

Parental involvement in the education of children on St. Maarten

Evaluation of the projects Active Parenting and Parent Teacher Associations/Foundation

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Abstract

Parental involvement proves to be an important predictor for academic achievement, student attendance and child development in general. The program Active Parenting (AP) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA's) or Parent Teacher Foundations (PTF's) are implemented by the Division for Educational Innovations (DEI) to foster parental involvement in the education of children on St. Maarten. However, little is known about the impact of these projects within various forms of parental involvement. Therefore this study analyzed by means of the ecological system theory of Bronfenbrenner in which ways these projects influenced various forms of parental involvement. Analyses within the micro level included parenting skills and parental home-based involvement, analyses within the exo level included parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital, analyses within the meso level included bridging social capital and finally, analyses within the macro level included the pedagogic civil society. This study made use of both quantitative as qualitative methods. Results of this study confirm the expectation that AP promotes parental involvement within the micro level of the child in a greater extent than parental involvement within the exo level. However, in contradiction with the expectations, this research found no differences concerning the effects of PTA's/PTF's within the various ecological levels. Perhaps, due to a small sample size, the found differences were not tested as significant. Further research with larger sample size could examine this. Furthermore, no effects were found concerning the influences of AP and PTA's/PTF's on the macro level of the child. Perhaps AP and PTA's/PTF's could only contribute to parental involvement within the macro level of the child when parental involvement is optimal within the preceding ecological levels. Further research can confirm this hypothesis. Finally, various bottlenecks were found concerning AP, PTA's/PTF's and parental involvement in general. These bottlenecks and the exploratory part of this study have led to a number of recommendations for stakeholders to foster parental involvement on St. Maarten.

Keywords: St. Maarten, parental involvement, home-based involvement, school-based involvement, school, parenting style, active parenting, parent committee, ecological level.

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In front of you, you find a thesis in which parental involvement in the education of children on St. Maarten is described. With great pleasure we committed us from January 2012 until June 2012 to the realization of this thesis. We hope that this thesis provides a guideline to the further development of parental involvement on St. Maarten.

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Abbreviations

AP	Active Parenting
APN	Active Parenting Now in 3
APT	Active Parenting of Teens
CJG	Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin
DEI	Division for Educational Innovations
FBE	Foundation Based Education
MESCY	Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs
PSVE	Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTF	Parent Teacher Foundation
USONA	Uitvoeringsorganisatie Stichting Ontwikkeling Nederlandse Antillen

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1. Research Background

1.1 History of St. Maarten

Traces of the first inhabitants of St. Maarten date from circa 4000 before Christ. Around 800 after Christ the island was inhabited by Arawak Indians, original inhabitants of South America. They were expelled in the 14th century by Carib Indians, who also came from the mainland and settled on islands in the Caribbean Sea (Hartog, 1981).

According to legend, Columbus discovered the island on his second voyage to the New World on the 11th of November 1493, the day that St. Maarten is celebrated. Columbus claimed the island for the King of Spain and named it Isla de San Martin. The Caribs called the island Soualiga, which means Salt Island. Not the Spaniards, but the Dutch started, simultaneously with the French, to extract salt from the great salt lakes on the island. Salt was very expensive at that time in Europe and there were great riches acquired. In 1648 the island was divided between France and the Netherlands, but not until 1817 the agreement was official. Marigot became the French capital and Philipsburg became the capital of the Dutch part (Hartog, 1981).

In the 18th century, large sugar plantations were established on St. Maarten. Sugar was also a source of great wealth. African slaves were brought to the island to work on the plantations. Also many English plantation owners and their slaves came to St. Maarten. This is the reason why the English language is the main language on the island nowadays. Slavery was abolished in the mid of the 19th century. The vacant work brought many workers from the United States, Latin America, East Asia and other Caribbean Islands. From this, the special mix of cultures on St. Maarten was created (Rummens, 1993).

In the Second World War, the Americans build large runways on the island, which served as an army base in the Caribbean. These runways laid the foundation for the new future of St. Maarten as a tourist destination. From the 50's, tourism has grown steadily on St. Maarten. Today, St. Maarten counts 37.000 inhabitants. The main economic resources are tourism and offshore financial services. The Dutch part of St. Maarten is since the 10th of October, 2010 an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Rummens, 1993).

1.2 Main Factors of Youth Problems on St. Maarten

Youth problems play a major role in the society of St. Maarten (DEI, 2012). There are several factors which foster and maintain youth problems on St. Maarten. Four of these factors are a poor educational system, single mothers, immigrants and the used parenting style (DEI, 2012). These factors and their relationship to youth problems will be described below.

A poor educational system, which does not connect to the personal development of children and youth, can lead to many repeaters in primary schools, too many children in special education, and drop-outs in secondary education (Poyck & van 't Rood, 2006). These consequences lead to a generally low level of education. This in turn contributes to a high rate of youth unemployment, and causes that young people will seek less positive ways to generate income, which makes that youth problems arise (Poyck & van 't Rood, 2006). The educational system on St. Maarten is revised in 2002, and again in 2008. Until now, St. Maarten is working on the optimization of the educational reforms.

On St. Maarten, the percentage of single mothers is high. Only 35 percent of the children live with both parents. The family structure on St. Maarten is dominated by households where common law unions are standard or where fathers are absent (Onderwijs en Jongeren Samenwerkingsprogramma, 2011). A common law union is regarded as living together without being married (DEI, 2012). Growing up in a single parent family could have negative consequences for the upbringing of the child, such as an increased risk to develop antisocial behavior, substance abuse and an increased risk for educational underachievement (Amato, 2000; Kaisa et al., 2003). These negative consequences contribute to the persistence of youth problems (DEI, 2012).

A third factor that contributes to youth problems is the high percentage of immigrants on St. Maarten. These immigrants come to St. Maarten with the intention to create a better future for themselves. However, they have difficulties with finding a well paid job, because they are poorly educated and do not master the language. To meet the basic needs for survival, like food and shelter, parents are forced to take multiple jobs. As a result parents have less time and resources to get involved in the upbringing and school life of their children (Ryan and Cooper, 2010), which in turn lead to youth problems (DEI, 2012).

The final discussed factor that maintains youth problems is the used parenting style on St. Maarten. For years, the communication style of Caribbean parents is characterized as not conducive to open parent-child communication and does not offer warm and gentle guidance (DEI, 2012). Caribbean parents struggle to engage long conversations with their children, and to give comprehensive explanations (Evans and Davies, 1997). Furthermore Caribbean parenting is characterized by order, harsh discipline, strict limits and respect for older people and authorities. Parents expect strict obedience of their children without explaining why. If a child does not listen, punishment will follow. In the education of children, attention is placed on shortcomings of the child. This is also described as negative reinforcement (van 't Rood, 2009). The above described parenting characteristics can be classified as an authoritarian parenting style (Baumrind, 1991). When children are raised from childhood on by an authoritarian parenting style, children develop a low level of self esteem and self confidence, and are at higher risk for educational underachievement (van 't Rood, 2009, Baumrind, 1991). In puberty, young people try to compensate a

low self esteem and low self confidence by enforcing respect in other ways, namely, by aggressive behavior, false pretense to the outside world, and abuse in many areas, such as sex, crime, drugs and alcohol. This in turn increases educational underachievement (van 't Rood, 2009, Baumrind, 1991).

1.3 Framework of Parental Involvement on St. Maarten

The above discussed pedagogic life circumstances on St. Maarten 'a poor educational system, a high percentage of single mothers, immigrants and the used parenting style', have led to problems among children and youth. Therefore the government requested in 2002 a policy to decrease youth problems. Two ideas that were developed to reduce these problems were changing the used parenting style and improving the educational system.

Mr. Davis, a social worker of a Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education (PSVE) school, and his colleagues developed the idea to reduce youth problems through improving parenting by changing the parenting style. Simultaneously, the government developed the idea to reduce youth problems by improving the educational system, see schematic overview Figure 1. Moreover, this figure is a guide to read the next section, which describes how these two ideas merged and how this has ensured that parental involvement on St. Maarten is promoted to eventually reduce youth problems.

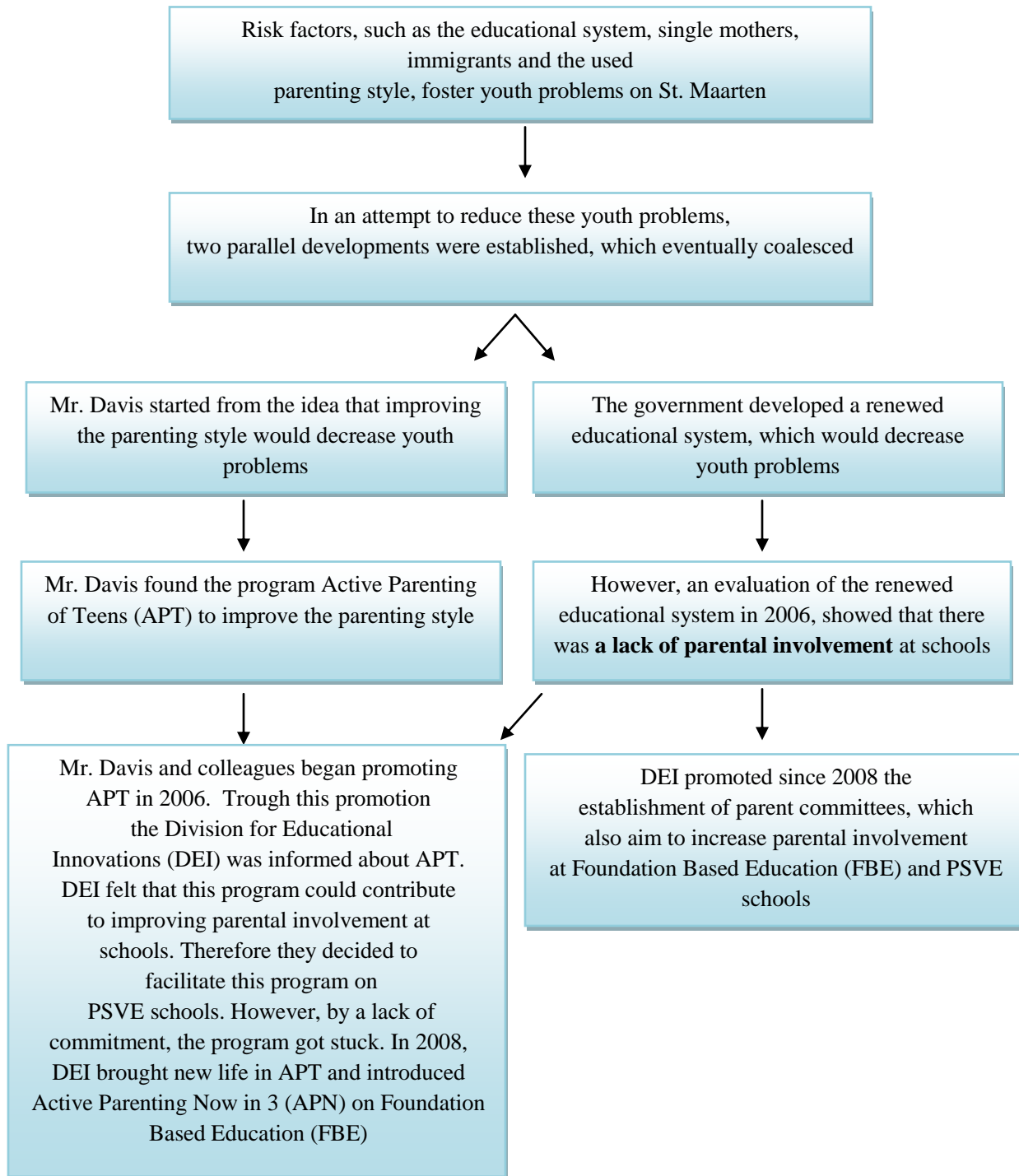


Figure1. Schematic overview of two directions which eventually should lead to increased parental involvement on St. Maarten

1.3.1 Active Parenting

Mr. Davis came in contact with many youth problems as a social worker. Therefore he developed the ambition to reduce these problems. As a result of a conference held in St. Maarten about this topic, Mr. Davis saw improving the parenting skills, through the parent-child interaction, as solution to combat youth problems. He analyzed several programs which had the intention to improve the parent-child interaction, and eventually ended up with the program Active Parenting (AP). He chose this program because it has the intention to strengthening the connection between the home, school and street culture in addition to the parent-child relationship (Davis, 2012). Mr. Davis believes that stimulating both the parent-child interaction as the connection between the home, school and street culture will reduce youth problems on St. Maarten.

1.3.2 Educational System

Simultaneously to the initiative of Mr. Davis, the government implemented a new educational system to ensure that the youth becomes higher educated, which in turn should lead to higher labor participation, and thereby reduces youth problems. In 2002, the program ‘Onderwijs Samenwerking Nederland – Nederlandse Antillen, 2002-2006’ was implemented. However, an evaluation about this program showed that the level of parental involvement in education was low on the FBE and PSVE schools. In order for the new educational school system to work optimally, parental involvement is necessary (Poyck & van ’t Rood, 2006). Parental involvement in the upbringing of the child, leads to better academic achievements, better student attendance and more positive student attitudes towards education (Altschul, 2011; Deutscher, 2004). Therefore parental involvement is one of the priorities in the follow-up program, named; Onderwijs en Jongeren Samenwerking Nederland – St. Maarten 2008-2012.

1.3.3 The Fusion of Active Parenting and the Educational System

Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs, DEI was given the responsibility to foster parental involvement on the FBE and PSVE schools. The promotion of AP by Mr. Davis resulted that DEI implemented AP as a way to increase parental involvement on the FBE and PSVE schools. DEI ensured that all student care coordinators of the PSVE schools were obliged to become certified trainers to give AP. However, the program got stuck by a lack of commitment of school boards, leaders and trainers of AP. DEI revived the program again in 2008, because the program still suited the aim to increase parental involvement by encouraging the parent-child relationship. In addition DEI introduced AP on FBE schools (DEI, 2012).

At this moment AP is provided into two different groups. There is a program for parents who have children between the ages of five to twelve years, named Active Parenting Now in 3 (APN),

intended for parents of children on the FBE schools. The other program is intended for parents with teenagers from twelve years and older, named Active Parenting of Teens (APT). This program is applied on PSVE schools. Both programs are based on the same vision and pursue the same objectives regarding parental involvement. Therefore it is decided to refer to Active Parenting (AP) in general in the continuation of this thesis. The program AP is given by leaders and trainers. Leaders may only give the program to parents, whereas trainers also may educate the leaders. Leaders and trainers consist of student care coordinators, social workers, teachers and special education experts. More information about the contents of AP can be found in Appendix 1.

1.3.4 Parent Teacher Association, Parent Teacher Foundation, Parent Committee

Besides AP, DEI works in another way at the promotion of parental involvement on FBE and PSVE schools, namely through the establishment of parent committees.

From 1979 it is obligatory for each school on St. Maarten to have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or a Parent Teacher Foundation (PTF). Both are legal entities and consist of parents and teachers. However, there are also differences between PTA's and PTF's, based on lawful regulations. Because these differences fall beyond the scope of this study, they will be disregarded in the continuation of this research.

Parents who participate in a PTA/PTF are not yet confident enough to verbally express their ideas and visions to school managements and school boards, which makes that parental involvement cannot manifest it selves (DEI, 2012). Therefore DEI works, since 2008, at changing the PTA's and PTF's into parent committees, with the ultimate goal to form a parent platform. In a platform parents feel more socially supported to verbally express themselves (Stearns, 2003). Therefore a platform enables parents to respond as a group to issues that concern them and their children (DEI, 2012). The platform should consist of representatives of the parent committees which are covered by the different school boards. In this way, members of the platform should have greater influence on decision making on educational level.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Parental Involvement within the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory views the child as an individual which develops within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The environment is seen as a series of interwoven structures consisting of home, school, community and society settings in which children participate. Each layer of the environment is considered as a powerful impact on the development of a child; see Figure 2 (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner is widely used as a framework to examine multiple effects and inter-relatedness of social elements in an environment (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Rinderle, 2006).

Within the micro level of the child parental involvement takes place through parent-child interaction and parental home-based involvement (Griffith, 1998; Grolnick & Slowiaznek, 1994; Sui-Chu & Willems, 1996; Tan & Goldberg, 2009). Parental home-based involvement is defined as behaviors from parents to actively promote a learning environment at home for children, as well as initiating and participating in learning activities at home (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Within the exo level of the child parental involvement takes place through bonding social capital of parents and parental school-based involvement (Griffith, 1998; Grolnick & Slowiaznek, 1994; Sui-Chu & Willems, 1996; Tan & Goldberg, 2009; Putnam, 2001). Bonding social capital is defined as the strengthening of networks between parents (Putnam, 2001). Parental school-based involvement is defined as activities and behaviors that parents engage in school together with other parents (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Both parental home-based involvement and parental school-based involvement refer to the involvement of parents in the educational development of a child. Within the meso level of the child parental involvement takes place by means of bridging social capital of parents. Bridging social capital is defined as close connections between different cultures in which the parents are living in (Putnam, 2001). Finally, parental involvement within the macro level of a child mainly takes place within the pedagogical civil society. This refers to the socialization of children and young people. When visions and actions about this will be shared in society, this is called shared parental responsibility (de Winter, 2011).

Research shows that parental involvement within the different ecological levels have positive influence on academic achievement, student attendance, student attitudes towards education and on the child development in general. Because parental involvement within the various ecological levels affect the development of the child in different ways, this study includes parental involvement within all ecological levels (Griffith, 1998; Grolnick & Slowiaznek, 1994; Sui-Chu & Willems, 1996; Tan & Goldberg, 2009).

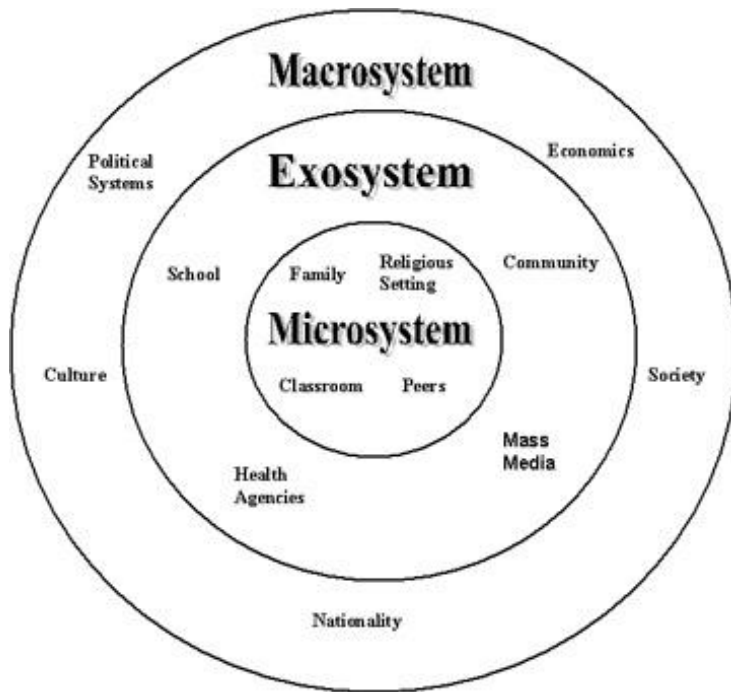


Figure 2 Ecological model of Bronfenbrenner

2.1.1 Micro System

The micro system is defined by activities and interaction patterns in the child's immediate surroundings (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). As shown in Figure 2, the family context is an element within the micro system of the child. In turn, within the family context, affective parenting is an important factor in the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner & Evans 2000). However, as described in section 1.2, the parenting style used on St. Maarten does not positively contribute to the development of children (Baumrind, 1991).

Trough AP it is attempted to contribute in a positive way to the micro system of a child. AP is based on the application of the Adlerian parenting theory, which is defined by mutual respect among family members within a democratically run family. The program teaches parents how to raise a child by using encouragement, building the child's self-esteem, and creating a relationship with the child based upon active listening, honest communication, and problem solving. It also teaches parents to use natural and logical consequences to reduce irresponsible and unacceptable behaviors. Besides the fact that parents who use the authoritative style set limits, they also wish to enter an open discussion to their children, give them explanations and provide warmth in the interaction. Parents raise their children with love and

encourage the independent behavior of their child. As a result of the authoritative parenting style children will be cooperative, confident, lively, friendly and more competitive later in life (Baumrind, 1991). Within an authoritative parenting style the emphasis is placed on the capacities of a child in order to encourage positive behavior. This is also called ‘positive affirmation’ (van’t Rood, 2009). Multiple evaluations of AP show that AP is an effective program to improve parenting skills whereby an authoritarian style is changed into an authoritative parenting style (Mullis, 1999; Popkin, 2008; Redwine, 1997). DEI expects that this study will confirm that AP will change the used parenting style in the direction of an authoritative style. DEI also expects that AP, through the changed parenting style, will foster parental home-based involvement and parental school-based involvement. However, AP will probably have more impact on the fostering of parental home-based involvement than parental school-based involvement. Because by changing the parenting style, AP has a direct influence within the micro system of the child, which includes parental home-based involvement. AP will also probably foster parental school-based involvement more strongly than bonding social capital, because parents will not experience full social support until they are parental school-based involved.

2.1.2 Meso System

The meso system is defined as connections between different micro systems of a child (Bronfenbrenner & Evans 2000). The way a child performs in school depends not only on what a child is doing at school, but also on the degree of parental involvement in encouraging and helping with homework. In this regard, good connections between the school –and home culture are of importance (Berk, 2006). According to Putnam (2001), closer connections between different cultures are called ‘bridging social capital’. Bridging social capital is important for the development of a child, because without connections between the home culture, school culture and street culture, it is impossible to equip the youth so that they can live independently as valued citizens, who work and recreate in the community (Onderwijs en Jongeren Samenwerkingsprogramma, 2011).

By means of AP parents come into contact with the school. Improved contact between parents and school strengthens the connection between the home –and school setting. Involvement of parents in a PTA/PTF will also strengthen the connection between the home –and school setting because by organizing activities parents come into contact with teachers and the school culture. In this way, AP and PTA’s/PTF’s do contribute to a strengthening of bridging social capital. It is expected that this research shows that both AP as PTA’s/PTF’s contribute to the strengthening of connections between the home- and school setting within the meso system of a child.

2.1.3 Exo System

The exo system of a child is defined as the social settings that do not contain children but nonetheless affect their experiences in immediate settings (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). These experiences can help parents with the upbringing of a child and, indirectly, enhance the development of a child. Through AP and PTA's/PTF's parents are brought together. This makes it easier for parents to share visions about parenting skills which enables them to feel socially supported. In this context, Putman (2001) speaks about 'bonding social capital'. This is defined as the strengthening of networks within a particular group, which leads to a strengthening of the exo-system of the child and in turn the community the child lives in. Just like bridging social capital, children benefit from bonding social capital of the parents (de Winter, 2011). Parental school-based involvement takes place within the exo-system of the child. It is about the shared commitment of parents in the educational development of the child. Being a member of a PTA/PTF is a convenient way for parents to be school-based involved. This is the reason why PTA's/PTF's probably have more impact on fostering parental school-based involvement than on parental home-based involvement. Furthermore it is expected that PTA's/PTF's will have more impact on fostering bonding social capital than on fostering parental home-based involvement, because, in contrast with parental home-based involvement, in a PTA/PTF parents can enter discussions with other parents about the educational system and about educating children. This makes parents feel socially supported which strengthens the bonding social capital and in turn the exo system of the child (Stearns, 2003).

2.1.4 Macro System

On the long term AP and the PTA's/PTF's could influence the macro system of a child. The macro system is defined as the larger social-cultural context affected by cultural, economic and political factors. The macro system is not solely geographically or physically, but emotionally and ideologically (Bronfenbrenner & Evans 2000; de Winter, 2011). Both AP as PTA's/PTF's rely on a macro level ideology to develop shared values and visions regarding education of children in the society of St. Maarten. This creates shared parental responsibility, which belongs to the Pedagogical Civil Society (de Winter, 2011; Coleman, 1990). Expected is that AP, in the first place, has a positive influence on the micro system of the child, which in turn affects the meso -and exo system of the child, and eventually the broader context of the entire society in which the child lives (Frimannsson, 2001). When stagnation occurs at one level, this could have negative influence on the development of the other levels. This expectation is based on previous research which showed that a lack of social support within the exo system allows parents to relapse easily in old habits, whereby the influence of a program like AP cannot penetrate into the macro system of the child (Haghen, 2010). It is expected that this research will find

bottlenecks concerning parental involvement within the micro, exo, or meso level, so that no observable effect will be found of AP or PTA's/PTF's within the macro system of the child.

2.2 Main Research Questions

On request of DEI, this research investigates the situation of parental involvement on St. Maarten, based on AP and PTA's/PTF's on FBE and PSVE schools. As described in section 1.3 it is assumed that AP and PTA's/PTF's lead to increased parental involvement. However, little is known about how both projects exact impacts parental involvement within the various ecological systems. Therefore it is decided to investigate in which ways AP and PTA's/PTF's affects parental involvement. Another purpose of this research is to provide insight into bottlenecks concerning these projects and parental involvement in general on St. Maarten. These purposes lead to the formulation of the following research questions:

- 1) In which way contributes AP to an increase of parental involvement?
- 2) In which way contributes a PTA/PTF to an increase of parental involvement?
- 3) Which bottlenecks can be identified concerning parental involvement on St. Maarten?

3. Methods

3.1 Design

DEI expects that both AP as PTA's/PTF's will foster parental home-based involvement and parental school-based involvement on St. Maarten. These forms of parental involvement take place within the micro -and exo level of a child. DEI has no specific expectations about the effect of AP and PTA's/PTF's on parental involvement within the other ecological levels. However, because parental involvement within the various ecological levels affects the development of a child in different ways, this study includes parental involvement within all ecological levels. Therefore, the analysis of parental involvement has been conducted by means of the following levels and corresponding categories:

	Level:	Categories:
1	Micro system	parental home-based involvement
2	Exo system	parental school-based involvement
3	Exo system	bonding social capital
4	Meso system	bridging social capital
5	Macro system	pedagogical civil society

There has been made use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, to investigate parental involvement and its bottlenecks at the various ecological levels. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to answer the research questions, is called triangulation. Triangulation increases the internal validity of the research (Bergsma, 2003). The internal validity is the extent in which is measured what is intended to measure (Grimm, 1993). When different methods lead to the same results it can be said, with greater certainty, that what was intended to measure, actually is being measured.

The quantitative part of the research includes analysis of parental involvement within the micro level and exo level of a child. Reason for this choice is that DEI expects that both AP as PTA's/PTF's will foster the parent-child interaction, parental home-based involvement and parental school-based involvement. Through quantitative methods these expectations can be tested. Bonding social capital is also included in the quantitative part, because this belongs, just like parental school-based involvement, within the exo system of a child.

Qualitative methods were used to know more about the impact of parental involvement within the different ecological levels and about possible bottlenecks concerning parental involvement. Qualitative methods provide an exploratory nature and thus offer the possibility to get more insight in these issues.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1. Quantitative Methods

The quantitative part of the research consisted of questionnaires for parents. To determine whether there is a difference between parents who have followed AP and who have not followed AP, two different questionnaires were created; one for parents who have followed AP and one for parents who have not followed AP. The questions focused on the perception of parents about AP and PTA's/PTF's, parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. In order to measure these concepts, it was necessary to operationalize them. Parental home-based involvement is operationalized by the interest of the parent in the school life of the child, the extent of encouraging the child in making homework and better communication with the child about the school system and the expectations that is given to the child by the school. Parental school-based involvement is operationalized by the involvement of parents at parent evenings and school activities, the contact with teachers, involvement in the organization of the school and the extent of experiencing self-confidence to be involved in the school setting. Bonding social capital is operationalized as the extent that parents feel socially supported, share parental values and communicate with other parents about raising children. These operationalized categories were used for the compilation of the items in the questionnaires and are based on the books 'Active Parenting' of Popkin (2008) and 'Verbeter de wereld begin bij de opvoeding' of de Winter (2011).

Both questionnaires started with eleven general questions to collect background information of the participants. Subsequently, there were questions asked in both questionnaires that needed to be answered by means of a Likert scale. Likert items are ordered, one-dimensional scales (Likert, 1932). Respondents have to choose one option that correspondent with their opinion in answer to a question. Each option, in this case ranging from one to three, is associated with the labels; "no" (1), "a little" (2), to "yes" (3). It was decided to use a three points Likert scale, after a pilot of this study showed that a five points Likert scale caused confusion and required too much time of the respondents.

To date, there is an ongoing debate about whether Likert items can be statistically processed on an ordinal or interval level. An ordinal level means that the response categories have an ordered sequence, while the distance between the different levels can not be interpreted as equal. On interval level, the response categories have also an ordered sequence, however, the distances between the different levels are presumed to be equal. Processing a Likert item on ordinal or interval level has statistical consequences, since *means* and *standard deviations* can only be used when the data is processed on interval level. The *mean* (M) is the statistical name for the average. The *standard deviation* is the statistical name of the dispersion of a variable. For example, a high standard deviation of the variable

‘parental home-based involvement’ indicates that the outcomes are spread out over a large range of values, so that the score on home-based involvement varies a lot, while a low standard deviation means that the scores on parental home-based involvement tends to be near the average (Grimm, 1993). Using means and standard deviations makes it possible to determine, for instance, if home-based involvement differs between parents who have followed AP, and who have not followed AP. However, to make use of analysis on interval level the outcomes have to be normally distributed. This means that the outcomes are symmetrical divided and can be represented in a bell-shaped curve, in which approximately 68 percent of the respondents scores in the middle of the curve and about four percent of the respondents scores in the extremity of the curve. When the results were not normally distributed, the result were represented in a different way, namely by means of percentages in addition to *means* and *standard deviations*.

The questionnaire for parents who have followed AP started with seven Likert items about parenting skills. Parents could indicate whether they had the idea that AP has contributed to altering the parenting style. Subsequently fifteen Likert items followed, equally divided between the categories home-based involvement, school-based involvement and bonding social capital. This could indicate to what extent they feel that AP has contributed to the promotion of these factors. The questionnaire for parents who have not followed AP consisted of eight Likert items, equally divided between the categories parenting style, home-based involvement, school-based involvement and bonding social capital. The last parts of both questionnaires were similar. Parents could indicate through fifteen Likert items, equally divided between the categories parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital, to what extent they felt that a PTA/PTF contributes to parental involvement in these categories. The items from these categories were the same as the items about the perception of AP of parents who have followed AP. In addition to the Likert items, the questionnaires consisted of open ended questions. However, the open ended questions belong to the qualitative methods of this research, which will be described in the next section.

3.2.2 *Qualitative Methods*

Qualitative methods used were open ended questions within the questionnaires, semi-structured telephonic depth interviews, semi-structured depth interviews and active participation in PTA’s/PTF’s meetings. The majority of the open ended questions in the questionnaires were questions about PTA’s/PTF’s, because previous observations from DEI showed that many parents do not know the contents of a PTA/PTF (DEI, 2012). Open questions provide the opportunity to obtain information on topics where little is known about in a relatively short time. A questionnaire consisting of only closed questions could lead to missing key information, or the possibility that a respondent fills out an answer that does not completely correspond to his or her idea. This may cause that the content validity of the

research can be questioned. The content validity is the extent to which the individual items represent the construct that is being measured (Field, 2009). Open questions about the PTA's/PTF's were about the awareness of parents about the contents of a PTA/PTF. Furthermore, it was asked whether and how a PTA/PTF contributes to parental involvement in general. In this thesis parental involvement in general refers to parental involvement within the various ecological levels. A smaller part of the open questions were questions about AP. It was asked whether and how AP contributes to parental involvement in general. Furthermore, it was asked if parents are aware of the contents of AP.

In addition to the open questions in the questionnaires, structured telephonic depth interviews were conducted with parents. In a structured interview the topics addressed are predetermined. The topics were determined after analysis of the questionnaires. This made it possible to clarify ambiguities from the questionnaires and to gain new insights. The topics were: the influence of AP and PTA's/PTF's on parental involvement in general, bottlenecks concerning parental involvement and suggestions to increase parental involvement. In addition, the interviews were used as a control measure to verify the data from the questionnaires to enhance reliability.

Furthermore, semi-structured depth interviews were held among employees of DEI, leaders and trainers of the program AP, the PTA's/PTF's, the school boards and the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs (MECSY). Semi-structured indicates that only the topics are predetermined but the questions are not. These topics are explored by starting with an open question and then respond to this answer by asking a deeper question. Open questions give the interviewees the opportunity to use their own frame of reference to answer and ensure that the interviewees can express their thoughts more freely (Bogdan & Knopp Bilken, 1992). Often the researcher established a logical order for the topics. However, the researcher is free to change the order of the topics, if it is more convenient during the conversation (Baarda, 2009). Semi-structured depth interviews were chosen, because it allows the researchers to learn in addition to the predetermined topics more about parental involvement in general and about the bottlenecks concerning parental involvement.

Semi structured interviews with members of DEI were hold to get more knowledge about the research background of parental involvement on St. Maarten The obtained information is used for writing the research background and theoretical framework of this thesis. The purpose of the semi-structures interviews by leaders and trainers was to gain more information about the functioning of AP, the bottlenecks concerning this project, to get recommendations for this project and to gain more information about parental involvement in general. The purpose of semi-structured interviews by school boards was to gain more information about the functioning of AP and PTA's/PTF's, the bottlenecks concerning these projects, recommendations for these projects and bottlenecks and suggestions for parental involvement in general. The purpose of the semi-structured interview with the Secretary General of MECSY was to gain

more insight in parental involvement within the macro level. This includes the history and current situation of parental involvement on cultural, socio- economic and political level.

Finally, active participation of the researchers occurred during PTA/PTF meetings. These meetings took place on both FBE as PSVE schools. The purpose of these participations was to get information about the current situation of PTA's/PTF's, and to find out what the needs are of the PTA's/PTA's. Information from this is obtained by means of discussions between PTA/PTF members. This makes it possible to find bottlenecks concerning parental involvement by PTA's/PTF's and parental involvement in general. To achieve the purpose of participation in these meetings, active input of the researchers was desirable.

3.3 Procedure and Participants

The first depth interviews were held with four employees of DEI. Through these individuals it became possible to conduct interviews with trainers and leaders of AP and to conduct interviews with school board members. Out of the seventeen FBE schools on St. Maarten, eight were included for interviews with trainers and leaders of AP. Among these eight schools, two public schools (Oranje School and Charles Leopold Bell school), three Catholic Schools (Sr. Borgia School, Sr. Magda School and the Sr. Regina School), a Protestant Christian School (Hillside Christian School), the Seventh Day Adventist School and a Methodist School (Mac. Rev. John. A. Gumbs Campus) participated in this research. In addition, interviews were conducted with leaders and trainers of AP of all four existing PSVE schools, namely the Milton Peters College, St. Maarten Vocational Training School, St. Maarten Academy PSVE and the Sundial School. The selection of FBE and PSVE schools is determined on basis of proportionality to the number of schools covered by a school board. Subsequently the schools are selected on basis of geographical location, namely which schools are nearest to DEI. The interviews with the main school board members are held among all existing school boards; the Public Education Services, the Foundation for Catholic Education, the Foundation for the Methodist Agogic Centre, the Foundation for Academic Vocational Education, the Foundation for Secondary Education, the Foundation for the St. Maarten Seventh Day Adventist Education and the Foundation for Protestant-Christian Education.

Furthermore DEI made it possible for the researchers to actively participate during eleven PTA/PTF meetings, of which eight FBE schools and three PSVE schools. Also DEI made it possible to attend a conference where different departments within MESCY presented their policy plans for the upcoming years. Through this conference, contact was made with the Secretary General of MESCY, allowing to include her as an informant in this research trough an interview.

Through both members of the PTA's/PTF's and leaders and trainers of AP, 108 questionnaires were distributed to parents who have followed AP and 114 questionnaires were distributed to parents who

have not followed AP. Of the 222 questionnaires, 29 questionnaires were received from parents who have followed AP and eleven from parents who have not followed AP. Eleven out of twelve members of a PTA/PTF have also participated in AP. Further demographic data of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Finally, trainers and leaders gave the researchers the opportunity to contact parents for telephonic depth interviews. Eleven telephonic depth interviews were conducted among parents who have and have not followed AP.

Table 1.

Demographic data participants

	Gender	Marital status	Group AP	Group PTA/PTF	Aware Content PTA/PTF
Number	34 Female	20 Married	29 AP	12 PTA/PTF	14 Aware
	6 Male	18 Single	11 No AP	16 No PTA/PTF	4 No Aware
		2 Missing Value		12 Missing Value	22 Missing values
Total Size	40	40	40	40	40

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analyses

The quantitative part of the questionnaires focused on research into parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. The scores of these categories on the Likert-scale items are processed in the program SPSS 16 for Windows. SPSS is a statistical computer program that is used to perform statistical tests. Before the data were put in SPSS, the raw scores were averaged by category. This made it possible to execute statistical analyzes. Table 2 and 3 indicate the total sum of means for each group and category.

The analyzes are divided into two parts. The first part of the analyzes is about AP and the second part of the analyzes is about the PTA's/PTF's. With the function 'descriptive statistics' of SPSS it was possible to present a normal distribution of the data about the question if parents who have followed AP have the idea that the parenting style changes in the direction of an authoritative parenting style trough AP, see Figure 3.

With a paired sample t-test it is tested whether parents who have followed AP have the idea that AP contributes to fostering parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital, see Table 4. A paired sample t-test makes it possible to investigate whether there is a difference between the means of two dependent groups. In this case, the categories are independent of

each other because the results come from one group, namely from the group AP or from the group PTA/PTF. The sampling distribution for the paired sample t-test is a probability distribution based on differences between means of dependent samples. The aim is to determine if the differences between sample means falls in the tail of the sampling distribution when the null hypothesis is provisionally assumed to be true. The null hypothesis is a statistical statement that states that there is no difference between the dependent variables. In this study tests were run with a 0.05 alpha level. This specifies the level at which the null hypothesis should be rejected. When the null hypothesis can be rejected, there is a statistically significant difference between the measured variables. The used alpha level is reported in the results section with the symbol p .

With an independent sample t-test it is tested whether parents who have and have not followed AP, have different perceptions about the influence of AP on parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital, see Table 5. An independent sample t-test is a statistical test, used to infer whether there is a difference between the means of two independent groups. In this test the independent variable is the group; whether or not parents were have followed AP. The dependent variables are the categories; parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. In this case, the null hypothesis states that there is no effect of the group, whether or not involved in AP, on the categories.

With a second paired-sample t-test it is tested whether parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF, have the idea that a PTA/PTF contributes to fostering parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital, see Table 6. Finally, a second independent sample t-test tested whether parents who are or are not involved in a PTA/PTF, have different perceptions about the influence of a PTA/PTF on parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital, see Table 7.

Table 2

Perception concerning the influence of AP: total sum of means

	Parenting skills	Home-based involvement	School-based involvement	Bonding social capital
Participating AP	2,70	2,88*	2,58*	2,46*
No AP	2,90	2,68	2,86	2,73
Participating PTA/PTF	2,70	2,96	2,89	2,47
No PTA/PTF	2,74	2,80	2,55	2,60

* In this table, the average score per group is shown on the perception that parents have about the influence of AP on fostering parenting skills, parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. The scores could vary from 1 (low) until 3 (high). In this context, the score 2,88 means that parents who have followed AP have the idea that AP contributes above average to parental home-based involvement, and to a lesser extent, but still above average, to parental school-based involvement (2,58) and bonding social capital (2,46).

Table 3

Perception concerning the influence of PTA/PTF: total sum of means

	Home-based involvement	School-based involvement	Bonding social capital
Participating AP	2,88	2,58	2,46
No AP	2,68	2,86	2,73
Participating PTA/PTF	2,75*	2,83*	2,78*
No PTA/PTF	2,80	2,79	2,78

* In this table, the average score per group is shown on the perception that parents have about the influence of a PTA/PTF on parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. The scores could vary from 1 (low) until 3 (high). In this context, the score 2,83 means that parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF have the idea that a PTA/PTF contributes above average to parental school-based involvement, and to a lesser extent, but still above average, to the bonding social capital (2,78) and parental home-based involvement (2,75).

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analyses

The analysis of the open questions from the questionnaires was done by overwriting all the answers of the questionnaires and processing them in Excel. Then the answers were categorized independently by both researchers. In this way, the internal validity is increased. When respondents gave multiple answers to a question, these answers were divided into several categories. The percentage of a category is calculated by dividing the number of responses within a category by the total number of responses within a question and subsequently multiplying the result by 100. The results are shown in percentages in the Tables 8, 9 and 10.

During all interviews, the researchers divided the tasks into an interviewer and a minutes secretary. From the minutes of the interviews, conducted with parents, leaders and trainers of AP and school boards, the answers to the questions are transcribed and categorized. Where meaningful, the results are shown in percentages within tables. The minutes of the semi-structured interview with the Secretary General of MESCY are elaborated in narrative form.

During the participation in the PTA/PTF meetings minutes are taken of occurred discussions. These minutes were also transcribed, categorized and, where meaningful, shown in percentages in tables.

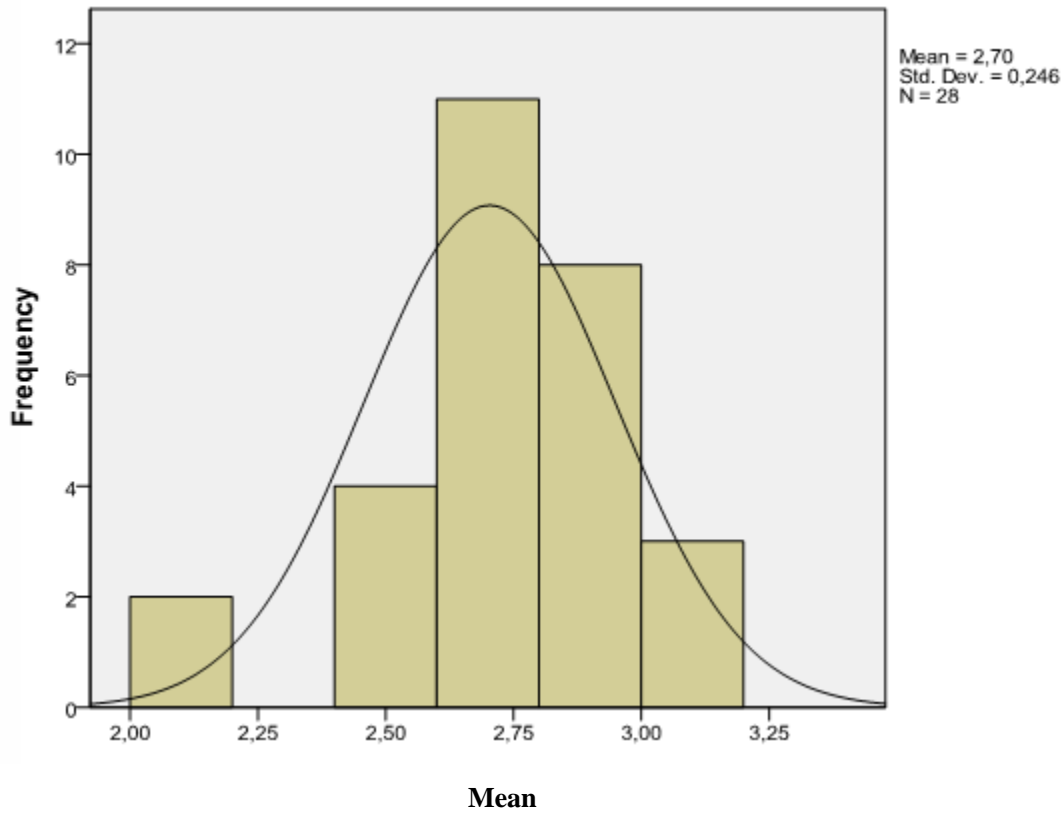
4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Results

4.1.1 Results of AP

Figure 3

Effect of participation in AP on the perception of a changed parenting style



* This normal distribution represents that parents who have followed AP have the idea that AP changes the parenting style in the direction of an authoritative parenting style. The Likert scale ranged from 1 (no change) until 3 (change). With an average of 2,7 the normal distribution can be seen as skewed to the right, which means there is a visible effect.

Table 4

Comparison between categories among parents who have followed AP

Condition	N	M	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
School-based – Home-based	25	-.27	.42	t(24)= -3.239, p=.003*
School-based – Bonding social capital	26	.14	.67	t(25)= 1.052, p= .303
Home-based – Bonding social capital	25	.44	.52	t(24)= 4.208, p= .000

* This table shows the sample size (N), the mean difference (M) the standard deviation (SD) and the outcome of the dependent sample t-test of each condition. This dependent sample t-test tested if the perception of parents who have followed AP, differs about the influence of AP on parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement en bonding social capital. In this context, $t(24) = -3.239$, $p = .003$, means that the result of the dependent sample t-test is -3.239 with a sample size of 25, and a corresponding p value of .003. Because this test was run with a 0.05 alpha level, $p = .003$ means that the test is highly significant. In other words, parents who have followed AP, find that the influence of AP on parental home-based involvement and parental school-based involvement substantially differs.

Table 5

Comparison between parents who have and have not followed AP: Perception of the influence of AP on the categories

Category	N	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Parenting Skills		-.21	.09	t(37)= -2.206, p= .034*
AP	26			
No AP	11			
Home-based		.02	.08	t(35)= .253, p=.802
AP	26			
No AP	11			
School-based		-.29	.15	t(35)= -1.936, p=.061
AP	26			
No AP	11			
Bonding social capital		-.27	.17	t(36)= -1.536, p=.133
AP	27			
No AP	11			

* This table shows the sample size (N), the mean difference (M) the standard error (Std) and the outcome of the independent sample t-test of each condition. This independent sample t-test tested if the perception of parents who have followed AP and have not followed AP, differs concerning the influence of AP on fostering the parenting skills, parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. In this context, $t(37) = -2.206$, $p = .034$, means that the result of the independent sample t-test is -2.206, with a sample size of 37 and a corresponding p value value of .034. Because this test was run with a 0.05 alpha level, $p = .034$ means that the test is significant. In other words, parents who have followed AP find that AP has a significantly greater contribution to the parenting skills, than parents who have not followed AP.

4.1.2 Results of PTA's/PTF's

Table 6

Comparison between the categories among parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF

Category	N	M	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
School-based – Home-based	12	-.08	.29	t(11)= -1.000, p=.339*
School-based – Bonding social capital	11	.05	.24	t(10)= .760, p= .465
Home-based – Bonding social capital	11	.05	.37	t(10)= 4.489, p= .635

* This table shows the sample size (N), the mean difference (M) the standard deviation (SD) and the outcome of the dependent sample t-test of each condition. This dependent sample t-test tested if the perception of parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF, differs about the influence of a PTA/PTF on parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement en bonding social capital. In this context, t(11)= -1.000, p=.339, means that the result of the dependent sample t-test is -1.000, with a sample size of twelve and a corresponding p value of .339. Because this test was run with a 0.05 alpha level, p =.339 means that the test is not significant. In other words, parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF find that the influence of a PTA/PTF on parental home-based involvement and parental school-based involvement does not differ.

Table 7

Comparison between parents who are and are not involved in a PTA/PTF: Perception of the influence of a PTA/PTF on the categories

Category	N	Mean Differences	Std. Error Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Home-based		-.05	.14	t(26)= -.359, p=.722*
PTA	12			
No PTA	16			
School-based		.05	.11	t(26)= .414 p=.682
PTA	12			
No PTA	16			
Bonding social capital		.01	.12	t(25)= .056 p=.956
PTA	11			
No PTA	16			

* This table shows the sample size (N), the mean difference (MD) the standard error (Std) and the outcomes of the independent sample t-test of each condition. This independent sample t-test tested if the perception of parents who are involved are not involved in a PTA/PTF, differs concerning the influence of a PTA/PTF at fostering parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. In this context, t (26) = -. 359, p=.722, means that the result of the independent sample t-test is -.359, with a sample size of 28 and a corresponding p value of .722. Because this test was run with a 0.05 alpha level, p =.722 means that the test is not significant. In other words, parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF and parents who are not involved in a PTA/PTF equally think that a PTA/PTF fosters parenting skills.

4.2 Qualitative Results

4.2.1 Awareness of the Contents of AP and PTA's/PTF's

Table 8

Awareness of AP and PTA's/PTF's by parents who have not followed AP and were not involved in a PTA/PTF

Category	AP open ended questions questionnaire	AP telephonic interviews	PTA/PTF open ended questions questionnaire	PTA/PTF telephonic interview
N	11	11	18	11
Yes	100%*	73%	80%	45%
No	-	27%	20%	55%

* This table shows that 100 percent of the eleven parents (N=11) who have not followed AP and are not involved in a PTA/PTF, indicates to be aware of the contents of AP.

4.2.2 Results of AP

Table 9

The idea of parents about the contribution of AP to parental involvement in general

Category	Parents who followed AP (N=25)	Parents who have not followed AP (N=9)
Improve of parenting skills	56%*	70%
Parental school-based involvement	-	10%
Interaction parents and school	7%	10%
Interaction between parents	7%	-
Only if more parents get reached	19%	-
Yes	11%	10%

* This table shows that 56 percent of the 25 parents (N=25) who have followed AP, thinks that AP fosters parenting skills.

4.2.3 Results of PTA's/PTF's

Table 10

The idea of parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF about the contribution of a PTA/PTF to parental involvement

Category	Parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF (N=11)	Parents who are not involved in a PTA/PTF (N=12)
Improve of parenting skills	-	31%*
Parental school-based involvement	15%	23%
Interaction parents and school	15%	-
Interaction between parents	-	15%
Yes	46%	23%
Only if more parents get reached	23%	-
No, a PTA/PTF takes too much time and effort	-	8%

* This table shows that 31 percent of the twelve parents (N=12) who are not involved in a PTA/PTF thinks that a PTA/PTF fosters parenting skills.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Evaluation AP: In which way contributes AP to an increase of Parental Involvement?

5.1.1 *Aware of the Content of AP*

The results of the open questions in the questionnaires show that 100 percent of the parents who have not followed AP are aware of the content of AP, see Table 8. However, after questioning during the telephonic depth interviews, it shows that about a quarter of the parents are not aware of the content of AP. An explanation for this difference may be that parents who filled out the questionnaires have more freedom to give socially desirable answers.

5.1.2 *Influence of AP on Parenting Skills*

The responses of the open questions in the questionnaire of parents, who have not followed AP, show that the majority indicates that AP will contribute to improving the parenting skills. The parenting skills are improved in the direction of an authoritative parenting style. One parent said *"AP ensures that I get a closer relationship with my child by approaching my child with more love and therefore I get a more loving connection with my child"*. Parents who have followed AP also indicate that AP contributes to an improvement of the parenting skills. Some parents said: *"By understanding the capabilities of my child I get mutual respect"*, *"AP encourages me to communicate with my child"*, and *"AP helps how I should listen to my child and that I should have more eye contact with my child"*. The normal distribution shows that parents who have followed AP have the idea that AP changes the parenting style in the direction of an authoritative parenting style, see Figure 3. The Likert scale ranged from 1 'no change' to 3 'change'. With an average of 2,7 the normal distribution can be seen as skewed to the right, which means there is a visible effect. However, the quantitative analysis shows that there is a significant difference between parents who have and have not followed AP. It appears that parents who have followed AP have, in greater extent than parents who have not followed AP, the idea that AP contributes to the fostering of the parenting style. An explanation may be that parents experienced an acknowledgment during the program that AP fosters the parenting skills.

5.1.3 *Influence of AP on Parental Involvement within the various Ecological Systems of a Child*

Through telephonic depth interviews 55 percent of the parents indicate that AP fosters parental involvement by improving the parent-child relationship. One parent says *"Parents get a lot of information to improve the interaction with their child"*. However, the quantitative part of the research went more deeply into the different levels of parental involvement, which includes parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. In this way, parental

involvement is analyzed from both the micro system and exo system of the child. The results show that parents who have followed AP think that AP is a significantly stronger contributor to parental home-based involvement, rather than to parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. This supports the expectation that AP fosters parental home-based involvement in the strongest way, and to a lesser extent parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. Within the micro system both the fostering of parenting skills and parental home-based involvement are mentioned. Thus, the influence of AP is twofold: it would improve the parenting skills and fosters parental home-based involvement. It is possible that AP at first anticipates on fostering the parenting skills, and that the new learned parenting skills in turn contribute to parental home-based involvement. Further research could examine whether this relation is justified.

Structured depth interviews with trainers and leaders of AP and main members of school boards give an indication that AP firstly anticipates on fostering the micro system and subsequently fostering the other ecological systems of the child. For instance, trainers and leaders indicate that AP, by improving parent-child relationships, will prevent youth problems and strengthens the society in the long term. So, the micro system of the child should be good before AP would have an effect on strengthening the macro system of a child. Main school board members also indicate that they feel that AP fosters parental involvement, because AP creates common ground between the school and the home setting of a child. In this way AP strengthens bridging social capital within the meso system of a child. However, according to the school board members this common ground can only be created when children are raised according to an authoritative parenting style.

5.1.4 Conclusion

Research shows that a part of the parents is not aware of the contents of AP. Both parents who have and have not followed AP indicate that AP contributes to fostering the parenting skills. However, parents who have followed AP indicate this in a greater extent than parents who have not followed AP, this difference is significant. Further results show that AP fosters parental involvement within the micro system of a child in a significant greater extent, than parental involvement within the exo system of a child. In addition, it is indicated that AP fosters the meso system of a child. Evidence suggests that AP may have only a positive contribution to the meso -and macro level when parental involvement is optimal within the micro level of the child. Further research could give this more attention.

5.2 Evaluation PTA's/PTF's: In which way contributes a PTA/ PTF to an increase of Parental Involvement?

5.2.1 Aware of the Content of a PTA/PTF

The open questions of the questionnaires show that a fifth of the parents who are not involved in a PTA/PTF are not aware of the contents of a PTA/PTF. However, after questioning during the telephonic interviews with parents, it shows that 55 percent of the parents are not aware of the contents of a PTA/PTF. An explanation for this difference may be that parents who filled out the questionnaires have more freedom to give socially desirable answers.

5.2.2 Influence of a PTA/PTF on Parental Involvement within the various Ecological Systems of a Child

The open questions from the questionnaires show that 31 percent of the parents who are not involved in a PTA/PTF indicate that a PTA/PTF contributes to improving parenting skills. One parent said "*As a parent you get a lot of information about how to educate your child in a right way*". This result was not expected. Possibly this effect is caused because parents may not know the contents of a PTA/PTF well. This is apparent from the telephonic interviews in which 55 percent of the parents indicate not to know the contents of a PTA/PTF.

The quantitative part of the study elaborated on the various forms of parental involvement, which are parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. It was expected that parents would indicate that a PTA/PTF would foster parental school-based involvement the strongest, than bonding social capital and at least parental home-based involvement. In other words, a PTA/PTF would directly have an impact on the exo system of a child and subsequently on the micro system of a child. This expectation was based on the idea that being a member of a PTA/PTF is an appropriate way for a parent to be school-based involved. In addition, both PTA/PTF as parental school-based involvement belong within the exo system of a child. However, the quantitative analysis shows that the influence of a PTA/PTF does not differ at the different ecological levels of parental involvement. In other words, a PTA/PTF does not have more effect on fostering parental school-based involvement, than on fostering bonding social capital or parental home-based involvement, even though the average raw scores do show that a PTA/PTF has the most influence on parental school-based involvement, subsequently on the bonding social capital and finally on parental home-based involvement. That these differences are not tested as significant may be caused by an insufficient size of the group of surveyed parents. Consequently the research could have too little power to detect a statistically significant effect. However, the results of the open questions and telephonic interviews with parents confirm that parents do not feel that a PTA/PTF affects parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital in varying degrees. Although this result may also be due to the fact that a large part

of the parents are not aware of the contents of a PTA/PTF and the possibility that a PTA/PTF can have an effect at different levels of parental involvement.

Finally, parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF indicate through the open questions in the questionnaires and telephonic interviews that a PTA/PTF makes a positive contribution to the interaction between parents and school. One parent said *"a PTA/PTF is used as a bridge between students, parents and teachers"*. This statement belongs to parental involvement within the meso system of a child. It has not been tested whether parents think that a PTA/PTF fosters the interaction between parents and school in a greater extent than the other levels of parental involvement. It is therefore recommended that further research should include the interaction between parents and schools in the quantitative part of the research. Finally, no evidence is found about the impact of PTA's/PTF's on the macro system of a child. It is possible that PTA's/PTF's only have a positive contribution within the macro system of the child when parental involvement is optimal within the preceding ecological levels.

5.2.3 Conclusion

A large part of the parents does not appear to be aware of the contents of a PTA/PTF. It is therefore possible that parents who are not involved in a PTA/PTF indicate that a PTA/PTF contributes to the fostering of the parenting skills. There is no difference found in the extent in which a PTA/PTF fosters parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and bonding social capital. In other words, the micro system and the exo system of a child are equally fostered by a PTA/PTF. However, there are indications that a PTA/PTF primarily fosters parental school-based involvement and subsequently bonding social capital and parental home-based involvement. Following research should investigate whether these indications are correct. Furthermore, parents who are involved in a PTA/PTF indicate that a PTA/PTF fosters the interaction between parents and school, and therefore the meso system of a child. Further research could tell whether parents think that a PTA/PTF fosters the interaction between parents and school fosters in a greater extent than the other levels of parental involvement. Finally, no evidence is found about the impact of PTA's/PTF's within the macro system of a child.

5.3 Evaluation Bottlenecks: Which bottlenecks can be identified concerning parental involvement on St. Maarten?

5.3.1 Bottlenecks concerning AP

Parents find AP in terms of content "a good program", and find the program a tool to improve the education of their children. Nevertheless there are some bottlenecks that prevent the program from an optimal effect. The most common bottleneck concerning AP is that, due to lack of time, participation in this program is very low. As a solution for the low participation some schools demand that parents should

follow AP before they may register their child in school. However, this condition is not legally established, so schools are not justified to refuse children when parents have not followed AP. Therefore, a large part of the parents still have not followed AP. This makes it difficult for parents on St. Maarten to achieve shared educational values and represent them together. This creates a lack of shared parental values and bonding social capital among parents on St. Maarten.

Other bottlenecks mentioned among parents who have followed AP are that AP is not given regularly and throughout the whole development of the child. Due to these factors of parents lapse quickly into old behavior patterns and parenting actions. For example, one parent said: *“AP will only work when the program will be given more consistently throughout the years a child is in school”*. According to leaders and trainers the economic and social situation on St. Maarten is also responsible that parents lapse quickly in old behavior patterns and parenting actions after taking AP. By entering into multiple jobs, parents have little time and a lot of stress to apply and practice the learned parenting skills. However, it should be indicated, according to leaders and trainers of AP, that there is a part of the parents who just have little interest in the development of their child. Besides this, parents feel less responsible for their child when they get older. According to leaders and trainers it is very important to stay involved in a child’s life when he/she gets older; *“While the physical care is declining, the mental support should increase”*.

Several leaders and trainers mention as a bottleneck for the content of the program AP itself that it is too American oriented. This is also mentioned by a single school board member. AP does not connect well with the culture and the parenting actions of the Caribbean parent. The examples in the videos do not optimally suit to the situation on St. Maarten, which means the problematic situations that arise in the education of children and the living conditions of parents. For example, the video clips show a family unit with a father, mother and two children who live in a nice house, while on St. Maarten there are many single parents with multiple children living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The demographic data shown in Table 1 already show that there are many single parents, instead of a household with both parent. As a result of the mismatch between the video clips and the real situation, parents find it difficult to identify themselves in order to learn from the situation seen in the video clips. At the same time takes this away the credibility from parents, making that they may not complete the program.

A bottleneck that is mentioned among school board members is that parents start enthusiastic with AP, but simultaneously take over the parenting skills uncritically. Therefore the program does not suit the individual situations and needs. When parents subsequently notice that the learned skills do not have a direct effect, they will not complete the program.

5.3.2 Bottlenecks concerning PTA's/PTF's

A PTA/PTF is considered as a good concept by parents who know what a PTA/PTF is and what it stands for. Parents find it particularly important that they are, through a PTA/PTF, aware of the school life of the child and that they can give their own opinion. However, the results of the open questions of the questionnaires and the telephonic interviews with parents show that the main bottleneck of a PTA/PTF is that a lot of parents are not aware of the existence and content of a PTA/PTF. This main bottleneck is also mentioned among PTA/PTF members. For example, some PTA/PTF members said; *"Many parents think that a PTA is only good for fundraising. Parents do not know their rights and obligations"*. The same PTA/PTF members indicate that they feel that parents do want to be involved, but simply do not know how to get involved. It may be concluded that there is insufficient content knowledge among parents about how they can come into contact with a PTA/PTF and about the activities and rights of a PTA/PTF. In addition to this bottleneck, some members of a PTA/PTF indicate that some schools are not always giving the freedom to a PTA/PTF to reach parents for meetings on their own. According to school board members, not all schools provide an open environment that allows a PTA/PTF to participate and to take responsibility. Furthermore, it appears that some of the parents are afraid to come into contact with the school, preventing them from joining a PTA/PTF. According to some PTA/PTF members this has to do with a lack of education and assertiveness among parents. A final bottleneck mentioned by PTA/PTF members is that parental involvement decreases when the child gets older. This corresponds to a bottleneck for AP, where trainers and leaders indicate that parents feel less responsible for their child when it gets older.

At this moment, it appears that the activity and efficacy of the different PTA's/PTF's of the schools varies strongly. Some PTA's/PTF's have a clear vision and specific goals. They know what their needs are and how they can reach parents in order to work together on the development of the children. Whereas other PTA's/PTFs do not have specific goals yet, do not know what their needs are, and do not know how to reach parents. It is possible that the above-mentioned bottlenecks may play a role in this difference. Further research can investigate the exact causes for the differences in activity and effectiveness between the various PTA's/PTF's.

5.3.3 Bottlenecks concerning Parental Involvement in general

Two main bottlenecks concerning parental involvement in general came forward from the telephonic interviews with parents and interviews with school board members. The first mentioned bottleneck is the lack of time because parents have too much work. Thereby, parents do not dare to demand time off from their work because this may lead to even greater financial problems. The second main bottleneck is that parents do not have the knowledge to be involved in their child's life. Another

mentioned bottleneck is the lack of communication between parents. This may indicate that parents experience a low level of bonding social capital which prevents them to become involved in the education of their child.

A main bottleneck concerning parental involvement in general mentioned by school board members and the Secretary General of MESCY is the low socio-economic situation on St. Maarten. Around 1990, a large amount of immigrants came into St. Maarten. A part of these people needs (medical) care, but cannot afford it. Therefore there a large financial burden shifted to health care. In addition, by the rapid influx of immigrants there is a shortage of water and electricity facilities on the island. Because these are urgent problems that require attention, there is too little money for the social system to develop properly. The Secretary General of MESCY also indicates that the spoken language of immigrant parents is a barrier for parents to be parental home-based involved and parental school-based involved in the education of the child. A second main bottleneck mentioned among school board members and the Secretary General of MESCY is the high percentage of single parents. Not only the high percentage of single mothers, but also the fact that these mothers are often teenage mothers is seen as a cause of a lack of parental involvement, because these young mothers seem to have other interests than adult woman.

5.3.4 Conclusion

Too little time is mentioned as the biggest bottleneck why parents do not participate in AP. Other mentioned bottlenecks for a lack of participation are that parents feel less responsible for their child when it gets older and that the program does not optimally suited the situation on St. Maarten. The reason that parents quickly lapse into old behavior patterns after following AP, is a lack of shared parenting standards and a lack of regularity of the program during the whole development of the child. A final mentioned bottleneck is that some parents take over the learned parenting skills uncritically; so that the program does not suit the individual situations and needs.

A lack of knowledge about the existence, effectiveness, and how to come into contact with a PTA/PTF appears to be the biggest bottleneck concerning PTA's/PTF's. It is also indicated that members of PTA's/PTF's not always get the space from the schools to give their own input, so that parents cannot be optimally reached.

Bottlenecks that are found concerning parental involvement in general is an excessive amount of work for parents and a lack of knowledge among parents about how they can be involved in their child's life. Another main bottleneck is the high percentage of single parents. Finally, the difference in language is mentioned as being a barrier to be parental involved.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for AP

The bottlenecks concerning AP show that participation of parents in is very low because parents have to work a lot. A recommendation is to give AP on businesses, or that parents get time off to follow AP at school. Prerequisite is that there should be a good partnership between businesses and schools. To show importance of AP to the businesses, the government should support these initiatives. Schools themselves can work on a higher participation of parents in AP by giving AP on multiple times and at several schools. This requires collaboration between schools.

To increase participation in AP it may also be considered to start with campaigns about AP through media. The first thing that should come forward in these campaigns is on what levels parents can be involved in their child's life. Only after this the importance of involvement should be emphasized. Also, before the start of a course of AP, there should be a clear explanation about the content of AP. This helps parents to develop realistic expectations regarding the effect of AP and it prevents that parents take over the learned skills uncritically. This is a buffer for falling back into old behavior patterns and parenting actions. Another recommendation is to present a program to parents, before the start of AP, which focuses on getting their lives organized. Since parents in St. Maarten are dealing with several problems, certain tools can help to reduce stress in their lives, leaving more time to be parental involved.

A relapse in old parenting practices can also be prevented by giving related follow up programs on a regular basis throughout the development of a child. One can think of 'AP 0-4 years', followed by 'AP Now in 3' in which parents learn parenting skills that fit into an authoritative parenting style. After this program the parents can follow 'Parents on Board' of Popkin, in which parents learn how to be parental home-based involved and parental school-based involved. Finally, 'Active Parenting for Teens' can be followed. However, these programs should be adapted to the family structure on St. Maarten, so that they better suit to the situation of parents on St. Maarten. For example, during the exercises there can be shown video clips of a busy single mother living in a disadvantaged neighborhood. In addition, teachers should follow the program 'Active Teaching'. In this program, teachers learn how to teach and approach children at an authoritative way. In this way, a common ground will be created between the home and school setting of a child, so that both parents and teachers approach and educate children in a similar way.

For AP and follow up programs to succeed and keep them up to date, it is important to have interim evaluations. This makes it possible to make early changes when problems appear, before the program declines slowly. A final recommendation is to make AP and follow up programs mandatory. In this way all parents together create shared parental values and unwilling parents get reached. However, there are requirements for this to succeed. There need to be enough trainers and leaders of AP, there need

to be consequences for parents who do not show up and parents need to receive time off from their work. To make this possible there is a collaboration needed between parents, schools, businesses and government.

6.2 Recommendations for PTA's/PTF's

Research into the bottlenecks concerning PTA's/PTF's show that a large proportion of parents are not aware of the contents or functioning of a PTA/PTF. Therefore, an island-wide information campaign which identifies the content and function of a PTA/PTF is necessary. This could be accomplished by the use of television. Television is a medium that is used regularly on St. Maarten in providing information. The meaning of parental school-based involvement and in what ways parents can be school-based involved, besides becoming a PTA/PTF member, should also be explained. The information should reflect on the situation of parents on St. Maarten. This could include providing practical workshops where parents learn how they can provide input into the educational development of their child, while they have little time and a lot of stress. It should also be made clear to parents that parental involvement does not declines as their child gets older, and why it is important to stay involved throughout the development of their child. So, parents need to be informed about how they can continue being involved in a way that suits their own situation and the development of their child. Information is the first step to make parents more assertive, so they feel more confident to approach a PTA/PTF and schools and give their own input.

PTA's/PTF's should create an open atmosphere by clearly indicate how parents can turn to them and how they can become a member. Also, the PTA's/PTF's need to continue with informing parents about their activities. This can be done through a monthly newsletter, or by using the internet. This will influence the expectations and ideas from parents about a PTA/PTF in a positive way. A precondition for this is that the PTA's/PTF's have their business organized and have adequate knowledge.

In turn, PTA's/PTF's need to receive information on how they can reach parents and how they can maintain good contact with school managements and school boards. It is important that PTA/PTF members will have more knowledge about their rights and obligations, so that they may have an equivalent contribution to school managements and school boards. On the other hand, school managements and school boards need to be open for the input from PTA's/PTF's and take this seriously. A reciprocal open relationship between PTA's/PTF's and school managements and school boards could be realized by organizing regular meetings, in which everyone can express his-her ideas and plans.

The plan of DEI is to connect the different PTA's/PTF's through a platform. However, the explorative part of the research shows that the activity of the various PTA's/PTF's at schools varies greatly. It is therefore recommended to DEI to firstly set up guidelines to determine which requirements PTA's/PTF's should meet. These can be described in a comprehensive document, which, for example,

captures the rights and duties of a PTA/PTF, how a PTA/PTF should work and what the common goals are. The different PTA's/PTF's should get individually support to achieve these guidelines. Only when each PTA/PTF meets these guidelines, it is useful to connect them through a common platform.

6.3 Recommendations for Parental Involvement in General

When the government wants to work to the strengthening of parental involvement, more money should be made available for projects such as AP and PTA's/PTF's. A good needs assessment is the first thing that should be done. Only after this, the selected projects can be implemented. Then, evaluations must take place on a regular basis. In this way, no money will be wasted by implementing programs which do not suit the situation on St. Maarten or are not needed. Furthermore, in this way possible bottlenecks can be tackled on time.

Parents must constantly be informed about the importance of parental involvement within all levels through the media. Also, parents need time to be involved in the lives of their children. Therefore, a good cooperation between schools, policymakers, businesses and government is needed. Parents should be allowed to take time off from work to follow educational programs like AP, or to be school-based involved. The government can take the initiative to start giving employees time off. Then the business world will probably follow.

Parents indicated that there is a lack of communication between parents. There should be a place created where parents can come together to discuss parenting and parental involvement and where they can get information. Something that could be considered is to implement a Centre for Youth and Children. In the Netherlands this is called 'het Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin' (CJG). There, each city has a CJG. It is a recognizable point in the neighborhood, where parents and young people can turn with their questions about health, growing up and parenting. A CJG offers advice, support and assistance (www.cjg.nl). A condition is that it is easily approachable. To realize this, support from the government is needed. The CJG could also provide language courses for immigrant parents, since the language barrier is a bottleneck for parental involvement. Also, there should be island wide prevention campaigns about teenage pregnancies and single parents. If this is prevented, parents will experience less stress; they can work less and thus have more time to be involved in the lives of their children.

7. Limitations of the Research

There has been no previous research about parental involvement on St. Maarten. Also the content and meaning of parental involvement was still unclear. Therefore, this research has partly been forced to have an exploratory nature, whereby it was impossible to include all levels of parental involvement in the quantitative part of the research. During the stay of the researchers there was a lack of AP courses and it turned out that there was a great difference in the activity of the various PTA's/PTF's. Therefore it was not possible to carry out pre and post-measurements about the effect of AP and PTA's/PTF's within the various levels of parental involvement. Thus, the researchers were forced to include parents who have and have not followed AP. However, this does not provide a pure comparison, because both groups may naturally differ in the degree of parental involvement and their perception about this. This makes it also impossible to establish causal relationships between following AP and the various forms of parental involvement.

Another limitation can be found in the small, not randomly taken sample, due to the fact that the response rate of the questionnaires was very low. The small amount of participants could do harm to the representativeness of the outcomes. There are many different reasons for people to fill in a questionnaire or not. Parents can have too little time, do not understand the language or the statements or do not see the importance of filling out a questionnaire. The small sample size could have an unforeseen effect on the results. In this way it could be possible that the research may not had enough power to detect a differences of the influence of PTA's/PTF's between the various levels of parental involvement.

The data from the qualitative part of research were transcribed and then categorized by the researchers. Subsequently, the percentages were calculated by category. However, it must be noted that these percentages are a rough estimate from reality. The categorization can be influenced by the subjective judgment of the researchers, so the results are slightly biased. This problem is partly overcome, because the researchers independently categorized the raw data. Finally, the language differences and cultural differences of the researchers with the interviewees can have an influence on the acquired information.

8. References

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<http://www.cjg.nl/> Information about Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin retrieved on Mai 27th.

9. Appendixes

9.1 The program AP

Active Parenting is a video-based education program, which is based on the application of Adlerian parenting theory. This theory is defined by mutual respect among family members within a democratically run family. There are different versions of this program. On St. Maarten the following two versions are primarily used: Active Parenting Now in 3 (APN), intended for parents with children between five and twelve years old, and Active Parenting of Teens (APT), intended for parents of teens. APN consist of three sessions of two hours, with the following topics during each session: 1) communication and cooperation, 2) discipline and responsibility, 3) power, courage and self-esteem. APT consist of six sessions of two hours, in which, five topics will be discussed: 1) The active parent, 2) winning communication, 3) responsibility and discipline 4) building courage, redirecting misbehavior, 5) drugs, sexuality and violence (Popkin, 2005). The meetings are led by trainers who in turn are trained by leaders. The leaders can also lead the AP meetings. Because local people are trained to become trainers or leaders of the AP program, the program works to enlarge the capacity of the community (Popkin, 2005).

The AP program is subsidized by Uitvoeringsorganisatie Stichting Ontwikkeling Nederlandse Antillen (USONA). USONA is responsible for a legitimate and effective management of the funds that the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations has made available for many countries, including St. Maarten, for development projects within the theme of Education and Youth (www.usona.an). The money that USONA makes available for the AP program is intended for educational materials and spaces for meetings, training for leaders and trainers, and for guiding these meetings by leaders and trainers.

9.2 Questionnaires

9.2.1 Questionnaire for Parents who have followed AP



Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports
DIVISION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PLANNING & INNOVATION
DIENST ONDERWIJSPLANNING ONDERZOEK en INNOVATIE

Evaluation

Parental involvement in the upbringing of children on St. Maarten

Christel Dekker and Romy Kleijn

University of Utrecht

This questionnaire can be completed anonymously

Active Parenting

- 1) Date:
- 2) Gender:
- 3) Land of birth:
- 4) Ethnicity:
- 5) Marital status: *Please circle what applies to you:*
Single Married Other:
Cohabiting Divorced
- 6) Does the child live in your house?
Yes - No - Other:
- 7) Highest level of education:

- 8) Number of children:
- 9) Age of the children:
- 10) Name of school that the child is participating in:
- 11) What is your relationship to the child in question: *Please circle what applies to you:*
Father Grandfather Uncle Sibling
Mother Grandmother Aunt Other:

Active Parenting:

- 12) Which program do you follow/ or have you followed? *Please circle what applies to you:*
Active Parenting Now
Active Parenting of Teens

13) How did you get in contact to the Active Parenting program?

Please circle what applies to you:

By a letter or email of school By the internet By the church
By another parent By the media Other:

14) Which sessions have you attended? *Please circle what applies to you:*

Active Parenting Now (number of sessions): 1 - 2 - 3

Active Parenting of Teens (number of sessions): 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6

15) Why did you sign up to follow the Active Parenting program?

After following the Active Parent Program...

(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 16) I more often explain my choices to my child | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17) My child and I understand each other better | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18) I actively listen to the needs of my child | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19) I can better cooperate with my child | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20) I set consequences for behavior and firmly maintain these consequences | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21) I feel more confident in using my parenting skills | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22) I give my child more freedom to give his/her opinion | 1 | 2 | 3 |

After following the Active Parent Program...

(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 23) I stimulate my child more in making his/her homework | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24) I stay more up to date of what the school is asking of my child | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25) I can better guide my child with making school tasks | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 26) I ask my child more about his/her school day | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 27) I am trying harder, to understand the school system of my child | 1 | 2 | 3 |

After following the Active Parent Program...**(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

28) I go more often to parent evenings and school report meetings	1	2	3
29) I get more in contact with the teachers	1	2	3
30) I get more actively involved at school activities	1	2	3
31) I get more actively involved to the organization of the school	1	2	3
32) I have more confidence to get more actively involved in the school activities and the organization of the school	1	2	3

After following the Active Parent Program...**(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

33) I feel a stronger connection between the home, school and street culture	1	2	3
34) I feel a stronger sense of community by shared parental values	1	2	3
35) I feel that I have more consultation with other parents about the school life of the children	1	2	3
36) I feel that I have more consultation with other parents about the upbringing of children	1	2	3
37) I feel more socially supported to stay involved at the life and school life of my child	1	2	3

38) Do you think that the Active Parenting program is a good way to increase parental involvement?
Please explain:

Parent committee**I think that a Parent committee ensures that I...****(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

39) Stimulate my child more in making his/her homework	1	2	3
40) Get more up to date of what the school is asking of my child	1	2	3
41) Guide my child better with making school tasks	1	2	3
42) Ask my child more about his/her school day	1	2	3
43) Am going to try harder, to understand the school system of my child	1	2	3

I think that a Parent committee ensures that I...**(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

44) Go more often to parent evenings and school report meetings	1	2	3
45) Get more in contact with the teachers	1	2	3
46) Get more actively involved at school activities	1	2	3
47) Get more actively involved to the organization of the school	1	2	3
48) Have more confidence to get more actively involved in the school activities and the organization of the school	1	2	3

I think that a Parent committee ensures that I feel...**(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

49) A stronger connection between the home, school and street culture	1	2	3
50) A stronger sense of community by shared parental values	1	2	3
51) That I have more consultation with other parents about the school life of the children	1	2	3
52) That I have more consultation with other parents about the upbringing of children	1	2	3
53) More socially supported to stay involved at the life and school life of my child	1	2	3

PLEASE NOTE!

Only answer questions 54 up to and including 59 if you are NOT a member of the parent committee of your child's school

Only answer questions 60 up to and including 63 if you are a member of the parent committee of your child's school

54) I am aware of the contents of a parent committee and what it stands for.

Please circle what applies to you: Yes - No Please explain:

55) What are your expectations about a parent committee? Please explain:

56) What could a parent committee do for **you** and **your child**? Please explain:

58) How would you like to get involved in school? Please explain:

59) Do you think that a parent committee is a good way to increase parental involvement? Please explain:

60) What is the reason that you participate in a parent committee? Please explain:

61) What are your expectations of a parent committee? Please explain:

62) Do you feel that these expectations are met? Please explain:

63) Do you think that a parent committee is a good way to increase parental involvement? Please explain:

We want to thank you for your cooperation. This is the first step to get more involved! 😊

9.2.2 Questionnaire for Parents who have not followed AP



Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports
DIVISION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PLANNING & INNOVATION
DIENST ONDERWIJSPLANNING ONDERZOEK en INNOVATIE

Evaluation

Parental involvement in the upbringing of children on St. Maarten

Christel Dekker and Romy Kleijn

University of Utrecht

This questionnaire can be completed anonymously

16) Date:

17) Gender:

18) Land of birth:

19) Ethnicity:

20) Marital status: *Please circle what applies to you:*

Single Married Other:
Cohabiting Divorced

21) Does the child live in your house?

Yes - No - Other:

22) Highest level of education:

23) Number of children:

24) Age of the children:

25) Name of school that the child is participating in:

26) What is your relationship to the child in question: *Please circle what applies to you:*

Father Grandfather Uncle Sibling
Mother Grandmother Aunt Other:

Active Parenting:

12) I am aware of the contents of the Active Parenting program and what it stands for.

Please circle what applies to you: Yes - No Please explain:

13) Would you like to join the Active Parenting program?

Please circle what applies to you: Yes - No Please explain:

14) Do you think that the Active Parenting program is a good way to increase parental involvement?
Please explain:

I think Active Parenting leads to...

(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)

15) Better parenting skills	1	2	3
16) A better relationship with my child	1	2	3
17) More involvement in the school life of my child	1	2	3
18) More involvement in school activities	1	2	3
19) Better guiding my child with his/her homework	1	2	3
20) Be more up to date of what the school is asking of my child	1	2	3
21) A stronger connection between the home, school and street culture	1	2	3
22) A stronger sense of community by shared parental values	1	2	3

Parent committee

I think that a Parent committee ensures that I...

(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)

23) Stimulate my child more in making his/her homework	1	2	3
24) Get more up to date of what the school is asking of my child	1	2	3
25) Guide my child better with making school tasks	1	2	3
26) Ask my child more about his/her school day	1	2	3
27) Am going to try harder, to understand the school system of my child	1	2	3

I think that a Parent committee ensures that I...**(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

28) Go more often to parent evenings and school report meetings	1	2	3
29) Get more in contact with the teachers	1	2	3
30) Get more actively involved at school activities	1	2	3
31) Get more actively involved to the organization of the school	1	2	3
32) Have more confidence to get more actively involved in the school activities and the organization of the school	1	2	3

I think that a Parent committee ensures that I feel...**(1=No, 2=A little, 3=Yes)**

33) A stronger connection between the home, school and street culture	1	2	3
34) A stronger sense of community by shared parental values	1	2	3
35) That I have more consultation with other parents about the school life of the children	1	2	3
36) That I have more consultation with other parents about the upbringing of children	1	2	3
37) More socially supported to stay involved at the life and school life of my child	1	2	3

PLEASE NOTE!

Only answer questions 38 up to and including 42 if you are NOT a member of the parent committee of your child's school

Only answer questions 43 up to and including 46 if you are a member of the parent committee of your child's school

38) I am aware of the contents of a parent committee and what it stands for.

Please circle what applies to you: Yes - No Please explain:

39) What are your expectations about a parent committee? Please explain:

40) What could a parent committee do for **you** and **your child**? Please explain:

41) How would you like to get involved in school? Please explain:

42) Do you think that a parent committee is a good way to increase parental involvement? Please explain:

43) What is the reason that you participate in a parent committee? Please explain:

44) What are your expectations of a parent committee? Please explain:

45) Do you feel that these expectations are met? Please explain:

46) Do you think that a parent committee is a good way to increase parental involvement? Please explain:

We want to thank you for your cooperation. This is the first step to get more involved! 😊

9.1 Interview Questions Trainers and Leaders

- 1) Are you a trainer or a leader?
- 2) How long do you work at this school and what is your background?
- 3) How long have you been a trainer/leader?
- 4) How did you come into contact with this function?
- 5) How long does this school provide AP?
- 6) Is the popularity of AP increased or decreased over time? How many parents have you trained in school year 2010-2011? Is AP given this school year?
- 7) How do you reach parents to participate in AP? Do you have any ideas how you can reach parents on a better way? Do you have an idea about why parents do not show up?
- 8) Are there a lot of parents who complete the program? If not, what do you think is the reason for this?
- 9) Is AP financed, it is free for parents, are the coaches/leaders getting paid?
- 10) Are parents obligated to follow AP? If not, why not? What can the school board do to help? Does the school board at all have an idea of how AP is working?
- 11) Do you think that the costs and benefits are in relation?
- 12) Would you like to continue with AP?
- 13) What would you change to AP and to the way it is given at your school?
- 14) Do you have the idea that AP leads to more parental involvement at home? And in what way?
- 15) Do you have the idea that AP leads to more parental involvement at school? And in what way?
- 16) Do you have the idea that AP leads to the strengthening of the community? And in what way?
- 17) Do you think that parents feel that they are supported by the community?
- 18) Do you think that AP contributes to the connection between the home-school- and street culture? And in what way?
- 19) Do you think that AP will have a positive contribution to the culture of St. Maarten?

9.2 Interview Questions School Boards

- 1) What is your opinion about the current situation of parental involvement in general?
- 2) What is your opinion about how parental involvement should be on St. Maarten?
- 3) What are your schools doing to increase parental involvement?
- 4) Do your schools use AP? If so does it work? If not, why not? Do you like to continue with AP?
- 5) Do you have recommendations for AP?
- 6) Do your schools have a PTA or PTF? If so, does it work? If not, why not? What is the role of a PTA/PTF?

- 7) What do you think about parents getting more influence in the school curriculum?
- 8) Do you have recommendations for PTA's/PTF's?
- 9) Do you have recommendations about how parental involvement in general can be improved?
- 10) How is the communication between teachers, social workers, school management, school board and government?

9.5 Interview Questions Telephonic Interviews with Parents

- 1) What do you think is the reason that parents are not enough involved?
- 2) What can schools do to involve more parents in the upbringing of their children?
- 3) Do you have any ideas how you can make parents more involved in the development of a child?
- 4) Do you think AP contributes to the strengthening of parental involvement?
- 5) Do you think that the parent committees contribute to the strengthening of parental involvement?
- 6) What can the government do increase parental involvement?

9.6 Interview Questions Secretary General of MESCY

- 1) What is your opinion about the current situation of parental involvement on St. Maarten?
- 2) What do you see as the causes of the lack of parental involvement?
- 3) What is currently being undertaken to strengthen parental involvement?
- 4) Should there be more attention within the policy to increase parental involvement?
- 5) What are the possibilities within the law to increase parental involvement? (for example, mandating a program such as Active Parenting, which is aimed to increase parental involvement)
- 6) Some schools made the program Active Parenting 'mandatory'. These schools have made it mandatory for parents to follow Active Parenting before their child can be registered at the school. However, this practice is not officially included in the law. Some school boards think that it may benefit when Active Parenting will be made mandatory within the law. In this way they can set consequences to parents who do not show up, with the result that more parents get involved. Do you think this is a good idea? In what way can the government support this?
- 7) How often are there meetings between school managements, school boards and the Ministry? Is parental involvement discussed in these meetings?
- 8) What are the options when a school board is not working properly? Can it be decided to close the school? What are the consequences for the children?