primary School were approached for the study. All twenty-three students agreed to participate in the study. Parental and student consent were sought prior before student participation in the research study (Please refer to appendix B). All consented students were approached for the research study for one-on-one interview. Interview sessions maximum of 30 minutes each with consented students took place in the classroom during non-teaching hours. All interviews with students were in English. All student interviews were completed within 2 weeks’ time frame after obtaining consent from parents and students.

### 3.5.2 Parents

Twenty (20) parents including some –guardians/grandparents of twenty-three (23) student participants were engaged in the case study (Table 1) to investigate factors affecting parent’s participation in their child’s education. Participant’s consent was sought prior before participation (Please refer to appendix B). All parents agreed to take part in the study. Parents/guardians were approached through questionnaires and interview. All questionnaires were collected after 5 days. Each interview session started with open ended questions such as age, level of qualification and place of residence. All parents’/guardians interviews were completed within 2 weeks timeframe after the initial approach for consent.

**Table 1: Parent Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Parents/Guardians /Grandparents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.3 Teachers

Ten (10) teaching staff consisting of 4 males and 6 females which makes up the complete teacher workforce at Dee Primary School agreed to participate in the study. Teachers were given questionnaires and were approached for interview based on their availability. Questionnaires were collected after 5 days from distribution. A maximum of 30 minutes was allocated for each interview session at a mutually agreed time and place. Each interview session started with open ended questions such as teacher’s age, qualification and teaching experience. All teacher interviews were completed within 2 weeks timeframe after obtaining consent.

Table 2: Profile of Teacher Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Masters in Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Diploma in Education (Secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Diploma in Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Diploma in Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Certificate in Education, Diploma in Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Primary)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection was by the means of questionnaires, interviews and *Talanoa* sessions. All the research participants were informed of the purpose of the study. The following provides a brief explanation of each of the data collection methods:

3.6.1 Questionnaires

This study used semi-structured questionnaires. Semi-structured questionnaire comprises a mixture of closed and open ended questions giving researcher the ability to gain deeper knowledge and understanding (Creswell, 2007). Two sets of self-made questionnaires were prepared, printed and distributed to consented research participants; teachers and parents in regards to the research topic (Please refer to appendix C for questionnaires). The first questionnaire was for parents/guardians for this study. Questions were designed in simplest form, giving respondents a choice of answer. Some questions also included short answers. Second set of questionnaire was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers in dealing with children with limited parental engagement. This questionnaire was also used to explore parental engagement strategies used by teachers at Dee Primary School.

3.6.2 Interview

The semi-structured interview questions were used to gather relevant information on the research study (Please refer to appendix D). Semi-structured interview addresses the issue of trust while maintaining a feeling of openness (Creswell, 2007). The interview consisted of open ended questions in English. Open ended questions in an interview allow participants to respond in their own words (Creswell, 2007). In this study, interviews for students and teachers were conducted in the school during non-teaching hours. Whereas, all consented parents/guardians/grandparents were interviewed at their residence. The study used one-on-one interview to gather data since the questions were prepared in advance. The researcher also asked probing questions from research participants to collect rich information regarding the topic. A language teacher who was fluent in *I-Taukei* was available to help with disseminating information to three *I-Taukei* grandparents who were not fluent in English. The researcher noted down all the responses in the interview questionnaire and stored securely.
Table 3: Summary of Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total Number Interviewed</th>
<th>Place of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>In classroom during non-teaching hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>In the computer room after school hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>At their residence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.3 Talanoa

Talanoa or informal discussions with school teachers after school hours supplemented the researcher with valuable information regarding the research study. Talanoa is referred to as a conversation, an exchange of ideas between participants (Vaioleti, 2006). It is chosen to remove distance between the researcher and the participants, so that they feel at ease to communicate openly and freely. It promotes mutual accountability which adds to the trustworthiness and quality of research (Vaioleti, 2006). The session started with open ended questions before moving to research topic. Talanoa session was used to complement the gaps in the questionnaires and interviews from teacher participants. The session was guided by the 3 key research questions as stated in section 1.7. The researcher noted down all relevant information.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis makes studying data a lot simpler, more accurate and helps the researcher to appropriately analyze the research findings (Creswell, 2007). Quantitative analysis was used to represent data in meaningful manner. After gathering data from the respondents, total responses were obtained, transformed from words to numbers and was entered in Excel spreadsheet. Descriptive analysis was used in the research study to: draw out themes according to individual questions, and summarize data. Descriptive analysis helps describe, show or summarize data in a constructive way. It is helpful when the research is limited to the sample and does not need to be generalized to larger population (Creswell, 2007). Frequency table
was used to identify number of times a response was given to an individual question. This data was then presented in tables and figures for interpretation.

Based on Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis was carried out to determine themes/ideas from the collected data. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It offers a flexible and accessible approach in analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this, the researcher examined sets of collected data into different themes that came up repeatedly. Based on Braun & Clarke (2006) data collected was analysed and categorised using six various approaches to thematic analysis which are illustrated below;

**Figure 4: Braun & Clarke (2006) Data Analysis Flowchart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Step</th>
<th>2nd Step</th>
<th>3rd Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Familiarizing with Data</td>
<td>• Constructing Initial Codes</td>
<td>• Searching for all possible themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ordering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4th Step</th>
<th>5th Step</th>
<th>6th Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Interpreting Data</td>
<td>• Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>• Producing the report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reviewing themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The initial step in thematic analysis the researcher did was familiarizing himself with the collected data. In this phase the researcher was involved in reading and re-reading data by noting down main ideas. Reading and re-reading helped the researcher to search for meanings and patterns in an active way. The researcher made sure that he was familiar with all the aspects of collected data either verbal or written.

Second phase of thematic analysis required the researcher to construct initial codes across the gathered data in a meaningful way. Codes are a feature of data that appears relevant and meaningful to the researcher. Creswell (2007) highlights that coding is part of analysis that organizes data in meaningful groups. The researcher was able to look for structures and patterns and placed them in separate groups (e.g.
parents, guardians, teachers and students) when analyzing. The researcher also made sure that he worked systematically through the gathered data by giving equal attention to each data.

Once the data was coded and collated, phase three of the thematic analysis required the researcher to search for all possible themes relevant and meaningful to the study. The phase refocuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher used mind maps to organize data into relevant themes and sub-themes.

Phase 4 and 5 of thematic analysis required refining, reviewing and naming organized themes. The researcher made sure that he read all collated extracts for each themes so that it forms a coherent pattern. By define and refine, we mean identifying the essence of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore thematic analysis allowed the researcher a great flexibility in interpreting and sorting collected data more easily into broader themes (Creswell, 2007).

### 3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are used to evaluate the quality of research. Reliability and validity are prerequisites to assure the integrity and quality of a measurement (Creswell, 2007). Data triangulation method was used in the research study to check for the reliability and validity of the research findings. Data triangulation is a method of using different varieties of method to collect data on the same research topic (Creswell, 2007). The researcher examined and compared gathered data from questionnaires, interviews and *Talanoa* for the consistency of the findings. Using several methods to explore an issue increases the depth and accuracy of findings (Chilisa, 2012). The researcher analysed quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, with both data given equal weighting. The researcher compared data to avoid bias such as peer pressure on focus group participants.
3.9 Ethical Consideration

The research was guided by ethics procedures set by the University of the South Pacific. Permission was obtained from all participants to carry out the research study. Permission was requested from Head teacher of case study school, USP and MOEHA to carry out the research study (Please refer to appendix E). There was a need to recognize and protect the knowledge of research participants. Participants were given information sheet explaining the research and also informed verbally about the research and seeking their written consent. Where participants were not fluent in English language, translation was made available in vernacular language (Hindi or I-Taukei). Participants were informed on how the information will be used, and all information gathered was treated as confidential to maintain privacy of the participants. All research participants were assured that data collected is for academic research purpose only.

Moreover, to maintain the confidentiality of research participants and case study, presentation of data is as follows: the school’s name was withheld and labelled with a pseudonym name as Dee Primary School, parents recruited in the study are denoted as P1, P2, etc., students as S1, S2, etc., and teachers as T1, T2, etc. All the participants were informed of their right as to withdraw from the study at any given point of time.

3.10 Limitation of the Study

While carrying out the research study, the following limitations were encountered. The time factor was a major constraint while doing the research study. Consideration is being given to the fact that the research study was focused on year 7 students, their parents and teachers at Dee Primary School; hence a case study approach based on one school and year level was used. Parents and guardians were requested for their kind cooperation towards the research study. Language barrier was another constraint in the research study while conducting interviews with parents who lacked understanding of English. To overcome language barrier, the researcher requested language teacher who was fluent in native language to help with disseminating information to parents not fluent in English. The results cannot be generalized to all schools or other settings except to those with similar background.
3.11 Summary

To conclude, this chapter has outlined important information about research methodology used in the study. It has presented on the research methodology and method used to collect data from participants. The chapter provides the description of research methods, details of the participants’ selection, data collection, data analysis, limitations and ethical considerations procedures. The next chapter presents the research findings.
CHAPTER 4
Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in preceding chapters, this study sets out to explore the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on parental engagement. As such, this chapter presents the findings of the research study collected from parents, teachers and students of Dee Primary School through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and *Talanoa*. The whole chapter is in three parts. The first part presents the findings related to the respondents’ perceptions on parental engagement. The second part dwells on the strategies used to support parental engagement, and the final part of the chapter highlights the challenges faced by each focus group in providing quality parental engagement. Each of these is presented in themes as follows:

4.2 Parental Engagement in Child’s Education

From the analysis of collated data from questionnaires, interviews and *Talanoa* session, the researcher found that parents, teachers and students had a wide range of beliefs on parental engagement towards a child’s learning at school. These common beliefs are presented in the Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Common Beliefs of Parental Engagement**
4.2.1 Parents’ Beliefs

Research findings highlighted that parental engagement in child’s learning is an important factor towards child development, learning and success at school and later life. The findings indicate parents’ had four main perceptions of parental engagement. All the respondents (100% N= 20/20) highlighted that when parents/guardians are engaged with their child’s learning, they have better understanding of their children and put in place appropriate measures to protect their children from different forms of abuses, neglects and exploitation. Parent respondent highlighted

When I am (parent) engaged with my child’s learning both at home and school, I am in a better position to keep a track of learning and patterns of behaviours that is affecting my child’s performance at school (P6).

Majority of the respondents linked parental engagement with improved child’s learning.

Helping my child with school work helps me to have a better understanding about my child’s learning at school and we are more likely to help when teachers’ request us for our engagement during home activities. This also creates a warm feeling within us that our support is valuable (P17).

Parents/guardians (90% N= 18/20) highlighted that when they become engage in their child’s learning, they were able to keep track of class and school events. Communications through newsletters and phone calls made parents/guardians connected with Dee Primary School.

Newsletters provide us (parents) with information regarding school and class events which kept us informed about our child’s school (P 13).

Clearly, (85 % N=17/20) participants have responded in an interview that parents who were informed became sufficiently motivated to take on greater responsibility at home for their child’s learning. It also built a healthy parent-child relationship that enabled children to share information without hesitations. Respondent claimed

Working closely with my children during home activities provides me with the opportunity to strengthen my relationship with the child. This builds a sense of trust, as a result children share their problems confidently (P3).
Finally, (50% N= 10/20) parents/guardians had perception that their support and assistance would reduce student dropout issues. Parental engagement will allow family members to take part in child’s education to ensure that children stay on in schools without difficulties.

Parents/guardians perceived their engagement can have positive effects on child’s learning as well as improve their parenting skills. Parents agreed that they play a pivotal role in school and home environments.

4.2.2 Teachers’ Beliefs

All teacher respondents 100% (N= 10/10) agreed that parent’s support is one of the key pillar towards strong and enduring partnership in child’s success. Teachers highlighted that the relationship between teacher and parents improved communication. Communication allowed parents/guardians to share information about a child’s home life which empowered teachers of Dee Primary School to step up and support the child in school. Teacher respondent mentioned in Talanoa that,

*Effective communication allows teachers and parents to exchange ideas about a child which can be used to improve child’s learning (T5).*

Another teacher linked with trust.

*Communication between teachers and parents/guardians builds understanding and trust. When teachers and parents understand and trust each other, they are able to work together to support a child (T2).*

(100% N= 10/10) respondents highlighted parental support and assistance improved student achievement, behaviour and students had completed homework. Students of engaged parents/guardians had fewer disciplinary problems that allowed teachers of Dee Primary School to use lesser time in dealing with behavioural issues in the classroom. Teachers in Talanoa session mentioned

*When we have students with behavioural issues, we (teachers) use a lot of time in dealing with those students. Lesser behavioural issues will allow us to use that much time in deeper learning for everyone (T2).*

Another teacher mentioned
The more the parental engagement, the more interaction with children and for improved academic results and discipline (T3).

All teacher respondents (100% N= 10/10) highlighted that when there is a high percentage of parental engagement in child’s education, teachers were more likely to experience higher morale and earned a greater respect for their profession from parents and guardians. Parental support and assistance to some extent helped ease teachers burden of poor child performance at Dee Primary School. Teachers have highlighted;

When parents/guardians get engaged with their child’s learning, they join in partnership with teachers in making a conducive learning environment for the child (T4). To add on, when parents/guardians foster an atmosphere of learning and work in partnership with teachers, the entire educational setting benefits, from students to teachers to parents themselves (T7 & T10).

Moreover, (90% N= 9/10) teacher respondents highlighted that with engaged parents/guardians, teachers had better school programs. Parents/guardians volunteered and took part in school based programs such as religious celebrations, sports day, and organized scouts/guides camping. Parents/guardians participation allowed teachers to focus more on teaching.

When parents/guardians helped in school event, they helped us (teachers). Their participation allowed us (teachers) to spend quality time in teaching (T4).

Most of the teachers (80% N= 8/10), highlighted that parental engagement allowed teachers to focus more on the task of teaching children. Teachers mentioned having more contact with parents/guardians, allowed them to learn more about students’ needs and home environments. These enabled teachers to identify and set benchmarks for a student’s performance level. Teacher respondents highlighted the following;

I feel valued and respected when I see parents'/guardians' involving themselves with their child during school and home based activities (T9). An effective partnership with parents allows us (teachers) to better understand the children and families and use this information to better plan our
(teachers) curriculum (T3, T6 & T10). Sequentially will be able to pay more attention to individual students (T4).

Finally, teacher respondents (80% N= 8/10) mentioned that with engaged parents/guardians in child’s education, there would be fewer school dropouts. Children who are guided by their parents/guardians are motivated to finish their education compared to those with limited parental support. A teacher responded

*Children who are supported and assisted by parents/guardians at home and school, the child spends more time in studies and completes his/her education (T1).*

Teachers had various responses in terms of parental engagement towards a child’s education. Majority of teachers had agreed that parental engagement is a key component towards quality education. Parents’ and guardians’ play a tremendous role in the lives of their children.

### 4.2.3 Students’ Beliefs

Findings indicate five major student perceptions on parental engagement. All students 100% (N=23/23) mentioned that with parental/guardian’s support, their behaviour and learning improved. Respondents mentioned that their parent’s interest and encouragement in the learning affects student’s attitude towards school and class conduct.

*When I see my parent supporting my learning, I know that I have to behave otherwise they will be called to school (S13).*

Another student mentioned in an interview

*When I see communication between the teacher and parents, I tend to focus more towards my education and avoid disruptive behaviours (S13).*

Student respondents linked parental engagement with higher motivation. Majority students (91% N=21/23) explained when parents/guardians get engaged, children felt better about themselves and their learning; this improved their performance. Students felt supported and valued by their parents/guardians, their morale towards learning improved. Participants stressed that parental engagement plays a pivotal role in nurturing them holistically.
We need love, care, and support from our parents and guardians. If they are not supportive, then we will not focus in our school work (S5 & S17).

Most of the students (87% N= 20/23) perceived that when they are supported by parents/guardians in their learning, students will not drop out of school.

*When I see my parents engaging in my learning, I feel a sense of pride in my education that gives me the sense of responsibility and confidence to complete my education (S6).*

Students (87% N= 20/23) mentioned in interviews that when parents/guardians were engaged in their learning, they completed homework and schoolwork. Engaged parents/guardians used to monitor children’s homework. Student highlighted that conducive learning environment at home when parents provided assistance with learning.

*When my guardian support learning, they become engaged in my day to day learning therefore I have to finish all my school work (S1).*

Students (43% N= 10/23) agreed that they had better school attendance when their parents/guardians were engaged in their learning. Engaged parents/guardians used to monitor children’s absenteeism. Sentiments were shared by students

*“When our parents/guardians are engaged in our learning, they keep track of our absenteeism and we try not to miss school” (S1, S5 & S12)*

Students’ had various perceptions about parental engagement in their education. Participants’ stressed that there is a positive correlation between parental engagement and student achievement. Engaged parents/guardians contributed significantly in improving child’s education compared to those with limited engagement.

**4.3 Current Strategies used to Support Parental Engagement**

Parents, teachers and students used a number of strategies to support parental engagement at Dee Primary School. These strategies are presented in sub headings as follows:
4.3.1 Strategies used by Parents/guardians

Parent’s engagement is a crucial factor in a child’s education and has a significant impact on child, the school and family as a whole. When parents were asked regarding the kind of parental support provided to their children, the following six strategies were identified (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Types of Parental Support Provided towards Child’s Education

Responses to the question raised to parents during interview and through questionnaires revealed that majority of parents do provide educational support to their children. Majority of parents/guardians (90% N= 18/20)) have highlighted that they provided their children with all needed school stationaries for effective learning. Whereas, (10% N=2/20) guardians mentioned with the help of other relatives, they were able to provide all needed materials.

*I help my children with assisting them in their school work and providing them with all the stationaries they need for education (P10)*

Most of the parents/guardians (80% N=16/20) also highlighted they encouraged their children to behave properly in school. Children need to respect all teachers and rights of other genders. Parents/guardians consistently guided their children to behave properly in their daily routine of the school.
I always tell my daughter to behave properly in school because her behaviour will reflect our (parents) values (P19).

Meanwhile (80% N= 16/20) of parents/guardians helped their children with homework and assisted/supervised with home based learning. These parents/guardians mostly spent 1 to 2 hours daily in assisting their children with homework. Parent respondents stressed;

I mostly help my grandson with most of the school work. I monitor how long he studies and will assist him when he is in doubt with questions (GP1)

We (parents) mostly spent 1 to 2 hours daily to assist my child with homework and schoolwork (P 8).

During the interview, one of the parent highlighted

Homework is part and partial of learning. Children review at home what they had learnt in the school when doing home based learning. I help my children every day in their homework and if there is no homework, I encourage them to read (P14)

Overwhelmingly, (75% N= 15/20) of the parents confirmed being involved with child’s learning through attending parent teacher discussions, reading newsletters and communicating with the teacher. Parents of year 7 at Dee Primary School had an understanding of what is going with their child’s learning.

In addition, (65% N= 13/20) of parents/guardians mentioned that they provided their children with conducive learning space (a special allocated room/place) that encouraged their children to have positive attitudes to learning without any distractions. These parents were able to monitor their children’s learning. One parent mentioned that

A special place is allocated for my child to study and I as a parent must make sure that my child sees homework as a priority and I must help him in his homework by avoiding distractions like TV (P4)

However, (35% N=7/20) of parents/guardians stated that a special place was allocated to their children within a particular room and the child had to leave when visitors arrived.
Finally, (50% N=10/20) of the parents helped their children with moral support. Respondents highlighted that children need to feel loved and the need for positive self-esteem. This loving support from parents/guardians built trust and provided children with safe learning home environment. According to respondents, they encouraged their children to do well in school work. Participants have highlighted the following:

*I always ask about my child’s day at school. By sharing what he did, he will build a greater sense of trust from us (parents). The participants further responded that “we applaud our children for completing their homework (P1).*

*I don’t shout at my child when he is not able to finish his school work, I try to help and encourage him that he needs to try his level best to complete the required activities (P 4)*

The weight of evidence from questionnaires, interviews and *Talanoa* from participants suggests that strategies used by parents/guardians can have a direct and beneficial impact on student’s learning, behaviour and overall development. Parents and guardians are encouraged to support their children with their valuable contribution towards learning.

### 4.3.2 Strategies used by Teachers

The analysis of the data, both from teacher questionnaires and interviews showed that parental engagement strategies are essential ingredient in children’s effective learning. To explore strategies used further, the findings of the study are categorized under following themes (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Teacher Strategies Used for Parental Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent teacher interviews (PTIs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A two way communication (Using social media/text messages/phone calls to connect with parents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging parents in school activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings highlight that although parental engagement was generally viewed as a crucial component towards effective student learning, strategies used by teachers at Dee Primary School varied. The collated data showed the need for effective parental engagement strategies and its importance was expressed and explained by teacher respondents using questionnaires, interviews and *Talanoa*. The most commonly used strategies are PTIs and a two-way communication. Majority of the teacher respondents (100% N=10/10) stressed that they are using PTIs within their class level to improve parental engagement towards student’s learning. Teacher participants in *Talanoa* session highlighted that PTIs is an effective way for both teachers and parents/guardians to discuss as how the child was doing in the classroom as well as at home. A teacher respondent in a *Talanoa* session mentioned;

> PTIs boost parents'/guardians engagement in classroom and help in promoting positive outcomes for their children, teachers and school as a whole (T5).

Another teacher linked PTIs with improved student behaviour and motivation;

> PTIs can be used as a means of motivating a child to do better in his/her school work. This can be done by appreciating the child in front of their parents/guardians that their good behaviour in school does not go unnoticed as everything they do is being observed by teachers. This will allow a child to display their best behaviour and will think twice before engaging in disruptive behaviours (T8)

Furthermore, (100 % N=10/10) of teacher respondents highlighted they used a two-way communication in creating a strong bond between parents/guardians. It was evident through data collected via teacher questionnaire and interview that when families of different background are engaged through a two-way communication at class level, teachers were better able to support children’s development and well-being. Teacher respondents have highlighted that a two-way communication bridged the gap between teachers and parents;

> As teachers we should not have communication breakdown with families (T4)
A two-way communication with the parents/guardians was maintained through phone calls, text messages, and social media opportunities that connected classroom activities with families.

Whenever a child does something wrong, I call the parents or guardians and inform them first so that the child does not repeat the mistake which can hinder his/her performance. Children are taught to obey their parents and discussing with them, the children might listen more to their parents than to teachers (T3).

Another teacher strategy used to encourage parental support is through newsletters. (80% N=8/10) teacher participant used newsletters to keep parents/guardians in the loop about what has happened in the classroom and school.

Moreover, (70% N=7/10) teachers mentioned they encouraged parental participation in activities that required parental support and assistance. Teachers engaged parents/guardians during sports day, school celebrations, and camping. However, teachers also claimed that inviting parents during teaching hours took a lot of teaching time.

The reason for not inviting parents/guardians during teaching hours is that it takes a lot of teaching time as we have to finish class syllabus within two terms (T8).

Majority of teacher respondents (60% N= 6/10) used home visits as a strategy to connect classroom learning with hard to reach families. Home visit was a great beginning to effective relationship between teachers and families and provided opportunities for teachers to learn more about the child and the family.

Meeting parents in schools can be unapproachable while talking over the phone can be distancing. Therefore, by having home visits, parents may be more likely to share their concerns, speak honestly and make the teacher a part of their lives (T9).

Teachers used a variety of parental engagement strategies to engage parents/guardians in the learning process of their children. Ensuring that parents/guardians are brought to the school early in the academic terms or before
students develop problems, so that it bridges the gap between school and home environments while improving students’ education.

### 4.3.3 Strategies Used by Students

Findings from questionnaire and interview indicate two (2) most common strategies used by students to increase parental support in their learning as shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Common Strategies Used by Students**

Majority of student respondent (91% N= 21/23) mentioned that information given by teachers were relayed to parents/guardians. Whereas (9% N = 2/23) of students did not relay information. Students also mentioned that if parents/guardians were not able to read, students used to explain in their own language so that they were informed about school activities. Respondents mentioned

*We used to give newsletters and other information given by teachers to our parents so that they don’t miss out with school events (S5, S9 & S21)*

Students (61% N=14/23) mentioned they encouraged their parents/guardians to volunteer in school programs and events. When parents/guardians took part in school programs like celebrations, camping and sports day, students felt a sense of happiness that their parent’s contribution large or small was significant.
When I see my parent involving in school programs, it makes me happy that my parent is interested in my education. This makes me to do better in class (S 6)

Students agreed they play a pivotal role in encouraging parental support and relaying information to parents/guardians. These are great ways to keep parents/guardians in the circle about what is happening in classroom and school.

4.4 Factors Affecting Parental Engagement

Although parental engagement is fundamental for effective child’s education, the nature and extent of such engagement is debatable amongst teachers and parents. The research study was undertaken to explore voices of research participants (parents, teachers and students) regarding challenges to parental engagement at Dee Primary School.

4.4.1 Challenges faced by parents/guardians

Six (6) factors were identified as constraints to parental engagement. The table shows most prevalent factor to least prevalent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of factors</th>
<th>Parent’s Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflexible work hours</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s attitude</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status (level of income)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging School Curriculum</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family background</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings show that greatest challenges that parents face while engaging in their child’s education is due to inflexible work hours. Findings revealed that majority of the parents/guardians (75% N= 15/20) are casual workers involved in farming, doing domestic duties, and some work as house maids thus they were not able to fully assist their children’s schoolwork.
I am not able to help my child in his homework or school work because I arrive late to home from work (P10). The respondent further claimed that

After coming home from work, I have to cook food for the family. After cooking I wash the clothes, feed the family and go to sleep because I have to catch the first bus that goes to town (P10)

I find very little time to support my child’s learning as I am busy selling vegetables for my family income. When I return home I am too tired (P6)

We are working parents which leaves us with insufficient time to visit schools to discuss issues regarding our children (P16)

Findings revealed that mothers solely took the responsibility of helping their children after school. Whereas fathers were busy with farm work and other household chores. A mother in the interview highlighted;

I always support my children in their school work by taking out time when I return home after work. My husband on the other hand is not able to help because he gets tired with his farm work (P3).

13 out of 20 parents (65%) also highlighted that their child’s own attitude is another barrier to their engagement. Parents/guardians claimed that their children have negative attitude towards their learning which often inhibits their learning. Children needed freedom in their studies. These parents/guardians also mentioned that their children sometimes forgot to inform them regarding school programs.

I am always available for my child to help him in his studies, when we try to help him, he always says that he can do on his own and doesn’t need anyone’s help (P4)

When we ask our child to study, she will just say that she is tired and there’s no homework from school (P5).

Moreover, (50% N= 10/20) parents/guardians further pointed out that they face day-to-day challenges in their homes during their child’s learning. Competing demands in their parental lives such as demands from more than one child, and their socio-economic status limits their engagement. Six of these 10 respondents relied on social welfare assistance and were not able to meet their child’s educational needs.
I have a total of 4 grandchildren to look after. I am only depended on social welfare assistance for livelihood. This makes it hard for me to help my grandchildren in their education (GP3)

Moreover, (35% N= 7/20) parent participants highlighted they are illiterate and innumerate and were not confident helping their children’s learning. Based on parent’s interview, there are illiterate grandparents’ and parents’ with little or no experience of school are unable to help their children.

I cannot read and write as a result I am not able to help my child with his studies (GP 2).

I was a school dropout and I am unable to read and write thus I don’t have any idea as what my child is learning at home (P11).

Parents/guardians (35% N= 7/20) did not adequately assist their child’s learning due to challenging curriculum. These parent participants pointed out that educational concepts used now are more challenging to the ones parents were taught.

We face difficulties while helping our children with homework as it contains a very high level of vocabularies which requires the use of internet. We don’t have access to internet which affects our engagement (P12)

The concepts in mathematics and science that were previously taught in secondary level are now taught at primary levels. It is very difficult for us as well as our children to understand (P16).

Finally, research findings assert that grandparents and single parent also faced difficulties while raising their children. (30% N= 6/20) of parent participants interviewed were grandparents (N= 4/20) and single mothers (N= 2/20) who were responsible for their child’s education. They faced difficulties in monitoring their children’s school work due to work schedule, financial burden and other family obligations.

Sometimes I as a mother come to an unstable state where I become helpless in supporting my child’s learning due to work commitments and income level (P9).
Findings have highlighted that parents’ know that their engagement is pivotal to their child’s success however their engagement is being hampered by several challenges. Parents need a very strong commitment of engagement. As few respondents pointed out that parents/guardians should not use challenges as an excuse to neglect their child’s learning. Parents’ should come up with solutions to deal with the issues for the benefit of child’s success.

4.4.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers

Based on teacher questionnaire, interviews and Talanoa, teachers faced certain challenges in engaging parents in child’s education. Seven (7) challenges were identified as constraints to parental engagement. Table 6 below shows the different challenges that teachers faced.

**Table 6: Challenges Faced by Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Factors</th>
<th>Teacher Responses N= 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents not attending PTIs and CAPS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited parental/guardian support</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towards homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to reach parents</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s attitude</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All teacher respondents (100% N=10/10) pointed out the major challenge they are facing is when parents do not attend PTIs and CAPS as scheduled. Dee Primary School organizes PTIs and CAPS once every term between teachers and parents to discuss child’s schoolwork and ways as how teachers and parents can work together
to improve child’s learning. Teachers pointed out that only few parents turned up for the discussions.

*During PTIs and CAPS only concerned parents turn up for the discussion compared to least bothered parents and upon enquiring, the reason they give is that they were busy (T3).*

A teacher further claimed that,

*During my first term end PTI, only 15 parents out of 23 parents turned up for the discussion. Even the left over parents did not show up (T6). The time when these parents will show up is when we tell them that they are receiving assistance for their children (T6).*

Other challenges teachers faced while engaging parents/guardians to child’s learning included limited parental support towards child’s homework. (100% N= 10/10) teacher respondents pointed parents/guardians did not check whether their child have done their homework. Every day teachers came across with students with unattended homework which had affected child’s performance in class and exams. Homework policy of Dee Primary School states that a parent/guardian needs to sight their child’s homework by putting signature at the bottom of page or worksheet which was set for homework, still parents/guardians failed to sign.

*Parents were encouraged during CAPS to sight their children’s homework and with pencil initial at the bottom of the page so that the teacher has an idea that homework was checked by parents. Despite this, majority parents showed no interest (T2)*

In addition to this, teachers also highlighted that when students stayed with their guardians or grandparents, those students do not take things seriously because grandparents do not follow on them, which has affected student’s learning.

*Grandparents are not involved in child’s learning because they give less value to schooling and to some instances gave children tiring household duties which used children’s time and distracted them from homework/schoolwork (T10)*

Additionally, teacher respondent highlighted,
Overtired learners often lacked motivation, concentrated less in class, become emotionally challenged, which in turn hampers their learning (T9) (80% N=8/10) teachers also pointed out during interviews ‘shortage of time’ hinders their desire to engage more parents. MoEHA requires teachers to complete their year syllabus by the end of two terms. Finishing coverage and giving remedial questions requires a lot of teacher time therefore they are not fully able to invite parents during teaching time. A teacher during an interview mentioned, 

I send home newsletters about upcoming class/school based events and encourage parents for their support but the missing link seems to be time. The biggest factor that I came across in my 10 years of teaching is I never have enough time to keep myself from being more involved. Parents truly want what is best for their children but working a full time job and other obligations makes it challenging to engage parents (T10)

Majority (60% N=6/10) teacher respondents expressed ‘hard to reach parents’ as an obstacle to parental engagement. Hard to reach parents/guardians neither attended school meetings nor responded to communications. Some parents/guardians were reluctant to participate because of their own negative school experiences.

There are a few hard to reach parents in my class that limits our full engagement. When we want to contact these parents, the contact provided in FEMIS is not valid, they live very far or they are not available for the invitation (T9).

Additionally, teachers also highlighted that parents’ attitude towards teachers is also a challenging factor that limits their full engagement. (40% N= 4/10) teacher participants mentioned that there were few parents/guardians who had negative feeling towards teacher’s role and some parents also had their own pessimistic belief that teachers are responsible for their child’s learning.

Parents did not respect us when we invite them to school. Many times they challenged and questioned our decisions. They always believe that their children are correct (T4).

There are some parents in my class who are neither involved in school nor get involved in their child’s learning at home (T7).
Data from *Talanoa* session with teacher participants also revealed ‘Child’s attitude’ as a barrier that hampers parents and teachers’ engagement. (30% N= 3/10) mentioned that there are children who don’t relay information such as newsletters or invitation forms to their parents. There are children who keep their parent away from schools so that parents don’t discover the difficulties or behavioural issues the child faces.

*There are some children in my class who don’t want their parents to get involved and there’s nothing we can do* (T10)

Finally, (30% N= 3/10) teacher respondents in *Talanoa* session mentioned ‘language barrier’ as a factor limiting communication between parents/guardians. Teachers reported they were not comfortable with parents/guardians who were not fluent in English or the language teachers used.

*Sometimes we invite parents to discuss about their child performance. It becomes difficult for us to communicate with parents who are not well versed with English* (T2).

Findings from teacher respondents suggest that learning becomes challenging when teachers are faced with challenges.

**4.4.3 Challenges Faced by Students**

Based on observation and interview, student’s learning is also being hindered by factors such as parents’ level of education, household chores and home disturbances. The three (3) factors identified are presented in Figure 8.
Students responded that their learning is also been affected by limited engagement of parents/guardians. Majority (57% N= 13/23) of students pointed out that it was very hard for them to seek proper guidance after school from parents’ because of lower level of parent’s education.

*My parents’ have only primary level of education so they are not able to provide guidance in my school work because the subject is very hard (S23).*

Another student further highlighted

*I am staying with my grandparents. They are old. They are not able to help me in my studies because they themselves did not go to school (S12)*

Based on researcher’s observation in class, due to lower level of parents’ education, children lacked guidance in their homework, studies and revision. Student participants sought help from elder siblings when parents were unable to help.

*I go to my elder sister for help and when she is busy she is not able to help me so I have to go to her when she is free (S23).*

Students mentioned that ‘household chores’ became an obstacle in their learning. Based on interviews, (35% N= 8/23) of respondents mentioned that daily after school they spent 1-2 hours doing household chores which resulted in lack of time for doing school activities such as homework and revision.
After school I help my parents with collecting firewood, helping in cooking and looking after younger siblings. These duties make me tired therefore I am not able to finish my homework or revise well for exams (S22).

Additional responses from student participant revealed ‘home disturbances’ as a factor that hindered learning. (26% N= 6/23) of respondents highlighted visitors, and loud music from Television distracted them from learning. Neighbors came for grog session which disturbed child’s learning at home. A student claimed

Sometimes while I am studying, my neighbors used to come for grog session and they stayed for long hours which disturbed my revision (S3).

Findings point out that children faced a variety of challenges that impedes their learning, thus, the relationship between parents and learners remains to be a major component towards learning.

4.5 Summary

Findings presented in this chapter are obtained from parents, students and teachers of Dee Primary School. Parental engagement offers numerous benefits to parents, teachers, and students. Parents/guardians become aware of child’s learning, keep track of school events, and built positive parent-child relationship. Teachers have higher morale, improves parent-teacher communication, able to understand child’s background and organize better school programs. Students get motivated and have good attendance. Whereas a shared perception between parents, teachers and students is that parental engagement improves child’s behaviour and performance, child completes homework, and has fewer school dropout issues.

Participants identified a number of strategies used to support parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Strategies used by parents in child’s education included sending children to school with needed materials, encouraging better behaviour, checking homework, involvement in child’s learning, providing learning space and moral support. Teacher strategies included PTIs, a two way communication through phone calls and text, giving newsletters, engaging parents/guardians in school based activities and home visits. Student strategies used to increase parental engagement included providing parents/guardians with school and class information, and
encouraging volunteer work. Respondents stated that child’s success can only come from a real partnership between the parent, teacher and child.

Respondents faced numerous challenges that limited parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Challenges faced by parents/guardians included inflexible work hours, child’s attitude, socio-economic status, illiteracy, challenging curriculum, and family background. Teacher challenges included parents not attending PTIs and CAPS, limited parental support towards homework, shortage of time, hard to reach parents, parent’s and child’s attitude, and language barriers. Parent’s level of education, household chores and home disturbances were some challenges faced by students of Year 7 in their learning. The next chapter is on the discussion of the research findings.
CHAPTER 5
Discussion of Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the discussion of the findings guided by three research questions as described in chapter 1. The discussion examined the perception of parents, teachers and students regarding parental engagement at Dee Primary School. The discussion is also based on strategies used to support parental engagement, and challenges faced by the parents, teachers and students. The discussions are as follows:

5.2 Perceptions Regarding Parental Engagement

The perceptions of parents, teachers and students regarding parental engagement at Dee Primary School are presented under the following sub headings.

5.2.1 Parents’ Beliefs

Generally, the parents interviewed had positive perceptions on parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Parents/guardians believed that they themselves can be a great influence to their child’s learning. They perceived that the best they can do is to be there for their children. Findings depict that parental engagement allows parents/guardians to have better understanding about their child’s learning. The study findings depicted a parent/guardian who understands what their child is learning has a better sense of their child’s capabilities. By being engaged in child’s learning, parents/guardians are able to monitor their children’s learning. Similar findings have been reported elsewhere on active parental engagement, increased interaction and contribution to their children’s learning (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Epstein, 2010).

Over 90% parent respondent highlighted that parental engagement offered parents and guardians to have a better understanding about school programs. This kept parents/guardians in the loop of school events. As parents’ became aware of child’s learning, they kept track of school events and were more likely to provide valuable support towards school events. This is supported by Epstein (2018) that
engaged parents have stronger bonds and commitments towards child, teachers and schools.

The study also confirmed that when parents/guardians provided support and assistance, the parent-child-teacher relationship improved compared to parents with limited support. Parents stated daily communication with their children enabled them to know more about child’s school life. Parents who understand their child can develop more positive relationship with the child and the school (Bunijevac, 2017; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; McNeal, 2014). The study depicted that parent’s satisfaction with their child’s performance and behaviour is due to their consistent support. Therefore, this study revealed that parents/guardians need to be well versed with their parenting roles in child’s education, so that valuable support is given for better performance.

5.2.2 Teachers’ Beliefs

The study also viewed teachers’ perception regarding parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Findings revealed that all teachers’ recognized parental support as a most prevalent factor in child’s education. Teacher’s felt that there are improvements in child’s learning when parents/guardians provided support and assistance. Consistent parental support positively affects student’s achievement in class (Shute, 2011; Audrey, 2018; Guan & Duan, 2018). However, limited parental engagement has negative influence on students’ learning (Caplan, 2000).

This study depicts that effective parental engagement in child’s learning consistently improves communication and relationship between parents and teachers. Teachers of Dee Primary School believed that when parents and teachers work together, it builds a stronger understanding and trust and when parents and teachers trust each other, both of them will be able to work hand in hand in supporting child’s learning and have better school programs. Working in collaboration also bridges the gap between school and home environments. Parents and teachers work together to facilitate the best learning environment for students (Fan, 2001; Fraser-Thill, 2020; MoEHA, 2016).

All teacher respondents linked positive parent-teacher relationship with higher morale and job satisfaction. It was revealed that when parents and teachers work together, children’s progress and areas of weaknesses are easily monitored. A strong bond between parents/guardians allows teachers to effectively plan learning
support for those students who need guidance. (Baker et al., 2016; Booth & Dunn, 2013; Harris & Goodall, 2008; McNeal, 2014; Savacool, 2011). However, teachers in *Talanoa* session mentioned that sometimes it become stressful dealing with parents/guardians having limited support towards their child’s learning. Students of disengaged parents usually show lack of interest in school work, have unattended homework and behavioural issues. Non-supportive parents often promote school failure and make teacher’s work stressful (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lingam et al., 2017; Omolade et al., 2014).

The findings depict that most teachers consider parental engagement as a tool in understanding about student’s background. These understanding help teachers to implement activities suitable to child’s need. Teachers during *Talanoa* stated that learning where students come from, the easier it becomes for teachers to know their culture, family and home environment. The finding is supported by studies that student’s background knowledge helps educators to better help students in the classroom and to receive more support and assistance from home (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Allen, 2013; Baker et al., 2016). Therefore, the study depicts that teachers must understand that parents/guardians support is pivotal in a child’s education.

**5.2.3 Students’ Beliefs**

The findings of the study also highlighted perceptions of students’ regarding parental engagement in their learning. Students’ during interview stated they want their parents/guardians to be engaged in their learning. When parents/guardians get engaged and show their interest in learning, academic attainments of students improve (Hussain et al., 2018; Minke, 2010; Prasad, 2016). Over 90% student believed that parental support increases their motivation to do well in their learning. Parents overtly showing their support and assistance in child’s learning develop encouragement and motivation (Shute, 2011; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018). However, based on teacher’s observation, the academic achievement of students with disengaged parents are found to be unsatisfactory. Students with limited parental support have to struggle on their own which affects their learning (Garbacz, 2019; Lara & Saracostti, 2019).

It is also highlighted in this research study that some students linked parental support with better attendance. Almost 40% of students interviewed mentioned that
parents/guardians used to monitor their attendance. Engaged parents usually keep track of child’s absenteeism which improves school attendance. Students with supportive parents don’t just have better performance: child’s attendance also improves (Banswal, 2014; Boonk, 2018). Therefore, according to the findings, students should understand that when their parents/guardians are engaged in learning, students’ develop a lifelong love of learning and stay in school.

5.2.4 Shared Perception between Parents, Teachers and Students

A shared perception between parents, teachers and students revealed that parental engagement leads to fewer school dropouts. Engaged parents/guardians keep track of their child’s learning and motivated children to complete education. All parents/guardians interviewed expected their children to complete their primary and secondary education and progress to tertiary. All teachers during Talanoa stated children whose parents remain engaged usually make a better transition to other year levels and are less likely to drop out of school. Great participation from parents and guardians in all aspects of child’s school life creates a child’s desire to complete education (Chandra, 2009; Rafiq et al., 2013; Robinson, 2016).

In this study, a shared perception between teachers and students confirmed that support from parents/guardians allow students to complete their homework. More than 90% of teachers and students mentioned that parental engagement is linked with child’s completed homework and school work. Teachers and students stated that when parents supported child’s learning at home, the child made sure that schoolwork and homework was completed on time. A child is more likely to complete his/her school work successfully when parents/guardians monitor their learning (Bull et al., 2008; Chand, 2017).

In this study, all teachers and students linked parental engagement with improved behaviour. A parent’s interest and encouragement in child’s learning can affect child’s attitude towards school, classroom conduct, and his/her overall behaviour (Jeynes, 2010; Lingam et al., 2017; Williams, 2008). Teachers stated that students used to behave when parents/guardians monitored child’s learning. Whereas students in interview mentioned that parents/guardians used to encourage them to behave and show respect to all teachers and students in school. Teachers often earn greater respect from students whose parents are actively engaged in the day to day learning of their child (Harris & Goodall, 2008). However, Epstein (2010) stated that
not all parental engagement leads to improve child’s achievement and behaviour. Therefore, the findings depict that parental engagement is a shared responsibility between parents/guardians, teachers, and students to facilitate the best learning experience.

5.3 Current Strategies Used to Support Parental Engagement

This present study also sought strategies currently used by parents, teachers and students to support parental engagement. These findings are discussed as follows:

5.3.1 Strategies Used by Parents/guardians

Parents/guardians believed that their engagement in child’s education continues to play a crucial role. Parents/guardians mentioned they continue to motivate and encourage their child’s learning. Supportive parents help children to be positive, healthy and good life long learner (Rafiq et al., 2013; Salin, 2017). It was revealed in the study that over 90% of parents/guardians made sure their children go to school with all required school materials. Parents stated that required stationeries prepared their children for learning. School supplies made the strongest impact on class preparedness, participation and interest in learning (Shakur, 2012).

This present study sheds light that although parents/guardians may not be aware as how to help in their child’s learning, with support and assistance they can become engaged in child’s learning. Almost 80% parents/guardians in interviews mentioned they guided and encouraged their children to behave in class and school. They made sure they do not receive any complaints from teachers as child’s behaviour reflected parental values. Children learn to behave quickly when they get positive and consistent guidance from parents (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Epstein, 2018).

It was found that almost 80% parents/guardians assisted and monitored their child’s homework and school work. Helping children with homework is an important responsibility of parents as it directly supports the learning (Chand, 2017; Prasad, 2016). Due to challenging curriculum, Year 7 students of Dee Primary School require more parental support in their home based learning. If parents were not available, other family members helped and guided children with homework. Parental support in child’s homework helps develop self-confidence and motivation in class (Banswal, 2014; Baker et al., 2016).
The study showed that 75% of the parents/guardians had a keen interest in their child’s education. Parents/guardians stated they been engaged through PTI meetings, read newsletters and communicated regularly with teachers and the school. Such behaviours by parents/guardians show their interest in their child’s education and maintaining a good relationship with the teacher and school. Being involved in child’s education bridges the gap between teachers and parents (Chohan & Khan, 2010; Hafiz & Farik, 2017; Matshe, 2014)

The findings also showed parents/guardians played an important role in their child’s education. They provided their children with conducive learning space and moral support. A special learning space was allocated to children to do their homework and schoolwork. Parents ensured their children were not distracted by TV, loud music or even by visitors. Setting a special place for learning is vital to avoid disturbances and to ensure that effective learning takes place (Townsend & Elder, 1994; Sapungan, 2014). Most parents/guardians regularly talked with their children regarding school activities. They provided an environment of trust and respect. Regular communication and feedback enable children to make responsible decision and resolve conflicts non-violently in schools (Amponsah et al., 2018; Wilson, 2011). Therefore, the study had depicted the more parents/guardians engage themselves in their child’s learning, the more improvement would be prevalent in their academic achievement.

5.3.2 Strategies Used by Teachers

The findings of the study depict that teachers of Dee Primary School used a variety of strategies to support parental engagement. Based on Talanoa, the perception of teachers was that children make numerous shifts between home and school environment when teachers connect both the learning context with strategies that bridges the gap between the teacher and the parent. Effective parental engagement strategies are essential factors in child’s success and can even bridge achievement gaps among group of students if used effectively (Allen, 2013; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

All teachers used PTIs in their respective classes to engage parents in child’s education. PTIs are organized once every term between teachers and parents to discuss school work, class observations, and on any issues affecting child. It also enables teachers to learn from parents/guardians about student’s strengths, needs,
behaviours and learning styles that could be used to improve learning and teaching. PTIs connects the link between parent and teacher as the teacher knows how the child behaves at school and the parents know how the child is doing at the home (Baker et al., 2016; Reddy, 2016; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018).

Over 90% teachers of Dee Primary School maintained a two-way communication between parents/guardians to build a strong understanding and trust. Teachers used social media, text messages and phone calls to connect with parents for: reasons for child being absent, issues affecting child in school (i.e. sickly or need care), or for special consent that needs explanation. Review of relevant literatures (Allen, 2013; Audrey, 2018; Taylor, 2015; Harris & Goodall, 2008) have pointed out that increasing the frequency of communication between educators and parents will provide opportunities to connect and actively engaged in the child’s education.

The case study school has a whole school communication plan where teachers are encouraged to provide newsletters to parents and guardians. Over 80% of teachers stated they used newsletters to connect class events with families. Newsletters by teachers mostly included classroom learnings, details of upcoming events, and suggestions as how parents/guardians can provide support towards their child’s learning. Newsletters are given once a term to parents/guardians through their child. Newsletters ensure useful information are effectively conveyed to all parents and guardians in a most accessible way, making parents/guardians to have equal access to school based opportunities (Taylor, 2015).

Teachers also encouraged parental participation in school activities that required parental support and assistance. Engaging parents in school activities build meaningful relationship between teachers and parents (Williams & Fan, 2010). Teachers encouraged parents/guardians to participate in activities that required parental support and assistance such as sports day, school celebrations and camping. Having parents/guardians in school activities was wonderful because they were able to see what their child was interested in and also seen behaviours that teachers were trying to discuss that may not be seen at home.

The study also depicts that teachers’ used ‘home visit’ as a strategy to maintain connection with few hard to reach parents. Teachers visited children’s home to make parents/guardians a central part in their child’s learning. Home visit was done on a termly basis. Home visit allowed teachers to learn about hardships faced by some families. It was an opportunity teachers used to speak privately about
the needs and development of the child with their parents/guardians. Teachers pointed out that home visits promote positive parenting practices that help them prepare their children for school. Home visits give teachers and parents the opportunity to meet and collaboratively talk for the benefit of child (Jafarov, 2015). Therefore, teachers should consistently use strategies to increase and improve parental engagement towards child’s education.

5.3.3 Student Strategies

Year 7 students also played a pivotal role in engaging parents in school based activities as well as in their learning. Over 90% students stated they relayed all relevant information given by teachers to their parents/guardians. Students took information like: upcoming class and school events, exam dates, and other school related matters that needed attention from parents/guardians. Newsletters were also given on time which showed that students were interested to keep parents/guardians aware of their learning. Due to some parents’ illiteracy, students read and explain the content of the newsletters to their parents/guardians using their language. Findings depict that relayed information enabled parents/guardians to keep a track of school events. Continuous information keep parents in the loop about what is happening and expected to happen in class and school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Baker et al., 2016)

The study depicted that almost 60% of students also encouraged their parents/guardians to volunteer in school programs and events. Student’s encouragement enabled parents/guardians participation in school programs like sports day, school celebrations and camping. This showed children taking a keen interest to keep parents/guardians in the loop of school activities. Parents volunteering made students to feel their parents/guardians contribution, small or big, is very significant in their learning. Families who volunteer in school activities grow more familiar and comfortable with their child’s school and teacher (Epstein, 2010; Blackwell & Hornby, 2018; Kedrayete, 1999). Therefore, it is vital for students to engage parents/guardians to make a significant difference in their learning.

5.4 Challenges to Parental Engagement in Child’s Learning.

The challenges faced by participants are presented under the following sub headings; parents/guardians challenges, teacher challenges, and the student challenges.
5.4.1 Challenges faced by Parents/Guardians

The findings from parents/guardians claimed they are faced with numerous hindrances that limits their active engagement in child’s learning, both at home and in school. Despite all parents/guardians wanting to support their child’s learning, not all parents/guardians were fully equipped with resources and opportunities.

The present study revealed that parents ‘inflexible work hours’ disengaged over 75% parents/guardians from supporting their child’s learning both at home and in school. It was found that parents/guardians are mostly engaged in farming and domestic duties which makes them tired and they are unable to provide sufficient and quality time towards their child’s learning. Over-tired parents due to work schedules did not offer much support towards home studies. Parents who are either employed or engaged in casual employment leaves them with very limited time to check their child’s progress or help in their homework (Boonk, 2018; Omolade et al., 2014; Audrey, 2018). Overtime and shift work also made parents difficult to take part in school events such as PTIs, CAPS and AGMs. Fijian parents with lack of time due to work commitment and shift work do not offer much conditioning in child’s learning (Chandra, 2009).

It was found from parents/guardians that ‘child’s attitude’ was another factor that hindered their participation. 65% parents/guardians have pointed out that they are willing to help their children with home and school based learning, but the fact is that the child did not want help. The attitude of students is that parents/guardians are confusing them by teaching in a completely different way to the way their teacher teaches. Children wanted privacy in their home studies. As children grow older, they feel the desire for freedom in their learning (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). It was also depicted that few students did not relay information regarding class and school events. Sometimes students failed to provide newsletters on time. Students deliberately fail to inform their parent of events in the school where parents are to participate (Harris & Goodall, 2008). These parents used to get information from neighbors.

The study also depicted that due to socio-economic status (income level and illiteracy), parents/guardians find difficulties in providing support and assistance in child’s learning. Parents/guardians stated they faced challenges due to competing demands in their parental lives such as demands from more than one-child. Few
parents/guardians were relied on social welfare assistance and some getting low wages. They faced difficulty in buying exercise books, uniform, bags, and sandals which affected student’s learning. Parental income for rural families influences a child’s level of educational attainments (Chandra, 2009). However, these kind of families were mostly assisted by Non-Government Organizations.

Furthermore, parents/guardians inability to read and write is another obstacle to parents’ participation. Lack of reading and writing abilities is a barrier to parental engagement (Matshe, 2014; Salin, 2017). This study showed that almost 35% of the parents/guardians lack the necessary knowledge as how to assist their children with literacy and numeracy therefore consider themselves unable to help in homework. Caregivers should possess literacy and a numeracy skill to assist in child’s learning (Cojocariu & Mares, 2014). However, these parents/guardians assisted their children to stay motivated and convey their expectations to their children.

The findings also depict that parents’/guardians’ with lower educational background found it challenging in comprehending the content of the textbook and worksheet given by teachers, and as a result they are unable to help in their child’s learning. Parents found Year 7 curriculum more challenging as it requires more critical thinking. Few parents did not help in child’s homework due to average primary education. These parents appeared to be less engaged than other educated parents. When parents have not been to school themselves and remains to be innumerate and illiterate, they cannot help their children with challenging curriculum (Shute, 2011; Bunijevac, 2017).

The study also depicted ‘family background’ as a factor impeding parental engagement. Few year 7 students stay with their grandparents and single mothers. Grandparents and single mothers gave limited parental support to children due to other family obligations. Some grandparents had poor health conditions thus were not able to attend PTIs and other school activities. These kind of family provided limited support towards child’s homework as a lot of time was taken on household chores. Family disruptions can lead to poor assistance by reducing the amount of time parents’ spend in child’s education (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Therefore, the study confirms that parents/guardians encounter some obstacles that limit their engagement in child’s education.
5.4.2 Challenges faced by Teachers

Despite recognizing parental support, engaging parents in child’s education remains to be a major challenge for teachers. The present study depicts that parents/guardians do not attend PTIs and CAPS as scheduled. Dee Primary School organizes PTIs and CAPS once a term to notify parents regarding child progress and the importance of their engagement in child’s education. Not all parents used to attend PTIs and CAPS. Teachers of Dee Primary School never had 100% parent/guardian attendance in previous PTIs and CAPS. Thus, teachers were not able to discuss the performance of a child with those parents who do not tend up for the PTIs. Teachers specifically mentioned that those parents who attend meetings, are those parents whose children are doing well compared to children with disengaged parents. PTIs help teachers to update parents on the progress of the child and give them ideas as how to improve their child’s performance (Caplan, 2000; Savacool, 2011; Harris & Goodall, 2008). However, if parents aren’t being engaged in the PTIs, they will not be aware of child’s strengths, weaknesses, behaviour and learning styles (Townsend & Elder, 1994; Minke, 2010).

The study found that teachers also came across with limited parental/guardian support towards child’s home learning. Students used to have unattended homework and schoolwork. At times students were not prepared for exams. Unattended homework and lack of revision affected many children’s performance in class. Despite giving homework policy, some parents/guardians did not sight their child’s homework. The findings also depict that some parents/guardians were not actively engaged in child’s home learning. These students in class did not take learning seriously because some parents/guardians did not follow on them while at home. These parents also had high expectation from teachers. Lack of parental support and assistance have a negative impact on students’ homework and schoolwork and ultimately affects child’s educational development and success (Baker et al., 2016).

The researcher in this study had found that over 80% of teachers are not able to engage parents due to ‘shortage of time’. Primary teachers been in full-time teaching from morning to afternoon with other school obligations hindered the desire to engage more parents. Inviting parents during school hours took a lot of teaching time as teachers are required to finish class curriculum within two terms. Teachers had to rush to complete their syllabus once teaching time was lost. Finding time
during the school day to invite parents/guardians means losing a break or stepping out of class; meetings during lesson take up important teaching time (Wilson, 2011).

The findings also reveal that ‘hard to reach’ parents/guardians are also a contributing factor in child’s learning. Findings from teacher depicts that not all parents are keen to engage in their child’s education. Over 60% teachers stated that there are some parents in their class who are neither available for PTIs nor respond to communications. These parents also fail to inform teachers regarding child’s absenteeism. When teachers contact these parents, the phone contact provided was incorrect. There remains a significant group of hard to reach parents for whom the practicalities of effective engagement present a real challenge for many school teachers (Magwa & Mugari, 2017).

The study also investigated that at times teachers are being defied by attitude of parents and students. Findings revealed that some parents did not respect the decision of been invited to school. Some parents/guardians used to question teachers for their decisions. It becomes difficult when parents’ make teachers’ responsible for the overall development of their child. Few parents will not visit schools when invited by class teachers or Head Teacher regarding child’s behaviour. There are even students who don’t relay information regarding school events to their parents/guardians. At times students shared wrong information with their parents/guardians. These activities limited parent’s participation at Dee Primary School. Negative attitudes towards school, teacher, and education can put a damper on teaching and learning (Chohan & Khan, 2010).

The findings of the study also revealed that ‘language barrier’ is also an obstacle between teachers and parents when it comes to communication. During PTIs and over phone calls, teachers faced difficulties in communicating with parents/guardians from different language background. Teachers were not able to convey important information regarding a child to the parents/guardians. Not using the language, the other person understands makes communication ineffective and prevents message from being conveyed (Williams & Fan, 2010). Language was also an obstacle to home visits. Some teachers were unable to have flowing and meaningful discussion with parents/guardians who were not fluent in English or with teacher’s spoken language. Communication becomes difficult in situations where teachers and parents don’t understand each other’s language (Williams & Fan, 2010; Baker et al., 2016). According to the study, teachers were faced with challenges that
can hinder their job performance. Therefore, parents'/guardians should accept
teachers as partners in their child’s education, and working collaboratively will
provide the best chances of success to their children.

5.4.3 Challenges faced by children

Students also encountered some challenges in their learning. The study
indicates that due to parents/guardians education level, some students find it very
hard to seek proper guidance from their parents/guardians. The study also indicate
that 55% parents'/guardians have average secondary education, 40% with primary
education, and 5% did not attend school. Majority parents/guardians found
curriculum difficult so did not help children with homework. Sometimes children
were unable to finish their homework because there was no one at home who could
help them compared to students with educated parents and elder siblings. Teachers of
Dee Primary School also stated that children lacked proper guidance in their
homework which in turn hinders their class performance. Generally, educated
parents/guardians spend more time with their children’s homework than parents with
less educated (Magwa & Mugari, 2017).

The study also depict that children’s home based learning is also been
affected by household chores. Almost 35% students after school often do at least 1 –
2 hours of household chores daily. Household chores mostly included helping
parents/guardians with washing, collecting firewood/coconut, and looking after
younger siblings. Grandparents mostly relied on children for household chores.
Household chores took away studying time from students. Students became tired
while studying, and therefore being distracted from their homework and schoolwork.
If a child is overloaded with chores, they will have less time for studying (Blackwell
& Hornby, 2018).

Finally, ‘home disturbances’ such as watching television and listening to
music with high volumes also distracted students while studying. Visitors during
child’s study periods distracted child’s learning. Due to distractions, students do not
focus on their homework and revision. Thus, the learning environment at home
become non-conducive to home based activities. Students learning in non-conducive
learning environment those that are uncomfortable, loud, or full of distractions will
find it difficult to stay engaged (Chand, 2017). Thus, the study confirms that students
also encountered some factors that obstruct their home based learning.
5.5 Summary

The chapter has discussed the overall findings of the research study. The findings of the study have been compared with the findings from the literature review (Chapter 2). It shows that some of the findings align with the literatures. The study depicts that parental engagement offers many opportunities to parents, teachers and students as depicted by literatures.

The findings of the study suggest that parental engagement in child’s education has a positive effect on child’s overall performances at Dee Primary School. These finding corresponds with other research findings that suggest that academically successful children come from supportive parents/guardians. Parents, teachers, and students used numerous strategies to support parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Numerous challenges as depicted in this study are quite similar to the ones mentioned in the literature. It is also noted that without parental engagement, it is hard for teachers to devise plans to help those students with learning difficulties. Therefore, parental engagement in child’s learning would no doubt assists teachers in the class to implement effective measures to improve child’s education. The next chapter provides a conclusion of the study. It also discusses the implications of the study to various stakeholders and finally provides recommendations.
CHAPTER SIX
Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Introduction

This study explored perceptions of parents, teachers and students regarding parental engagement at Dee Primary. The study also investigated strategies used to support parental engagement and factors affecting parents, teachers and students. This chapter provides the summary of findings, implications, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

6.2 Summary of Findings

The study was guided by three (3) research questions: (i) What are the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on Parental engagement at Dee Primary School? (ii) What strategies are used to support Parental engagement at Dee Primary School? and (iii) What are the challenges affecting Parental engagement at Dee Primary School?

6.2.1 Perceptions of Parents, Teachers and Students Regarding Parental Engagement

Parents/guardians play a pivotal role in child’s education. The research study found that parents, teachers and students have numerous perceptions regarding parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Firstly, findings depicted that parental engagement allows parents/guardians to have a better understanding about child’s learning. It was also revealed that a parent/guardian who understands their child’s learning has better parent-teacher-child relationships and better understanding of school programs. This kept parents/guardians engaged in the loop of child’s learning and school programs.

Secondly, the research shows that teachers have their own interpretation of parental engagement in child’s education. It was found from teacher respondent that consistent parents/guardians support and assistance positively affected student’s achievement in class. This study mentioned that parental engagement in child’s education improved communication and relationships between parents and teachers. The perceptions of teachers also concurred that with the literature that working in collaboration also bridges the gap between home and school environment (Baker et
Apart from this, teachers also linked positive parent-teacher relationship with higher teacher morale and job satisfaction. Teachers consider parental engagement as an important tool in understanding about student’s background to effectively plan learning support for students with limited guidance from home.

Thirdly, it was revealed that students’ view parental support as an important variable that positively influences their learning. Parental engagement increases child’s motivation and encouragement towards education. Shared perception between students and teachers confirmed that parental support and assistance allow students to complete their homework and schoolwork compared to students with limited parental support. Additionally, teachers and students linked parental engagement with improved child’s behaviour in class and school.

Finally, a shared perception between parents, teachers and students found that consistent parental engagement may lower chances of students dropping out of school. Engaged parents/guardians kept track of their child’s education and motivated them to complete their primary and secondary education and progress to tertiary. Parents and teachers responded that their dual support will provide children with skills, knowledge and attitude required for higher learning and their engagement will also provide wider opportunities for a productive life.

6.2.2 Current Strategies Used to Support Parental Engagement

The study identified a number of strategies used by parents/guardians, teachers and the students to support parental engagement at Dee Primary School. These strategies were used by participants to increase and improve parental engagement in child’s learning. Firstly, research findings highlight parents/guardians contributed ideas on how they supported their child’s learning. Parents/guardians consistently motivated and encouraged their children to attend school. They made sure their children go to school with all required school materials. It was found that parents/guardians also encouraged their children to behave in school and show respect to teachers and students. Parents/guardians also assisted their children with homework, attended PTIs, read newsletters, and communicated with teachers and the school.

Secondly, data from questionnaire, interviews and Talanoa showed teachers of the case study school using numerous strategies to engage parents/guardians in
child’s education. These strategies are used to bridge achievement gaps among groups of students. Teachers of Dee Primary School used PTIs to connect with families regarding child’s progress and on issues affecting child at school.

Finally, students also played an important role in engaging parents/guardians in school based activities. Students relayed all relevant information given by teachers to their parents/guardians which kept them informed about school programs. Newsletters provided by teachers were also given to parents/guardians by students. Some students read and explained newsletters to their parents/guardians. It was also found that majority students also encouraged their parents/guardians to take part in school based programs such as sports day, school celebrations and camping.

6.2.3 Factors Affecting Parental Engagement

It was revealed that there are difficulties encountered by parents, teachers and students which limit parental engagement in child’s education. Firstly, inflexible work hours disengaged majority parents/guardians from supporting their child’s learning. Due to this, parents/guardians were not able to attend PTIs/CAPS nor help children with home studies. Child’s attitude was another factor identified by participants that limited parental support. Due to income level, parents/guardians were not able to buy exercise books, uniforms, bags and sandals because of demands from more than one child. The study also found that due to average primary/secondary education, parents/guardians found Year 7 challenging, thus were not able to assist children with homework and revision. Additionally, family background was another factor that hindered parental engagement. Financial burden, poor health conditions, and other family obligations also hindered some grandparents to attend PTIs/CAPS. Parents pointed out that they could help in their children’s learning if more support and guidance is given by teachers.

Secondly, it was revealed that there are difficulties encountered by teachers of Dee Primary School while engaging parents/guardians in child’s education. Parents/guardians did not attend PTIs/CAPS as scheduled. There are limited support towards home based activities resulting in unattended homework. Shortage of time was another factor impeding teachers desire to engage more parents/guardians in child’s education. Other factors such as hard to reach parents, child’s attitude, parent’s attitude, and language barrier were obstacles to parental engagement at Dee.
Primary School. Teachers highlighted that parents and teachers must work together to help a child succeed.

Finally, student participants also encountered some difficulties that affected child’s learning at home. It was found that due to parent’s education level, students find it difficult to ask guidance in homework and schoolwork. Majority parents/guardians had average primary/secondary education and found Year 7 curriculum challenging. Other factors such as household chores, watching television, listening to music with high volumes, and visitors at home were some obstacles that hindered child’s home based learning.

6.3 Implications

This study sought to explore the perceptions of parents, teachers and students on parental engagement at Dee Primary School. It is argued that through gaining an improved understanding of parental engagement in child’s learning, the findings of the study provide baseline information which has important implications relevant for teachers, parents and MoEHA.

6.3.1 Implications for Stakeholders

The findings in this present study provides evidence for teachers, and MoEHA to better understand the possible factors contributing to limited parental engagement in child’s education. As a result, the teachers and MoEHA would be able to take proactive measures to enable more parents/guardians support in child’s learning either at home or school. Teachers and schools should consider a sensitive approach to accommodate the needs of students with limited support.

The literature and the findings presented in the study further augment the important role played by parents/guardians in their child’s educational success. Hence the school and teachers could implement strategies to reach out to parents/guardians and encourage greater participation in school based activities. The MoEHA could consider working with families, churches and other community organizations to develop a collaborative program to increase and improve parental engagement. Moreover, this research could also help MoEHA better understand the difficulties faced by teachers when teaching students with limited parental support. The challenges found in this study could be used by MoEHA to develop strategies for teachers to help parents/guardians to assist their child’s education.
6.3.2 Implication for the Literature

Although there is a pool of empirical information available in the western literature on parental engagement and related issues, there is limited empirical evidence available in Fiji. In Fiji, apart from the role of parents in their children’s formal learning in the home environment, there is limited, if any, empirical evidence of research being conducted on factors affecting parental engagement in child’s learning. Much of the literatures available in Fiji include news articles, media reports, and speech from Ministry. There are no explicit investigations made to explain the possible causes of limited parental engagement on child’s education. Thus, this study has added to the contemporary literature based on the empirical evidence from a case of a rural primary school in Fiji.

6.4 Recommendations

The research study was aimed to explore parental engagement towards child’s education at Dee Primary School. This is an exploratory study which discovered parents, teachers and students view regarding parental engagement towards education. The study proposes the following recommendations to stakeholders affiliated with children’s education.

6.4.1 Parents

Parents’ have most direct and lasting impact on their child’s learning and remains to play a crucial role in supporting their education. A case study of 20 parents offered a significant amount of information concerning the type of parental support provided towards their child, and what challenges are limiting them from being actively engaged. Therefore, it is recommended that parents/guardians need to support their child’s education; make the home environment conducive to learning; and help their children with home based learning.

Firstly, it is recommended that parents and guardians need to get engaged with their child’s learning as it is a motivating factor towards effective learning. Parents/guardians must ensure that their children go to school well rested, fed and ready to learn. A parent or guardian must set high expectations for their children. Parents need to have a positive attitude towards their child’s school. This enables children to show their positive attitude towards school and their learning. A parent
must be a role model for their children in shaping their child’s attitudes towards his/her learning.

Secondly, it is recommended that parents/guardians need to be in touch with their child’s school. Have a positive relationship with the school and their child’s teacher. A parent should attend all PTIs and CAPS as required by the class teacher or school. Attending PTIs/CAPS will allow parent/guardians to know about the child as well as on the upcoming class/school events. A parent who is not fluent in English or the language used by the class teacher, can bring a friend or interpreter so that information is communicated effectively for the benefit of the child.

Thirdly, a safe and supportive environment should be provided to children to make it a good place for learning. It is recommended that parents/guardians need to praise and provide encouragement towards their child’s learning. This will motivate children and provide them with confidence in becoming a successful learner. It is also recommended that parents’ need to monitor their child’s after school activities. Parents to make sure that activities such as household chores and games should not impede their child’s education. Apart from this, parents/guardians need to monitor their child’s television wisely and provide a suitable place for learning for children away from distractions such as television, phone calls, and loud music.

6.4.2 Teachers

Teachers are an asset and play a dynamic role in molding a child’s future. It is evident that a child’s education is greatly enhanced by teachers’ contribution in the classroom. Firstly, it is recommended that teachers need to provide regular feedback to parents’ regarding their child’s progress at school. To make this happen, teachers and parents must work in allies for the development and progress of children. Regular PTIs will update parents on the progress of the child so that parents’ can monitor their children from home. At the same time the teacher is also able to understand a particular child through their parents and implement remedial measures which can help in meeting those needs. Additionally, school to provide newsletters to parents/guardians in three different languages (English, Vosa-Vaka-Viti and Hindi) to allow them to be aware of school events and be more engaged. Teachers should assist parents on strategies to interact with their children on learning activities at home.
Secondly, teachers need to create a warm and welcoming environment to all parents and guardians. Parents should feel comfortable and made to feel a central part in their child’s education that their contribution, small or large, is very important. Additionally, teachers are recommended to praise parents for their efforts in sending their children to school. Reassure parents that teachers will meet their children’s needs. When families are welcomed and valued, it builds a strong bond between families and teachers.

Thirdly, it is recommended for teachers to have regular home visits and CAPS programmes to help parents understand their roles and responsibilities and create awareness on MoEHA’s Pillar 4 Parental Engagement and its significance to their child’s learning. Regular home visits and CAPS will bridge the gap between school and home environment. Although many parents are not versed as how to help their children with their education, the guidance and support from teachers through home visits and CAPS will help parents/guardians to assist their children. When teachers travel to a child’s family, parents are able to confidently voice out their concerns and let the teacher into their lives.

Finally, schools and teachers can make parental engagement as a key focus in their professional development sessions where it will allow teachers to discuss and develop strategies to improve the quality of parental engagement.

6.4.3 Ministry of Education

MoEHA should work more closely with parents and school in establishing a stronger and enduring partnership in enhancing academic achievement and protect children from getting into risky behaviours. It is recommended that MoEHA organise workshops for teachers and provide them with supportive strategies that can be used to motivate and engage parents’ meaningfully to enhance the quality education. These strategies could help parents’ through CAPS to gain deeper understanding on the importance of their roles in supporting their child’s learning. Additionally, when parents gain understanding, they will be able to use more proactive approaches towards their child’s education.

MoEHA should also consider teacher workload while engaging parents in classrooms. Completing syllabus by term two of each year limit teacher’s desire to engage more parents during teaching hours. Curriculum reform should try to remove irrelevant concepts in present primary curriculum to avoid it getting too overloaded
due to shortage of time and the rush to complete the syllabus. Additionally, a tracking system to be put in place in schools to gauge the effectiveness of PTIs/CAPS. More teacher and parent time is needed to discuss the progress and behaviour of children in schools.

To add on, MoEHA needs to carry out greater community awareness to enlighten parents and guardians with Pillar 4 Parental Engagement Framework. More focus should be shifted towards remote areas. Based on my interview, 100% of parent respondent highlighted that they were not familiar with the parental engagement framework. Therefore, MoEHA along with teachers should educate parents and guardians on the importance of their valuable support towards their children’s education and highlight on the positive impact as well as negative consequences if they aren’t engaged.

It is recommended that workshops for parents and guardians to be organized and greater awareness to be created using readily available mass media such as newspapers, radio stations and via television where by the framework can be explained effectively to major stakeholders. It is also recommended that the framework be published in major spoken languages that are used in Fiji (Hindi, I-Taukei, Urdu) so it becomes easier for parents to read, understand and apply in their child’s education.

6.5 Limitations

Limitations for this research study were found to be different to those studies taken in other contexts. One such is the sample size of this research study, it is a case study of a year level at a primary school therefore, it is not possible to generalise the findings of this study to a larger sample size. The findings of the study would be most relevant to rural primary schools in Fiji. The study was conducted in a rural Fijian community and the findings of this study may be limited to schools outside this region with different communal and socioeconomic settings. The time spent in data collection for this research study was limited by the timeframe of the thesis and geographical locations accessible to the researcher.

The researcher also faced some challenges while conducting the study. Firstly, the data collection was carried out towards the end of school term. Approval from MoEHA was given late, nearly three weeks before school closure. It was a challenge
for the researcher to collect data from research participants within that three weeks. Additionally, the researcher had to ensure that interviews with teachers, parents, and students complied with the COVID 19 safety strategies of the school and families. Secondly, time management was also a challenge that the researcher faced. Being in a full time job required conducting interviews with teachers after school hours. Teachers of the case study school also sacrificed their personal time to participate in this research. Moreover, difficulties also arose due the adverse weather condition that was experienced where the researcher had to cross slippery roads and bridges to respondents’ residence for interviews. The researcher had to sacrifice family time in order to complete all interviews from research participants before school holidays.

6.6 Suggestions for Future Research

The research can be conducted using a larger sample size and different locations in order to increase its reliability and validity. Through this study, many factors to parental engagement were surfaced. Therefore, parental engagement in child’s education especially from different localities needs more in-depth research using a bigger sample size to get more representative results. The research also suggests the possibility of other researchers doing similar studies so the findings can be verified. Future research can also be done on effectiveness of strategies to improve and increase parental engagement and the findings could be used by relevant stakeholders to plan and implement approaches to enhance parental engagement in child’s education.
References


Savacool, L. J. (2011). *Barriers to parental involvement in the pre-kindergarten classroom*.


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Project Title:
Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School.

Researcher:
Sachin Deo (Mob: 8705657; email: mrsachindeo@yahoo.com)

Supervisor:
Dr Sunil Singh, Senior Education Lecturer (FALE USP)

Project Description and Invitation

The research study is aimed to investigate potential barriers to parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Many schools across the country are facing similar challenges to increase parental engagement and improve student’s academic performances. Dee Primary School is no exception. Based on the findings, the research study will come with recommendations to improve the quality of parental engagement.

Participants Role

Research participants for the research study are the parents, students and teachers. The case study is based on Dee Primary School. There are 17 parents, 23 students and 10 teachers for the case study. Research questionnaires will be prepared, printed and distributed to the research participants. Questionnaires from participants will be collected after 4 to 5 days. Participants will also be interviewed based on the interview questions for 20 minutes at an agreed place and time. It will be a voluntary participation thus, no compensation would be offered to participants for their participations.

Project Procedures

The school supports this case study and allows the researcher to undertake interviews and distribute questionnaires at mutually agreed times. Privacy and confidentiality will be assured to research participants. Neither the names of school nor the research participants will be used in the in the research study.

Data Management

All data (printed/electronic) will be stored securely by the researcher in locked cupboard/password protected computer. Only the researcher, head teacher and supervisor will have access to the data.
Participant’s Rights

Participants have the right to,

• Decline to respond any particular questions
• Withdraw from study at any time
• Ask any questions related to case study at any time during the participation.
• Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission for this to the researcher
• Be given access to a summary of the project findings when the project is concluded.
(i): Participants consent form (Teachers and Parents)

The University of the South Pacific

Researcher Name: Sachin Deo
Mob: +679 8703657
Date: 25th September 2020

Consent Form

Project Title:
Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

I have read and understood the Information Sheet describing the above named project. I agree to participate as a subject in the project. I consent to publication of the results of the project/ the information given to me on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

I understand that any time I may withdraw from the project, as well as withdraw any information that I have provided.

I note that this project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at the University of the South Pacific.

Name: (Please Print)

Signature:

Date:

Age (______ years)

To agree/disagree to participate in this project
(ii): Student’s consent form

The University of the South Pacific

Researcher Name: Sachin Deo
Mob: +679 8703657
Date: 13th October 2020

Student Consent Form

Project Title:
Explores parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

Purpose of the study is to investigate barriers to parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Based on the findings, the research study will come with recommendations to improve the quality of parental engagement

RE: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

I __________________________ (Please Print Name) of year 7 agree / do not agree (cross one) to take part in the research study. I also confirm that I have been informed by my parent and the researcher the subject information sheet for the above study. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

Student Name: (Please Print) .......................................................... Signature: .......................................................... Date: ..........................................................

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(iii): Parental Consent Form

The University of the South Pacific

Researcher Name: Sachin Deo
Mob: +679 8703657
Date: 15th October 2020

Parental Consent Form

Project Title:
Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

Purpose of the study is to investigate barriers to parental engagement at Dee Primary School. Based on the findings, the research study will come with recommendations to improve the quality of parental engagement.

RE: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

I/We, ___________________________ (Please Print Name) AND ___________________________ (Please Print Name)

give/ do not give (cross one) my full consent and allow my child named ___________________________ (Please Print Name) of year 7 to take part in the research study.

I confirm that I have read and understand the subject information sheet for the above study. I also understand that my child(s) participation is voluntary and he/she is free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

Name: (Please Print)

(Parent/Guardian)

Signature:

Date:

Name: (Please Print)

(Parent/Guardian)

Signature:

Date:
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

(i): Questionnaire for Parents

Research Questionnaires – Parents/Guardians

Topic: Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

I humbly request for your kind cooperation towards the research study which is part of my Masters of Education Program. Please answer the questions below. The response shall be used to compile thesis report. You may ignore questions that you may feel unethical to answer.

Your response to each questions will be treated as private and confidential. I also undertake that your response shall be for the purpose of the research study only.

1. What is your relationship to the child? (Please tick one)
   - [ ] Parent
   - [ ] Guardians
   - [ ] Grandparents
   - [ ] Others

2. Do you provide guidance to your children? (Please tick one)
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

   a) State the type of guidance provided to your child in his/her education

3. Has your child got a special study place at home?

4. How often do you assist your child in his/her school work? (Please tick one)
   - [ ] Often
   - [ ] Seldom
   - [ ] Never

   b) How much time do you spend assisting your child(s)? (Please tick one)
   - [ ] Nil
   - [ ] 1-2 hours daily
   - [ ] 3-4 hours daily
   - [ ] 4 or more

5. Does your child face any kind of difficulties while studying?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

   b) State the type of difficulties

6. Do you provide assistance when your child needs help? Please explain the type of help provided

7. Please state some of the difficulties you face in giving support to your child?

8. Is there an effective communication between you and the school or the teacher?

   b. Explain as how they communicate

9. Do you feel that there is a need for frequent Parent Teacher discussion towards your child’s education? Explain

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b. Do you feel welcome by the teachers/school during Parent Teacher Interview?

10. Do you attend school based activities? Please explain the type of activity that you take part in

b. How often do you get involved with school based activities?

11. Who do you feel should be responsible for your child’s education?

☐ Child ☐ Teacher ☐ Parent

☐ All of the above

Thanking for your kind support in filling this questionnaire
Research Questionnaires – Teachers

Topic: Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

I humbly request for your kind cooperation towards the research study which is part of my Master of Education Program. Please answer the questions below. The response shall be used to compile thesis report. You may ignore questions that you may feel unethical to answer.

Your responses to each question will be treated as private and confidential. It also underlines that your response shall be for the purpose of the research study.

1. What do you understand by the term ‘Parental Engagement’?

2. Do you think parental engagement plays a crucial role in student’s education? (Please tick one)
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   b) If Yes, Explain How?

3. What are the effects of lack of parental engagement on student’s education?
   b. What could be the contributing factor towards lack of parental engagement?

4. Is there an effective communication between you and the student’s parents/guardians? Explain How?
   b. How can you maintain effective communication between the student’s parents/guardians?

5. Do you invite parents/guardians to school based activities? Please explain the type of activity
   b. How often do they get involved with school based activities?

6. Please state some of the challenges you face in supporting your student’s learning?

7. Please explain if teachers alone can make a difference in the academic success of children? Explain

8. From teacher’s perspective, state ways as how you can increase parental engagement towards students learning?
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

(i): Interview Questions for Teachers’

Interview Questions – Teachers

Topic: Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

I humbly request for your kind cooperation towards the research study which is part of my Masters of Education Program. Please answer the questions below. The response shall be used to compile thesis report. You may ignore questions that you may feel unethical to answer.

Your response to each question will be treated as private and confidential. I also undertake that your response shall be for the purpose of the research study.

1. How many years of teaching experience you have?

2. Do you think parental engagement is a major contributing factor towards child’s education?

3. What different backgrounds do your students come from?

4. Do you think there is correlation between family background and child’s education?

5. What might be some of the challenges faced by student’s parents towards their child’s education?

b. What challenges do you face with teaching students’ whose parents are not supportive or engaged in their child’s learning?

6. What are some of the strategies you use to increase parental engagement in your class?

7. In what ways do you provide collaboration opportunities to the parents’ of your students?

8. What factors could be hindering parental engagement? List and explain

9. Based on your teaching experience, what are your views regarding parental engagement?

10. What are some school strategies that can be used to increase parental engagement?
(ii): Interview Questions for Parents/Guardians

Interview Questions – Parents/Guardians

Topic: Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

I humbly request for your kind cooperation towards the research study which is part of my Masters of Education Program. Please answer the questions below. The response shall be used to compile thesis report. You may ignore questions that you may feel unethical to answer.

Your response to each question will be treated as private and confidential. I also undertake that your response shall be for the purpose of the research study.

1. What is your relationship to the child?
   - [ ] Parents
   - [ ] Grandparents
   - [ ] Guardians
   - [ ] Others

2. What is your level of education?
   - [ ] Primary
   - [ ] Secondary
   - [ ] Tertiary
   - [ ] Others

3. Does your child spend time doing home based activities after school?

4. As a parent/Guardian do you monitor and spend time in assisting your child with his/her school work?

b) How much time do you spend assisting your child(s)? (Please tick one)
   - [ ] Nil
   - [ ] 1-2 hours daily
   - [ ] 3-4 hours daily
   - [ ] 4 or more

c) Who mostly assists in your child’s learning?

5. Do you face obstacles while engaging yourself with your child’s school based/home based activities? If Yes, How?

6. What factors contributes towards lack of parental engagement to your child’s education?

7. Are you well versed with the curriculum studied by your child?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

b) Do you find the curriculum difficult? Explain in what ways
8. Are you well versed with Ministry of Education’s Parental Engagement Framework?

b) Do you think Parental Engagement is important in your child’s education? Please explain

9. Being a parent, are you welcomed by teachers and school in the school based activities (PTI, CAPS, AGM, School Programs)?

10. What ways could the school improve on collaboration with parents/guardians?
Interview Questions – Students

Topic: Exploring parental engagement at a rural primary school in Fiji: A case study of year 7 at Dee Primary School

I humbly request your kind cooperation towards the research study which is part of my Masters of Education Program. Please answer the questions below. The response shall be used to compile thesis report. You may ignore questions that you may feel unethical to answer.

Your response to each question will be treated as private and confidential. I also undertake that your response shall be for the purpose of the research study.

1. Whom are you staying with? (Please tick one)
   - Both Parents
   - Mother
   - Father
   - Grandparents
   - Guardians

2. Do your parents/guardians assist you in your homework? (Please tick one)
   - Yes
   - No
   b) If Yes, How?

3. Do your parents/guardians face difficulties while helping you in your studies?
   - Yes
   - No
   b) If Yes, How?

4. Do your parents/guardian provide you with needed educational materials?

5. Do you face any difficulty while studying at home? If Yes, Explain what kind of difficulty

6. Do you take information/Newsletters to your parents or guardians given by the teachers/Head teacher?
   b. Do your parents/Guardians read the newsletters given to them?

7. Do your parents ask about your days’ schedule at school?

8. Do you face with any difficulty at school? Please state
APPENDIX E: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTERS

(i): Approval from Head Teacher

Note: School letter head is removed and school name is erased from school stamp to maintain anonymity.

28th September 2020

Dear Sir

To Whom It May Concern

This it to inform you that I allow Mr Sachin Deo TPF: 86088 to conduct a research in the above school and use the school as a case study.

I have no hesitation in allowing him to collect information from the year 7 students and teaching staff based on their schedules and free time. I request all parental consent are sought prior to the research study.

I request schools name and any information pertaining above school to be kept confidential.

All the best to Mr Sachin Deo in his research study.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

Mr Suresh Chand
TPF: 55463
(ii): Approval from Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

Note: School Name is erased from approval letter to maintain anonymity.

Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts

Resident Address: Marela House, 19 Thurston Street, Suva, Fiji.
Postal Address: Private Mail Bag, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji.

Our Reference: RA 70/20

Date: 26 November 2020

Mr Sachin Deo
P. O. Box 2329
Labasa

Dear Mr Deo,

Re: Official Approval to Conduct Research in the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

We are pleased to inform you that the approval for the request to conduct research in the Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts (MEHA) has been granted on the topic: "Exploring Parental Engagement at a Rural Primary School in Fiji: A Case Study of Year 7 at Dee Primary School". It is noted that you will conduct your research with some students and parents provided their consent is obtained. You had also indicated that you will work on your research at Primary School, Labasa, where you currently teach.

The approval is granted until 18th December 2020, as specified in your request.

Please liaise with the relevant personnel with regards to the logistics and the conduct of your research and be further advised that the Government of Fiji’s legislations, procedures, policies and protocols must be unreservedly adhered to. This will include ensuring that your research complies with the COVID19 safety strategies of the schools. The Research must also not interfere with MEHA operations and workload. Note that this approval is only for the processes requested for.

As a condition for the research approval, a copy of the final research report must be submitted to the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts through this office upon completion. The report will be reserved in the MEHA Research Library and will be avaliable for reference by Senior Ministry and Government officials. Also note that the findings of the research are for the sole purpose of your course exercise.

Moreover, it is important to note that the Ministry of Education reserves a right to publish the final report or an edited summary of it.

We further wish you success in your research study.

[Signature]

Iosa Wainiqolo (Mr) for Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage & Arts.

cc: MEHA Research File

All communications to be addressed to the Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage & Arts.
(iii): Approval from USP Research Office

Our Ref: Mr. Sachin Deo/2020/

To: Mr. Sachin Deo,
Student,
C/O: School of Education,
USP,
Lauca Campus.

Date: 30 October, 2020

Re: Human Ethics Application

Dear Mr. Deo,

The human ethics application for the following research project has been approved by the University Research Office.

Title: Exploring Parental Engagement at a Rural Primary School in Fiji: A Case Study of Year 7 at Dee Primary School.

Principal Researcher: Mr. Sachin Deo

School: Education

The ethical values and principles apply to all University activities, to all its staff and student researchers including those visiting for short periods, and to any research agreements or partnerships that the University establishes. The University's human ethics will be compliant with the laws of individual University member states, particularly in relation to privacy, confidentiality, ownership, intellectual property requirements, research permit requirements and human rights.
All research conducted by persons affiliated with the University of the South Pacific will be carried out only with the prior, free, and informed consent of all persons concerned, whether individuals or communities, based on adequate information. The consent may be withdrawn by a particular individual or community at any time for any reason without disadvantage or prejudice.

Where research involving human subjects/participants is proposed by a researcher at the University of the South Pacific, agreement must be obtained from a fraction of those subjects or their spokespersons in advance of the proposal being submitted to the University Research Ethics Committee, who will require written evidence of such an agreement. Where appropriate, this must be translated into a language that is readily comprehended by potential participants. The rights of participants must be emphasized, their questions all satisfactorily answered.

Please note that it is the researcher’s responsibility to submit relevant application forms for Research permit purposes. These must be submitted as annexes with the first progress report form. Also, be reminded that progress reports are expected at end of six-month period throughout the duration of the project.

Congratulations and all the best for your research project!

Professor Derrick Armstrong
Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and International
The University of the South Pacific
Laucala Campus, Suva.
Fiji Islands.