Utrecht University

Challenges and Opportunities to Increase Parental Involvement in Mauritius

Master Thesis: Youth, Education & Society

PID Track

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Date: 19 June, 2020

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Abstract

Research points to parental involvement as a significant variable in students' academic achievement, and one which can improve outcomes for disadvantaged children who are at increased risk for underachievement. It has been said that what parents "do" can mediate what parents "have" when parents exhibit a set of beliefs and practices conducive to parental involvement, and a positive parent-school partnership exists. These ideas are critical in Mauritius, where numerous educational innovations have been made, yet problems of student retention, failure and attrition persist. Research has found low parental involvement in Mauritius, though gaps remain in specifying stakeholders' needs and ideas to increase parental involvement. The current study thus explores the challenges and opportunities that exist for parental involvement in Mauritius, employing a mixed-method research design. Through online surveys with parents (n = 28), teachers (n = 27), and a case study with educational professionals in a ZEP school community, stakeholders' perspectives were analysed alongside school practices. The study finds that key parent beliefs, socio-economic and family factors affect parental involvement, and highlights the value of targeted, ecological approaches. Participants' desire for a parent education programme in Mauritius and a preliminary exploration of the programme features is offered.

Keywords: parental involvement, academic achievement, disadvantaged communities, Mauritian primary schools, ZEP, parent education

Introduction

Mauritius is an upper middle-income island country located off the southeast coast of Africa, with a highly diverse population of 1.3 million inhabitants. The government has a vision of equal access to quality education for all Mauritian people, as part of its objective to position the country in the global knowledge economy (Ministry of Education, 2009). Mauritius has a primary school population of 85,730 children, of which nearly half are girls and 95.4% of all children aged 6 to 11 are enrolled in primary schools (Education Statistics, 2019). Inequality in Mauritius nonetheless remains, with only 78.8% of students obtaining the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) to advance to secondary school. Recently, innovations towards greater equality have been made, for example, the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education plan was introduced in 2017, which extended free primary education in Mauritius. Additionally, the PSAC has replaced older measures with the aim of assessing learners holistically. Despite commendable advances, inefficiencies of the educational system persist. Most notably, high (although decreasing) rates of student retention, failure and attrition jeopardize the education and future prospects of children and young people (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Research indicates that disadvantaged children face a higher risk of underachievement and are more likely to miss out on opportunities to climb the social ladder (Morabito, Carosin, & Vandenbroeck, 2017). Two primary factors, namely, parental involvement and teacher supportiveness, are critical to students' academic success (Becket & Luthar, 2002; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Considine and Zappalà (2002) note, "What family members have (material resources) can often be mediated by what family members do (for example, parental support, family cohesion)" (p. 92). Interventions that address changeable mechanisms like parental involvement are thus key to improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children in Mauritius. Such efforts can prevent intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage from reoccurring (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2007).

In Mauritius, research has found that parental involvement is low (Coleman, 2018). However, limited research has been done to assess a wide variety of parental involvement variables and the views of key stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities that exist. A primary objective of the current study is thus to collect the related perspectives of parents and teachers. Parents are an important stakeholder for the significant role they play in the upbringing of children, along with the school, for which literature has found a decisive role in children's

outcomes (Epstein, 1995). The insights of key stakeholders can inform the development of an intervention in Mauritius to increase parental involvement. It is expected that investing in children's education and future prospects in this way will lead to positive returns for families, the economy, and a more socially just society (Deannamode, 2016).

Disadvantaged Children and Underachievement

Disadvantaged children can be defined as those experiencing low socio-economic status (SES) of the family and neighbourhood, and often belonging to a minority group (Becket & Luthar, 2002). Low SES affects children in a myriad of ways, for example, by limiting nutrition and the availability of educational resources at home and school. SES can also affect parent beliefs and practices, which in turn affect students' academic outcomes, for example, when parents who did not economically benefit from the education system fail to invest in their children's education (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2010). Secondly, disadvantage can be understood as inequalities tied to cultural status allocated in society and political access compared to other groups (Gurr, 2000). Ethnic and religious diversity is the norm in Mauritius, with the school population comprised of children from Indian, Chinese, African and Malagasy descent (Creoles) among others. At around 30% of the population, Creoles represent the largest minority ethnic group and the most marginalised group on the island (Morabito et al., 2017). The socio-economic exclusion of Creoles has been found (Deenmamode, 2016) alongside lower levels of academic achievement in the socio-economically disadvantaged regions of Mauritius (Kumar & Gurrib, 2008).

Educational Priority Zones

The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science & Technology established the *Zones d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) in 2003, an innovative school programme addressing the needs of disadvantaged children across Mauritius. The United Nations Development Programme provided monitoring, materials, teaching training, and support in 2006 related to the three ZEP pillars of human resources, infrastructure, and the school/community partnership (Kumar & Gurrib, 2008). The programme aims to address social inequalities by mobilizing resources from the child's environment and providing educational support to schools with high failure rates (Deannamode, 2016). In Mauritius, schools have been designated as ZEP when the pass rate for the national primary examinations has been below 40% (Kumar & Gurrib, 2008). There are 27 mainland schools listed by the Ministry of Education as ZEP schools (Ministry of Education,

2020) located in the disadvantaged regions of Mauritius. Alongside notable successes, some researchers have argued that problems of student absenteeism and low performance on the national exams persist (Deenmamode, 2016).

Theories and Research

Research points to parental involvement as a critical factor that can explain and improve children's differential outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). It is often described in terms of parents' or caregivers' level and quality of investment in the education of their children, at home and with the school (Larocque et al., 2011). Examples of parental involvement activities in the literature include: parent-teacher meetings, parent education courses and trainings, home learning activities, and parents' role in school decisions (Epstein, 1995).

Research indicates a number of variables that predict parental involvement. Family structure is one, with single parent households generally having less time and resources to invest in their children's education (Jeynes, 2010). Secondly, the quality of the parent-school relationship and the forms of involvement offered to parents play an important role (Hornby, 2011), along with parental beliefs, academic expectations of children, and parenting style. For example, loving and supportive parenting entailing both discipline and open communication is said to be conducive to increased parental involvement (Jeynes, 2010). On parental beliefs, parents who have not benefited economically from their own education are less likely to believe in the value of their children's education, thereby obstructing parental involvement. Researchers have found that SES and parental involvement are closely related, whereby additional barriers faced by low income parents include needing to work long hours, limiting the availability of parents' time and energy (Denessen, Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2001). Coleman (2018), on which the current study builds, found parents' lack of time and energy related to long work hours was one of three barriers to parental involvement in Mauritius. In addition, low educational level causing negative parental beliefs and negative parent views of education contributed to low parental involvement. A parent education workshop and after-school programme were recommended to improve children's academic outcomes, but programme feasibility and content were not yet explored. Therefore, collecting parent views on a programme to increase parental involvement, their needs and desires, is a primary objective of the current study.

A suitable model which has integrated prior theoretical frameworks and can be used to evaluate parental involvement in the school context is that of Hornby (2011). The Model for

Parental Involvement indicates eight school factors that facilitate parental involvement under two categories of parental needs and contributions, with example activities under each, allowing for flexibility in how the model is applied in different contexts. Factors related to parental needs (with the amount of parents involved in each), are as follows: channels of communication (all); liason with school staff (most); parent education (many); and parent support (some). Parental contributions are as follows: sharing information on children (all); collaborating with teachers (most); acting as a resource (many); and policy formation (some). The following themes have been additionally incorporated into an interview schedule accompanying the model: involving diverse parents; encouraging parents into the school; and professional development for teachers.

With relevance to diverse societies like Mauritius, a meta-analysis by Jeynes (2010) found that parental involvement had significant positive effects on children's academic achievement regardless of parents' level of education, economic background, and culture. This supports the idea that a parental involvement intervention would benefit diverse children and those from disadvantaged groups. It should be noted that this study occurred in the American context, while other research used in the current study included international case studies such as the Barbadian elementary school context (Hornby, 2011).

Common strengths and weaknesses of parental involvement have been found across international settings. Notably, a lack of written school policies on parental involvement, limited parent education activities, and limited professional development for teachers were all commonly found (Hornby, 2011). In Mauritius, the ZEP programme aims to improve such factors, with Kumar and Gurrib (2008) having noted special courses for ZEP teachers enabling them to better meet children's needs. Of the limited research available on the ZEP programme, I have not found an in-depth exploration of ZEP school resources and how they contribute to parental involvement in practice. The current study seeks to fill this gap through a case study at one ZEP school, and to analyse the common school factors above to explore whether the same barriers (and related opportunities) exist in Mauritius.

Taking into account different contextual agents surrounding the child and family, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is valuable for analysing parental involvement. The theory indicates that multiple socialising agents influence the learning process of children at the micro, meso, and macro levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, the family, parent-school relationship, educational policies, and societal factors must all be considered since each of

these systems around the child interact and influence outcomes. Related to this, a study by Morabito et al. (2017) has noted that on social phenomenon such as low parental involvement, some scholars contest the emphasis on individualizing problems and underscore the importance of structural circumstances in shaping life opportunities. The researchers found that while Mauritian parents tended to adhere to the discourse of parental responsibility, poverty played an influential role in shaping children's inequality of educational opportunities, for example, effects of negative teacher attitudes towards disadvantaged children. While the study identified some explanatory factors, a need emerges for research to explore parent ideas on how to remedy differential children's outcomes, which this study collects in the context of parental involvement.

Research Aims

The existing research indicates a wide variety of factors that affect parental involvement and children's educational outcomes. Through the perspectives of key stakeholders, the current study thus seeks to address the following research question: "What challenges and opportunities exist to increase parental involvement in Mauritius?" While the original aim was to answer the research question in relation to disadvantaged school communities in Mauritius, limitations in reaching the desired parent sample have led to a broader approach in which low and high SES families and schools are represented. The following sub-questions were addressed:

1. What do parents' beliefs and practices suggest about the current level of parental involvement in the sample?
2. What are the needs and desires of parents in relation to parental involvement, and a parent education workshop specifically?
3. What are the school practices and perceptions of the parent-school relationship?
4. What factors affect parental involvement at a ZEP school in a disadvantaged community?

Methods

Research Design

This research is descriptive and exploratory in nature, seeking to describe and explore participants' understanding and interpretation of parental involvement through their own

perspectives and experiences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The research has been organised into Study 1 and 2 to provide clarity (some overlap of methods occurred), with an overview of the measuring instruments and methods included in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Structure

Study 1	Parent survey (n=28)	Teacher survey (n=22)	
	Mixed methods	Mixed methods	
Study 2		Teacher survey (n=5)	Headmaster interview (n=1)
(ZEP case study)		Mixed methods	Qualitative data

Participants and Procedure

The sample was comprised of parents (n = 28), teachers (n = 27), and one school headmaster at the primary school level. Informed consent was collected from the participants through an online consent letter, form and signature.

A convenience and opportunistic sampling technique was employed (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), using contacts made at Mauritian primary schools (through the process of obtaining Ministry approval for my research) and online, since the Covid-19 global health pandemic caused my premature return to The Netherlands, where I conducted the research remotely.

I joined and posted in eighteen social media (Facebook) groups aimed at Mauritian primary school parents and teachers over a two week period in April 2020 to distribute the online surveys. A form of snowballing in the sample occurred, whereby group administrators sometimes referred me to additional, unforeseen groups, reaching more participants. It is estimated that over 40,000 people were reached based on the tallied membership figures, although inactive members, overlap in group membership, and that some members were not part of the intended target group, needs to be accounted for. A benefit to this sampling technique was that survey respondents came from across all geographic regions of Mauritius (Table 2).

Parents. In total, 28 parents completed the survey in French and/or English. An additional 32 parents consented to participate, but failed to finish for unknown reasons (possibly due to poor

internet connections). The sample characteristics are displayed in Table 1. Overall, the sample largely represents high SES, highly educated mothers of two-head households, with children attending mostly private schools across Mauritius.

Table 2

Sample Characteristics (n = 27 - 28)

Variable					
Parent Type	Mother	Father			
	26	2			
Number of Parents or Caregivers	One	Two or more			
	7	21			
Parent Education Level	Secondary School	Higher education[a]			
	9	19			
Socio-economic Status	Rs 15,000 – 25,000	> Rs 25,000			
	3	25			
Work Hours[b]	0-14	15-29	30-45	45-59	Unanswered
	10	0	13	4	1
School Type	State public	Private aided	Private unaided		
Child	5	9	14		
Teacher	17[c]	6	0		
School Zone	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Rodrigues
Child	12	5	2	7	2
Teacher	6	6	5	5	1

[a]University or other tertiary. [b]Outside the home. [c]Includes ZEP, 5 teachers = one school.

Teachers. In total, 27 teachers completed the survey in English (a commonly used language by Mauritian teachers), including those reached through Facebook (n = 22) and through the ZEP school headmaster (n = 5). An additional 76 unfinished survey responses were recorded (possibly

owing to technical difficulties and repeat attempts). The breakdown of school type and zone are displayed in Table 1. The teachers largely represent state public schools located almost evenly across Mauritius.

Headmaster. One headmaster whom I had earlier met in Mauritius agreed to participate in an interview as part of a case study, which was conducted over Skype for a period of 45 minutes and later transcribed. The participant is male, has 29 years of work experience in education, and has overseen the state public ZEP primary school in Zone 2 for one year.

Case study. A single, instrumental case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008) was used to describe parental involvement at one ZEP school to answer the research question from the perspective of a disadvantaged school community. It was comprised of a sub-sample of the teacher survey, five teachers from one ZEP school (recruited by the headmaster), along with the headmaster interview. Parents could not be reached due to limited internet access and low parent literacy.

Measuring Instruments

Two separate surveys were designed in Qualtrics software. The parent and teacher surveys differed in structure and content, but they had related aims. Each survey had 32 questions with a combination of question types. An interview and case study were also used.

Parent survey. The survey used 18 Likert Scale questions, 3 multiple choice and 3 open questions. Demographic information was collected through 8 questions on key variables linked to parental involvement outcomes in the literature (for example, family structure, SES and parent education level) (Jeynes, 2010). The survey used a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). For questions measuring the frequency of practices, the 4-point scale was coded as follows: 1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Often. Of the Likert Scale questions, 4 questions were on significant parental beliefs and 4 questions were on parents' perspectives on school engagement. Beliefs included how much parents value education, and parents' confidence level in their ability to support their child academically. Perspectives on school engagement included perceived teacher attitudes towards parents and whether the school offers parental involvement activities (Hornby, 2011). An additional 4 Likert Scale questions were on parents' needs and desires, for example, whether parents have enough time and resources to be sufficiently involved in their children's education, and their interest in a parent education workshop. Finally, 3 Likert Scale questions were on other significant variables, such as parents' agreement with the authoritative parenting style, and academic expectations of their

child, and 3 questions were on the frequency of key practices, such as parent-teacher meetings. Both the multiple choice and open questions covered parent desires on a programme to increase parental involvement and desired engagement from the school. For example, parents were asked to select their preferred topics in a workshop to support parents (multiple choice), how they would like the school to involve them, and suggestions for a parental involvement programme (open questions).

Teacher survey. The survey used 14 open questions, 7 Yes/No questions, 6 multiple choice questions, 3 Likert Scale questions and 2 background questions (of which school name was used to determine school type and zone). The questions were based on Hornby's Model for Parental Involvement (2011) and adapted from the proposed interview schedule to evaluate school-based parental involvement factors. In the Yes/No questions, the following themes were addressed: policy formation (2 questions); acting as a resource (1 question); parent education (1 question); and parent support (1 question), along with professional development for teachers (2 questions). For example, teachers were asked whether their school has a parental involvement policy and parent education activities. In the multiple choice questions, the following themes were each addressed in one question: channels of communication; liason with school staff; collaborating with teachers; sharing information on children, involving diverse parents; and encouraging parents into the school. For example, teachers were asked through which means the school communicates with parents, and which parental involvement activities the school offers. Of the open questions, 7 questions prompted teachers to expand on their answers to the Yes/No questions (for example, to what extent do parents participate in the PTA), and 4 questions were on teachers' beliefs and suggestions for parental involvement, for example, whether parents need to have a certain background to effectively support children's education, and what steps could be taken to increase parental involvement. An additional 3 open questions addressed broader themes, such as what the school does to overcome barriers to parental involvement, under the topic of 'encouraging parents into the school' (Hornby, 2011). Finally, 3 Likert Scale questions evaluated teacher beliefs using the same 4-point scale as the parent survey, measuring, for example, teachers' belief in parents' ability to contribute to their children's academic success.

Semi-structured, in-depth interview. An ecological perspective was employed in the question design, covering parental involvement variables at the school, parent, family, community, socio-economic and policy levels. For example, the headmaster was asked in-depth

how being designated as a ZEP school influences parental involvement, and whether particular challenges exist in the community. The interview was semi-structured in nature since the headmaster was probed for further information and the question order was modified as fit (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

    Case study. The case study was comprised of the headmaster interview and the five teacher survey responses from the same ZEP school (the only ZEP school represented in the sample), as described in the case study procedure and the two instruments above (teacher survey and semi-structured, in-depth interview).

Parent Survey

    Quantitative data. Descriptive statistics were analyzed using Qualtrics for frequencies and SPSS for the means and standard deviations of individual items. Parent demographic data was used to provide an overview of the sample and to conduct tests in SPSS on whether patterns of results differed between groups.

    A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare means between school types on the variable of whether schools offer parental involvement activities according to parents, with the hypothesis predicting that state public schools would offer less activities than private unaided schools due to differences in school resources. ANOVA was used since it can handle categorical data in more than two groups (Allen, Bennett, & Heritage, 2014).

    Two t-tests were conducted to examine if parents from single parent households and parents with a lower SES of the family scored higher/lower on the variable of having enough time and resources to be sufficiently involved in their children's education than parents from multiple parent households and parents with a higher SES of the family (Jeynes, 2010). T-tests were used to determine if there were significant differences between the means of the groups. Each of the independent variables had two categories (Table 2).

    A correlational analysis was conducted to examine if long work hours corresponded with parents having less time and resources to be involved in their children's education than parents who work less hours. A Spearman's correlation test was used to measure the association between two ordinal variables, where the independent variable, work hours, had four categories (Table 2).

    Qualitative data. The responses to open ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis, since it offers a flexible yet systematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012). An inductive approach was used, with codes and themes in part being derived from the content of the data. For

example, the desire to participate in classroom activities was frequently cited by parents and thus used as a code. A deductive approach was also used to bring relevant concepts and theories on parental involvement to the interpretation of the data, for example, parent work hours and SES were used as codes. Codes which were similar were grouped together into themes, for example, parents' desire to participate in the classroom and parents' desire for trainings at the school were grouped into parents' interest in specific school activities.

Teacher survey

  Quantitative data. Frequencies were analyzed using Qualtrics. The teacher survey used the same 4-point Likert Scale as the parent survey, but the analysis relied mainly on descriptive statistics such as the frequencies of significant school variables. For example, school activities were analysed using Hornby's Model for Parental Involvement (2011) to identify gaps, positive practices and opportunities.

  Qualitative data. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, with the same process of coding and creating themes as used for the parent survey. Variables identified in the parental involvement literature were used to analyse the open questions (for example, family structure, parent education level, and SES), as well as teachers' unique observations such as "social ills" affecting parental involvement. Hornby's Model for Parental Involvement (2011) was used to help interpret the actual and desired school practices highlighted by teachers.

  Semi-structured, in-depth interview. The transcript of the interview with the ZEP school headmaster was analysed using thematic analysis. The data was coded as described with the surveys and grouped into themes based on the ecological perspective at the parent, family, school, community, socio-economic and policy levels. For example, the life circumstances of parents and the school approach emerged as important themes. Quotes were used to contextualize the findings and gave insight into the broader research question.

  Case study. The five ZEP teacher survey responses were analysed separately from the rest of the teacher sample since the ZEP teachers were recruited separately with the intention of analysing parental involvement in a disadvantaged school community, along with the headmaster interview (above). The data analysis process was nevertheless the same as for the teacher survey. Other sources of data were not available in the revised form of the research project.

Results

Study 1, Parent Survey

Quantitative data. Parents' responses to the Likert Scale questions are displayed in Table 3. All of the parents either somewhat or strongly agreed with the first three beliefs listed, which are conducive to parental involvement.

On perspectives on school engagement, 96% somewhat or strongly agreed that the school communicates in a language they can speak, and that teachers display a positive attitude towards parents. Parents showed non-uniformity in their answers (a range of 1-4) on the question of the school offering parental involvement activities, with 68% having somewhat or strongly agreed.

On parents' preferred means of school communication, the most selected were meetings at the school (n = 18) and email (n = 17).

On parents' needs and desires, 81% somewhat or strongly agreed that they have enough time and resources to be sufficiently involved in their children's education. Parents showed non-uniformity in their answers. On the question of whether parents want to get more involved in school activities and workshops for parents, 96% somewhat or strongly agreed.

The most frequently desired topic in a workshop to support parents was "child development and age-appropriate learning activities I could do with my child" (n = 20), followed by parenting skills (n = 16), mutual parent support (n = 15), and parents' own education (n = 10).

On the desired scheduling of such a workshop, the weekend was most frequently chosen (n = 12), while the timeframe of the hours after school (n = 9) and morning or evening (n = 6) were less frequently chosen.

On other variables, it was notable that all parents somewhat or strongly agreed that an authoritative parenting style plays a positive role in their children's academic success.

On the frequency of key practices, 64% reported that they sometimes or often meet and/or discuss their children's education with the teacher, while the remainder of parents reported that parent-teacher meetings rarely occur.

Table 3

Frequencies of Parent Answers on Parental Involvement Variables (n = 26 - 28)

Item	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

Parents' Beliefs			
Education is important	0	0	1	27
Values their role in education	0	0	0	28
Confident in ability to support child academically	0	0	9	19
Education is the responsibility of schools more than parents	5	12	9	2
Parents' Perspectives on School Engagement			
School communicates in a language parent speaks	1	0	2	25
Teachers display positive attitude towards parents	1	0	8	19
School listens to and respects parents	1	3	11	12
School offers parental involvement activities	5	4	5	14
Parents' Needs and Desires			
Enough time and resources to be involved	1	4	12	9
Knows how to be involved	0	1	15	12
Supports after-school programme for children	4	3	8	13
Wants to get involved (school activities and parent workshops)	0	1	13	14
Other Significant Variables			
Authoritative parenting style	0	0	4	23
Parent academic expectations of child	0	1	7	19
Parent knowledge of how child is doing at school	0	0	6	23

Frequency of Practices	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Parent-teacher meetings	0	10	9	9
Home learning activities	0	1	5	22
Parent-child discussions about school	0	0	9	19

Note. Items are in abbreviated form.

The descriptive statistics for the one-way ANOVA are displayed in Table 4. School type had a significant impact on whether the school offered parental involvement activities according to parents, $F(2, 25) = 21.88$, $p = .00$. The partial eta squared was .64, indicating a large effect size ("Effect size," 2020). Parents of children in private unaided schools agreed more that the school offers parental involvement activities than parents of children in state public schools.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics School Parental Involvement Activity Offerings

School Type	n	M	SD
State public	5	2.00	1.00
Private aided	9	2.11	1.05
Private unaided	14	3.93	0.27
Total	28	3.00	1.19

Note. n = respondents; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

A t-test showed that the amount of time and resources that parents have to be involved, does not significantly differ between single parent households, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.90$, and multiple parent households, $M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.81$, $t(24) = 0.10$, $p = .92$. The results of the second t-test showed that the amount of time and resources that parents have to be involved, does not significantly differ between parents with a lower SES of the family, $M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.00$, and parents with a higher SES of the family, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.82$, $t(24) = - 0.26$, $p = .80$. Neither family structure nor SES related to parents having enough time and resources to be involved.

Spearman's rho indicated no significant correlation between the amount of time and resources that parents have to be involved, $M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.83$, and the amount of hours worked by parents outside of the home, $M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.16$, $r = .14$. $p = .51$, two-tailed, $N = 25$.

Qualitative data. In the open survey questions, three parents expressed that they felt sufficiently involved in their children's education, and eighteen parents expressed additional desires, needs, and suggestions, as described below.

Parents' interest in specific activities. Three main desires were suggested by parents concerning school-based activities for parents: 1) parent-child activities arranged by the school; 2) parents' participation in the classroom; and 3) parent workshops to facilitate academic support of their children. On the first point, some parents expressed interest in doing activities with their child, for example, a project once per trimester, educational visits, and a family/fun day (each cited by individual parents). Secondly, displaying parents' desire to be directly involved in their children's education, four parents stated that they would like to attend the classroom lessons of their child. Some suggested they would like to assist in the classroom, while others linked this intention to their desire to be informed. For example, one parent shared they would like to "see a live class of the children to be better aware of the environment." Finally, four parents pointed to their desire for the school to provide parent education support, for example, a training on how parents can help their children with schoolwork and "the proper way and methods to use for education." Individual parents expressed the desire for school meetings, the need for the school to hold open days at term-end, and more interesting forms of PTA involvement. In conclusion, parents had specific ideas of activities they would like to participate in at the school; motivations included being informed of the children's school environment and supporting them academically.

Parents' desired communication. Mixed views emerged on the desired frequency of school communication, with parents expressing in nearly equal amounts concern on the level of communication, and alternatively stating they were satisfied with current practices. On desirable means, parents suggested that schools use meetings, email, newsletters, and online tools. Two parents pointed to the use of technology to provide parent and child support, learning materials, and a social network. One parent shared, "Google Classroom…Would be really helpful for after-school activities and homework support!" Another parent stated, "A newsletter (printed or digital) is a great way to regularly inform parents of the various activities their children are doing

at school. Schools may see this as a loss of time and money, but parents feel positively integrated in the school's life." In this excerpt, a parent reveals the idea that schools could adjust their communication to better meet parents' needs.

Working parents' needs and the role of the school. Some parents cited socio-economic barriers to parents being involved in their children's education. It was suggested that schools should not assume a lack of interest on the part of parents, but work to address underlying reasons and support working parents. A stable, ongoing role of the school in family life was proposed, with one parent suggesting, "[Schools should] keep in touch during holidays and continue to support parents – holidays are not easy for most working parents and children are left to themselves." Time constraints were likewise suggested as a reason for parents' frequent lack of participation in school meetings that are scheduled during afternoons. One parent elaborated, "Some parents may not be able to ask for permission, others will be stuck because of transport. [The school] needs to find solutions for that… And try other means to communicate." In this way, parents implied that the school should adopt a proactive role in reaching parents and adjusting to their needs such as work.

Study 1, Teacher Survey

Quantitative data. Responses indicated low frequencies on some of the school factors that facilitate parental involvement (Figure 1). Of interest, 94% of teachers who reported that their school did not have teacher training on parental involvement expressed interest in this.
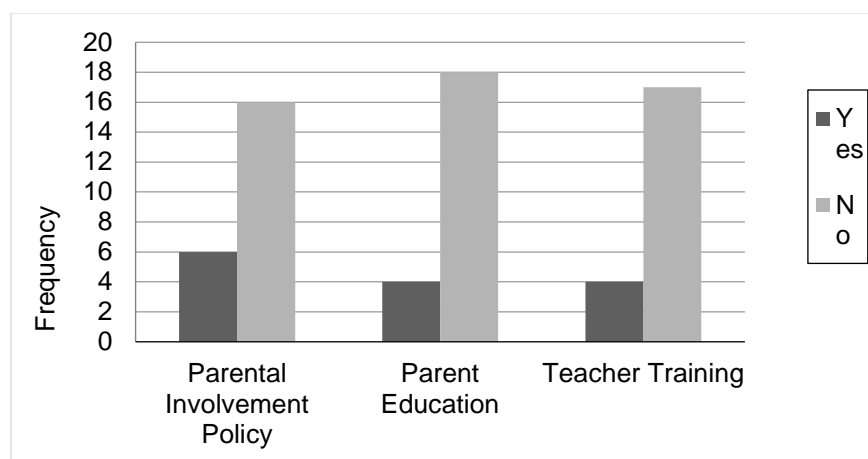

Figure 1: School Factors Parental Involvement (N = 21 – 22)

On the activities offered by schools, teachers reported the PTA at every school, followed by parent-teacher meetings (n=17) and school events to which parents are invited (n=16). None reported home visits and two reported "other" activities.

On when school activities for parents typically occur, during school hours was most frequently reported (n=19), while the timeframe of the evening (n=6), a flexible schedule (n=2), and the weekend (n=1) were less frequently reported.

On the means of communication through which the school engages parents, most reported were phone (n=17) and meetings at the school (n=16); least reported was email (n=1).

Qualitative data.

Parent skills and attitudes. Teachers expressed two main views on how parents can contribute to their children's education as follows: 1) parents require academic knowledge and skills to help their children; and 2) positive parenting skills and attitudes are needed. A belief commonly stated by teachers was as follows, "The level of education is high, and with no knowledge it's impossible for parents to help their ward." Language skills and literacy were given as examples of skills needed for parents to provide homework support. At the same time, many teachers identified parenting style as equally or more important than parents' educational level. Parent presence, time, interest, emotional support, the teaching of values, discipline and monitoring of children were all cited as important parental contributions related to the perceived value of authoritative parenting. One teacher shared insight from her upbringing, "My family background was supportive though they didn't have a high educational or social background… My parents always encouraged me and were so proud to see the results." This value was echoed by other teachers, and individual parents additionally referred to the function of parent attitudes and expectations. For example, one parent stated that parents were "only concerned about themselves" to the detriment of children's educational prospects and displayed "no eagerness for the child's success." In the above ways, parenting practices centred around the child's best interests were advocated by teachers as ways in which parents can contribute to their children's education.

Time constraints and family issues. On the challenges parents face to being involved, a lack of time connected to work and family related issues were most cited. One teacher stated, "I know most parents are working to make ends meet but… A little attention is largely welcome." Four teachers referenced family structure as a barrier to parental involvement, for example

"single parents" and "broken families" leading to the absence of parents at home. As elaborated by one teacher, "I have heard some children say, 'I hardly see my mum or dad' and this is tough for both child and parent." Individual teachers additionally cited "relationship problems," "misplaced parent priorities," and "social ills" including imprisoned parents as barriers. Poverty and financial stress were referenced for their influence on the family, though respondents didn't elaborate on these views.

Support for parent education and collaboration. The most frequently suggested step to increase parental involvement was the involvement of parents in educational opportunities and trainings, as cited by nine teachers. Proposed topics included raising awareness of the importance of parental involvement and skills to help children with schoolwork. Additionally, teacher-parent communication along with activities bridging the school-parent gap were recommended by five teachers, with ideas including meetings, reports on children's behaviour and progress to be viewed by parents, and educational projects to be completed by students and parents. Creative ideas enlisting community participation were also identified. For example, one teacher suggested, "Bridge the gap between school and home through community projects that actively engage the stakeholders as a whole, for example, a community garden." In conclusion, the teachers largely promoted educational and collaborative approaches to parental involvement.

Study 2, Case Study: Parental Involvement in a ZEP School Community

Quantitative. The survey results of the five teachers from the same ZEP school revealed the school has a parental involvement policy, a PTA, and parent education opportunities. Most of the teachers reported that they do not receive training on parental involvement (n=4). Parent-teacher meetings (n=5), school events to which parents are invited (n=4), and home visits (n=1) were reported. Every teacher reported that activities occur during school hours, with one adding in the evening. The most reported means of school communication with parents were phone and school meetings (n=4).

Qualitative. The results of the headmaster interview and the open teacher survey questions are grouped into three themes below, with the respondent type noted.

An Ecological Perspective. The school community was described as having impoverished conditions by both respondent groups, with families facing a number of affiliated challenges to parental involvement at the parent, family, and socio-economic levels. It was noted that many parents have not completed secondary school and have been unable to guide their

children through homework. The headmaster referred to parents' low confidence in their abilities to support their children's education, with parents defining themselves as unable to help their children. Related to the perceived low value of education and low parent academic expectations, he explained, "There are some parents who don't have a vision for what they would like their children to be. They are so pessimistic about the future. They're saying that I'm like this; my children will be like this. So what's the use of going to school?" Secondly, it was noted by two teachers that parent social-behavioural issues negatively affect parental involvement, for example, drugs, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. The headmaster noted that such circumstances contribute to poor home environments and instability in children's education, along with the high incidence of separated parents leading to student absenteeism (caused by children frequently moving between households). Additionally, the headmaster noted that children are sometimes left unattended or cared for by siblings or grandparents, due to parents' long work hours. Two teachers noted that work prevents parents from attending school meetings and being at home, with one stating, "The care and encouragement kids need at home is often absent." The respondents thus described interconnected challenges to parental involvement at various levels around the child.

School resources and parental involvement activities. The headmaster highlighted various school resources (afforded as part of the ZEP programme), which have been used to advance parental involvement and children's outcomes. For example, he explained the function of local social workers and educational psychologists who are aware of the challenges families face and address underlying causes and issues like those noted in the section above. One of the teachers highlighted the role of Parent Mediators in making the link between parents and the school as a means of making parents feel comfortable engaging with the school. The headmaster noted that Parent Mediators also reach out to families in response to issues at the school, such as student absenteeism. Additionally, the parent education reported by teachers was described by the headmaster as being school and community organised, including the topics of authoritative parenting skills and how parents can support their children with critical-thinking homework tasks. Parent education at the school has been positively received by parents, who expressed their desire to participate again. The headmaster explained that through the allocation of the above resources, the school's pass rate on the national exams has increased remarkably from 30% to 60% in the last five years.

A Bottom-Up Approach. Finally, community participation has advanced parental involvement, in particular, the recruitment of school caretakers and administrative staff from the locality. Three functions of this role were mentioned by the headmaster with significant value attached to them: 1) the sense of local ownership created over the school; 2) the social bridging function between the school and parents; and 3) the knowledge afforded on influences beyond the school. On the first point, the headmaster described an important message conveyed to parents, "When you take people from the locality and you put them in the educational context, I think this arouses a certain sympathy for school things, the sense of ownership… Because they are people all working there. They will come to ask if ever they have some difficulty." Related to the social bridging function of the staff, this has contributed to the establishment of a "friendly" school-parent relationship, with two teachers noting that "we listen to parents," and "we always welcome them whether they have positive or negative comments." Finally, knowledge of value to children's education has been sought from the local school staff. The headmaster emphasised, "We can foresee these problems because these people are going to tell us what the problem is with this pupil… How we can help." An inclusive approach was echoed by the teachers who respect the knowledge and decision-making of parents. One teacher noted, "We are working in a ZEP school where the lifestyles of these kids are so much different… Before indulging their kids in any activity, a PTA board meeting is organised… [Parents] share their views and often we adjust with them." Finally, involvement has been noted of the Catholic Bureau of Education, the Rotary Club, and NGOs, all mentioned by the headmaster for their contributions to parent programming and children's academic support. The ZEP school has thus taken a participatory, local approach to parental involvement, with much success despite challenges.

Discussion

Parental involvement is critical to children's academic achievement, and has great potential to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. In Mauritius, prior research has found parental involvement to be low (Coleman, 2018). More knowledge is needed on the experiences, needs and suggestions of key stakeholders on the best ways forward to increase parental involvement. To this end, I conducted surveys with parents and teachers and a case study with educational professionals at one ZEP school in a disadvantaged community. In addition to revealing the views of primary stakeholders, the current study is informative on the level of

parental involvement in the sample, including an evaluation of school practices. The data served to answer the research question, "What challenges and opportunities exist to increase parental involvement in Mauritius?" The main findings are discussed below with recommendations made throughout. The paper concludes with limitations and implications of the research.

Parental involvement was high in the sample, based on parents exhibiting a set of beliefs, expectations, and practices conducive to parental involvement. The parents largely valued their children's education (and their role in it) and they had confidence in their ability to support their children, crucial beliefs in the literature on parental involvement (Hornby, 2011). These findings contrast prior research done in Mauritius by Coleman (2018), which found low parental involvement due to negative parent beliefs. Notably, my parent sample was skewed towards high SES, highly educated parents, which could explain differences in the beliefs found. For example, parents who have not benefited economically from the education system are less likely to believe in the value of their children's education and to invest in it (Jeynes, 2010). The high SES of my parent sample suggests the opposite was true. On the second belief, low parental confidence has been linked to parents assuming they have not developed sufficient academic abilities to effectively help their children (Hornby, 2010). This belief was less prevalent in my sample, which could be related to most of the parents having a higher education degree. In my case study, however, data was provided on a disadvantaged school community which shows an alternative picture. Negative parent beliefs and expectations were precisely found to be challenges to parental involvement, noted by the headmaster and ZEP teachers, a finding in line with Coleman (2018). For example, the headmaster stated that parents place a low value on education, perceive themselves as unable to help their children academically, and lack vision for their children's future. That these ideas were not put forth by parents themselves indicates an area for future research in order to reach low SES parents. Interestingly, research widely acknowledges that parents' ability to support children's learning does not require a high degree of education from them (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Initiatives which increase parent confidence in their inherent abilities to support their children would thus be valuable.

Research indicates that the effects of low SES can be mediated by parents through supportive practices and family cohesion (Considine and & Zappalà, 2002). An authoritative parenting style is likewise noted as a positive variable in parental involvement (Jeynes, 2010). Parents and teachers in the current study echoed these findings, linking authoritative parenting,

such as open communication and interest in the child's schoolwork, to improved outcomes. Parenting skills were noted as a component of the parent education deemed valuable by the headmaster in the case study, and well-received by parents. Secondly, respondents in all groups and methods referred to separated/single parents as a barrier limiting parents' time and availability, corresponding with prior research indicating that single parents face increased challenges in time and resources to dedicate to their children's education (Jeynes, 2010). Yet, no significant relations or differences between groups were found during the quantitative tests, contrary to the expected results. In the current study, neither family structure, parents' income, nor their work hours were related to parents having enough time and resources to be sufficiently involved in their children's education. Two possible reasons for this follow: 1) the parent sample size was small, with not enough single and low SES parents represented to make reliable conclusions, and 2) considerations of time and resources were grouped into one question, making it possible for parents to interpret one or the other in their response. For example, parents of two-head households may have agreed that they have enough resources, while simultaneously disagreeing that they have enough time, if, for instance, both parents work. A recommendation for future research is thus to separate the variables of 'time' and 'resources' to get a more accurate picture of parents' needs. A larger, more representative parent sample would also increase the reliability of quantitative results.

In the qualitative results, it was found in both surveys and the case study that respondents viewed long work hours as a significant barrier to parental involvement. The absence of parents at home and constraints on parents' time and energy posed limitations on parents' ability to be involved. This finding was echoed in Coleman's (2018) study as one of the three main barriers. Building on this, in the current study, parents and teachers reported low parent participation in daytime school meetings when parents work. Roughly one third of teachers reported that their school offers parent activities in the evenings and/or weekend, a figure which should be increased if schools are to accommodate parent needs and promote their involvement. Notably, in-person meetings were both desirable by parents and frequently reported by teachers. Email was the other most desired means of communication reported by parents, yet it was seldom reported by teachers. Future research should involve parents and teachers from the same schools in order to draw reliable conclusions on this potential gap and to explore whether it corresponds to SES of the school/community or a lack of knowledge/will. It can be concluded that flexible

scheduling of school activities for parents, and possibly the use of email, would be appreciated by parents and better accommodate working parents. Initiatives to engage parents will be more effective when they are tailored to meet their specific needs (Nation et al., 2003). Parental involvement could also be increased through schools appealing to parents' desired forms of participation, such as attending children's classrooms, noted in this study. Some advocates argue that schools and governments need to "go the extra mile" to proactively encourage high levels of parental involvement (Jeynes, 2010).

A number of school factors beneficial to parental involvement emerged from my study alongside areas of improvement. Positive teacher attitudes and communication with parents in a language they can speak were widely reported in the parent survey, facilitating parental involvement. As noted by Hornby (2011), schools that are welcoming to parents and make it clear they value parental involvement encourage more parents to become involved. In the teacher survey, every teacher reported a PTA at their school, enabling parent voices to be heard and influence school decisions. However, according to Hornby's Model for Parental Involvement (2011), the PTA is a contribution which applies to "some" parents rather than a greater number. Other beneficial school structures were noticeably lacking, including parent education, a school policy to guide parental involvement, and teacher training on the topic, all of which are common weaknesses across schools internationally (Hornby, 2011). The case study revealed how a ZEP school organises parental involvement and applies resources to successfully address these topics, a lesson which could be applied at other schools. Finally, the analysis of school factors in the current study revealed opportunities to increase parental involvement. Of interest, the factors appealing to "all" or "most" parents' needs in the model are "channels of communication" and "liaison with school staff" respectively (Hornby, 2011). Examples are emailing parents and involving them in (flexibly scheduled) parent-teacher activities, as revealed in the parent survey. Based on Hornby's model, it is advised that Mauritian primary schools adjust practices in these areas to reach more parents, benefiting more children.

Parents expressed mixed views on whether the schools offer activities for parents to be involved, and the ANOVA test yielded significant results by school type. The hypothesis was thus upheld, with parents of children in state public schools less frequently agreeing that these schools offer parental involvement activities than parents of children attending private schools. It could follow that state public schools have less resources to devote to parental involvement than

private schools. Alternatively, 'channels of communication' (Hornby, 2011) could be more effective at private schools, with parents simply being more informed and aware of the opportunities that exist. However, further research would need to indicate this. A practical solution that could mitigate inequalities is increased government funding to state schools beyond the current ZEP programme, which has displayed success in increasing parental involvement and students' outcomes through increased resources, as displayed in the case study.

Part of the objective of the current study was to explore interests in a parent education workshop, which emerged as a popular idea among parents and teachers in both surveys, and a successful practice at the ZEP school in the case study. Such a programme should be offered to parents on the weekend, or a flexible or rotating schedule to accommodate working parents and mixed views on desired scheduling. Parents expressed interest in a wide variety of topics, namely, "child development and age-appropriate learning activities," followed by "parenting skills," suggesting that a holistic/integrated approach be taken to content development. Doing so would appeal to parents' multiple interests and improve children's outcomes, with multiple interventions increasing programme effectiveness (Nation et al., 2003). Parents in the survey expressed a clear interest in gaining skills to help their children academically, which was also reported by the headmaster as a successful practice, indicating a third topic of value. Parent education could be replicated at other schools to effectively bridge the gap between home and school environments (Timmerman et al., 2017). It is recommended that government funding be extended beyond ZEP schools to make such initiatives possible on a broader scale in Mauritius. Teacher training offers another promising means to increase parental involvement (Hornby, 2011), and one in which the majority of teachers in the current study expressed interest. By bringing together parents and the school, and educational policy around the child, children's outcomes can be improved (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Lastly, opportunities for parental involvement emerged in the case study in the form of a bottom-up school approach and ecological perspective to parental involvement. The ZEP school headmaster and teachers displayed an understanding of the structural circumstances shaping life opportunities for parents and children, including poverty (Morabito et al., 2017). They adapted their approaches to parental involvement in line with parents' needs. This was achieved in part through the use of social workers to address root causes at the family level. A sense of local ownership over the school was built gradually and contributed to positive outcomes. With local

people employed at the school, they bridged the social gap between parents and the school and 'encouraged parents into the school', an important variable (Hornby, 2011). This practice has led to "sharing information on children," a key factor in the Model for Parental Involvement, since parents have useful knowledge on their children and circumstances which might affect their learning. Additionally, a parental involvement policy, PTA, and parent education were all reported at the ZEP school, facilitating parental involvement. On the latter point, the parent education offered by the school and community organisations targeted parents' abilities to help children with schoolwork, which may have likewise increased parents' confidence, a facilitating belief (Jeynes, 2010). The above practices at various levels around the child indicate that an ecological perspective helped increase parental involvement and student academic achievement at the ZEP school, a lesson which can be applied across school types to effectively meet parents' and children's needs.

Limitations and Implications

This study has presented multiple challenges to parental involvement in Mauritius including negative parent beliefs, low SES and related family challenges, and gaps in school practices on parental involvement. At the same time, promising opportunities have emerged, including school parental involvement activities to meet parents' needs, parent education, and the value of ecological approaches. Limitations already discussed include limited sample size and composition, that parents and teachers formed separate samples, and the need to further specify some variables. A strength of the research was that various perspectives on parental involvement were provided through parent and teacher surveys and a case study, and respondents came from all geographic zones and school types in Mauritius.

On broader limitations, the scope of the study was reduced due to a global health pandemic, which prevented the research from being carried out in Mauritius. In the revised project, teacher interviews could not be achieved remotely through the contacts I had, and low SES parents could not be reached due to limited internet access. Thus, the original aim to answer the research question in a larger disadvantaged school/community population was not possible. Future research should explore the in-depth perspectives, needs and desires of disadvantaged parents directly, and investigate patterns across communities to determine the transferability of results. Engaging parents from low SES backgrounds in research on parental involvement would contribute valuable knowledge on tailored approaches to address the needs of parents with the

greatest challenges to parental involvement, thereby increasing the effectiveness of interventions (Nation et al., 2003). Finally, while the current study offers preliminary data on the possible format of a parent education workshop in Mauritius, future research should employ a larger sample and specify programme development in line with participants' views.

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Appendix I. Parent Survey

Parent Survey

Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Children's Primary Education in Mauritius

In this survey, we would like to learn more about your beliefs and desires on the role and participation of parents, and the school, in your children's education. Your answers will be used together with those of other parents and will be anonymous. Please be as honest as possible - there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for your participation!

Instructions: Please answer the questions in this survey in relation to your child (or children) in primary school in Mauritius.

Part 1. Please provide the following background information on your family household:

1. What is your relationship to your child? Please select one.
    A. Mother
    B. Father
    C. Other caregiver

2. Please state the full name and location of the primary school your child attends.
    _____

3. How many parents (or caregivers) are there in your household?
    _____

4. Please specify the ages of each child in your household.
    _____

5. What language(s) do you primarily speak at home?
    _____

6. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? Please select one.
    A. Primary school certificate
    B. Secondary school certificate
    C. Higher education degree (university or other tertiary)
    D. No formal education

7. How many hours do you work per week outside of the home?

   _____

8. What is your family's approximate level of income? Please select one.
   A. Below Rs 15,000
   B. Rs 15,000 – 25,000
   C. Above Rs 25,000

Part 2. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please select one response to each statement.

9. A quality education is important for my children's success in life.

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10. I have an important role to play in supporting my children's education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. I am confident in my ability to support my child's learning and schoolwork at home.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

12. I know how my children are doing at school (academically and socially).

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

13. I expect of my children that they should perform well academically at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

14. If I provide my children with positive encouragement, warmth and clear structure / discipline, they will be more likely to succeed academically.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

15. Children's education is the responsibility of schools, more than parents.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

16. My children's school communicates with me in a language I can speak and understand.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

17. The school offers activities for parents to participate and contribute to children's education at school / at home.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

18. The teachers display a positive attitude towards parents and they want us to be involved in our children's education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

19. The school listens to parents and respects our views and knowledge about our children.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

20. I know what steps to take to be involved in my children's education at school / at home.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

21. I have enough time and resources to be sufficiently involved in my children's education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

22. I would support my children attending an after-school program during which they could work on their schoolwork and do recreational activities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

23. I would like to get more involved in my children's education, for example by participating in more school activities and workshops for parents.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

24. In a workshop to support parents, which topics would you be interested in?

Please check all that apply.

    A. Parenting skills (how to be supportive of my child, manage their behaviour, etc.)

    B. Child development and age-appropriate learning activities I could do with my child

    C. Education for myself, which I can use to support my children

    D. Listen to the concerns of other parents and support each other as parents

    E. None of the above

25. Please specify when would be a good time for you to participate in such a programme for parents. *Please check all that apply.*

	Morning
	After school
	Evening
	Weekends
	I would not participate.

26. Do you have other ideas or suggestions for a programme to increase parents' involvement in their children's education. *Please write your comments.*

Part 3: Please read the three following statements and indicate how often each occurs.

27. How often do you and the teacher meet / discuss your children's education? *Please select one.*

Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

28. How often do you do learning activities (for example, homework) with your children at home? *Please select one.*

Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

29. How often do you discuss your children's experiences at school with your children? *Please select one.*

Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

Part 4: Finally, please share your opinion and ideas on the three questions below.

30. What form of communication would you prefer for the school/teacher to use with you? *Please check all that apply.*

    a. Phone

    b. Email

    c. Newsletter

    d. School website/online portal the teacher and I can use

    e. In-person meetings at the school

    f. Home visits

    g. Informal events where both teachers and parents are present

    h. Other. *Please specify* _____

    i. None of the above

31. How (and when) would you like the school to involve you in your children's education?

32. Do you have additional comments or concerns relevant to this survey?

Thank you! ☺

Appendix II. Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey

Practices and Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Children's Primary Education in Mauritius

In this survey, we would like to learn more about your school's practices for engaging parents in children's education, and your beliefs on parental involvement. Your answers will be used together with those of other teachers and will be anonymous. Please be as honest as possible - there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for your participation!

School Practices

Part 1. Please provide the following background information about your school and its practices.

1. Please state the full name of the primary school you teach at in Mauritius.

    _____

2. Please state the number of years you have been teaching at the primary school level.

    _____

3. Does your school have a written policy or other guidelines on parental involvement? For example, this may describe how teachers should engage with parents, among other topics. *Please check one*: Yes / No

4. **If you answered Yes** to the question above, please specify some of the main points you are aware of in the school policy or guidelines on parental involvement.

5. Is there an active parent-teacher association (PTA) at your school?

    Please check one: Yes / No

If you answered Yes to the question above, please answer the following three questions.

6. To your knowledge, what is the main purpose of the PTA at your school?

7. How are parents encouraged to join the PTA? Do they come from diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds?

8. To what extent do parents participate in PTA meetings and share their knowledge and opinions?

9. Do parents influence decision-making at the school? If so, please describe how parents' views are sought and incorporated.

10. What activities does your school offer for parents to get involved in their children's education (at school /at home)? *Please check all that apply.*

    a. Parent-Teacher Association

    b. Parent-Teacher meetings/gatherings

    c. Home visits by the teacher or other school staff

    d. Parent education workshops

    e. School events to which parents are invited

    f. Other: *Please specify* _____

    g. None of the above

11. When do activities for parents typically occur? *Please check all that apply.*

    a. During school hours

    b. Immediately after school on weeknights

    c. In the evenings

    d. On the weekend

    e. On a flexible schedule

    f. None of the above

12. In which language(s) do you and the school reach out to parents?

    a. Creole

    b. French

    c. English

    d. Other: *Please specify* _____

13. What is done to work effectively with parents from different cultures and those whose primary language is not English?

14. Through which means do you / the school communicate with and engage parents?

    Please check all that apply.

    a. Phone

    b. Email

    c. Newsletter

    d. School website/online portal that teachers and parents can use

    e. In-person meetings at the school

    f. Home visits

    g. Informal events where both teachers and parents are present

    h. Other. *Please specify* _____

    i. None of the above

15. On which topics and occasions do you reach out to parents? *Please check all that apply.*

    a. When their child is falling behind academically and needs improvement

    b. When their child is doing well academically and/or socially

    c. When their child is being disruptive or displaying behavioural challenges

    d. When their child has done something positive and praiseworthy at school

    e. Other. *Please specify* _____

    f. None of the above

16. On which topics do you / the school seek parents' views and knowledge relevant to their specific children? *Please check all that apply.*

    a. Children's strengths and weaknesses, academically and/or socially

    b. Children's behavioural tendencies and how they respond to different approaches

    c. Relevant family circumstances that may affect children's education

    d. Potential barriers faced by parents to supporting their children's education

    e. Other. *Please specify* _____

    f. None of the above

17. Are opportunities provided for parents to discuss their concerns privately with teachers regarding their children's education?
    Please check one: Yes / No

18. What is done by the school to overcome barriers to parental involvement and create an atmosphere where parents feel comfortable engaging with the school?

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19. Are opportunities provided by the school for parents to connect with other parents in similar situations?
    Please check one: Yes / No

20. **If you answered Yes** to the question above, please describe what type of opportunities are provided by the school for parents to connect with one another.

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21. Does your school or community offer a parent education workshop or similar activity whereby parents can learn skills and knowledge to support their children's education?
    Please check one: Yes / No

22. **If you answered Yes** to the question above, please describe the parent education workshop or similar activity offered to parents by your school or community.

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23. Do you receive any teacher training on parental involvement and how to work effectively with parents?

    Please check one: Yes / No

24. **If you answered No** to the question above Would you like to participate in a teacher training on parental involvement?

    Please check one: Yes / No

25. **If you answered Yes** to the question above, in a teacher training on parental involvement, which topics would you like to learn / discuss in relation to your role with parents?

Teacher Perceptions

Part 2. Please share your personal beliefs and opinions on the questions below.

26. I believe that what parents do can contribute to children's academic success. *Please select one.*

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

27. I believe that the parents of my students should become more involved in their children's education at school / at home. *Please select one.*

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

28. I know of some steps I could take to help increase the level of parental involvement in my school community.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

29. How do you think parents are best able to contribute to their children's education?

30. Do you believe parents need to have a certain level of education or background in order to effectively support their children's education? Why or why not?

31. What do you think are the biggest challenges or barriers parents face, which might prevent them from being involved in their children's education (at school / at home)?

32. What next steps do you think could be taken to increase parents' level of involvement in their children's education (at school / at home)?

Thank you ☺

Appendix III. Hornby's Model for Parental Involvement

Model for Parent Involvement

PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS

SOME   **POLICY FORMATION**

e.g. PTA members, school governors,
parent support/advocay groups

MANY   **ACTING AS A RESOURCE**

e.g. classroom aides, fund-raising,
supporting other parents

MOST   **COLLABORATING WITH TEACHERS**

e.g. home-school reading, maths
and behavior programs

ALL   **SHARING INFORMATION ON CHILDREN**

e.g. children's strengths, weaknesses,
likes, dislikes, medical details

ALL   **CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

e.g. handbooks, newsletters, telephone
contacts, homework diaries

MOST   **LIAISON WITH SCHOOL STAFF**

e.g. home visits, parent-teacher meetings

MANY   **PARENT EDUCATION**

e.g. parent workshops

SOME   **PARENT SUPPORT**

e.g. counselling, support groups

PARENTAL NEEDS

Fig. 3.1 Model for parental involvement