Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study.

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Dedication

To Sarah Zenenga (deceased), who nicknamed me 'Dr' but never lived to see her dream come true and to Molline, Kupa and Kudzy who made me a 'qualified father.' Thank you very much for being such an inspiration.

Abstract

Parents play a vital role in the education of their children. Apart from providing material resources, they are also responsible for enhancing what is learnt at school and providing relevant background information about their children that is helpful to teachers. This research project focuses on engaging fathers in the education of their sons. It explores the roles played by fathers in the education of their sons and some of the barriers they encounter in trying to work with schools.

For various reasons, fewer fathers engage in the education of their children yet they can play a vital role. Although the contribution to education by mothers cannot be ignored, this thesis contributes new knowledge to the unique influence that fathers have in the education of their sons.

This enquiry is based on a qualitative case study carried out on a specialist secondary school in the UK. The participatory action research case study methodology adopted in this PhD thesis provided an opportunity to make an in-depth study of the phenomena. A triangular approach was employed in which the views of the fathers, boys and teachers were considered through interviews, document analysis and observations. The enquiry used a participatory action research approach in which participants were involved in the identification of the problem, implementation of an action and reflection of the whole process. Fathers, boys and teachers in the school participated in a series of meetings to suggest ways in which the school could improve the engagement of fathers.

The research helped the school to formulate policy that improved the achievement of boys through the engagement of their fathers. Management at the school has taken on board most of the recommendations and is now in the process of improving and strengthening relationships with parents and fathers in particular. The school has employed a family liaison officer responsible for working with parents and advising staff on how to engage better with fathers.

This research project has been driven by my own experiences as a father, teacher and son. It contributes new knowledge in the form of a 'Father Engagement Model' designed for the school to engage and maintain relations with more fathers. The style of writing adopted in this thesis has been aimed at engaging a wide range of readers including the fathers and their sons of various reading levels.

1.1 AN OVERVIEW THE STUDY

This PhD thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter is a brief overview of the study and the second chapter is a critical review of literature, exploring other researchers' views on engaging fathers in the education of their sons. The second chapter contains nine sections with the first section mainly looking at the developments of parental engagement in schools. This view is slowly narrowed to father engagement, its history and the current situation. This is further developed in the same chapter to explore strategies of engaging fathers and what fathers can do to enable their own engagement. Barriers to engaging fathers and how these can be overcome forms an integral part of chapter two. The chapter ends with two sections, one about other issues affecting boys in education that are unrelated to fathers and the other one on the effects of mothers on their sons' education.

The third and fourth chapters are about the methodology used in this study. The third chapter focuses on the philosophy behind the methodology, identifying the enquiry as a qualitative study. Justifications and explanations for choosing the qualitative study are given in this chapter. The fourth chapter identified the strategies used in this study as well as the methods of data collection. The case study and participant action research were employed as the main strategies. Interviews, observations and document analysis were used to collect data. Minutes of the meetings were also used as an additional data collection tool. The fourth chapter also details the piloting and sampling processes and the importance of conducting the two.

The fifth chapter explains how data were collected and analysed. There is an emphasis on the choice of the analysis process identified as grounded theory. The use and justification of grounded theory is thoroughly explained in this chapter. Coding and triangulation are explained in detail as the core processes used to identify patterns and themes which eventually led to the development of the 'Father Engagement Model.'

The themes and the model are further discussed in detail in chapter six which is mainly about the findings of the study. The findings are focussed on answering the research questions and explaining some of the exceptionalities. The chapter also contains some of the exact words said by the participants themselves. Chapter seven closes the study with a further discussion of the findings linking them to my own

personal experiences and the literature review. Recommendations are made in the same chapter with particular reference to the model of engaging more fathers for the school. The trustworthiness of the research is also discussed and benefits as well as limitations of the study are explained. There are two additional sections, one on how I will disseminate findings of this research and the other on suggestions for further studies before the conclusion. In the next section, I shall give a brief overview of the site where this study was conducted to help the reader understand the origins of this research.

1.2 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY SITE

This research site comprised a single independent school (which I work for) in the United Kingdom providing alternative education to young people aged 13 to19. The school caters for excluded pupils who find it difficult to cope in mainstream education due to their behavioural difficulties. The majority of the students are boys who had difficulties with achieving their targets due to various issues that included lack of interest, special needs and the lack of engagement by fathers. We identified the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons as an important factor in improving outcomes for these boys.

In sum, three factors influenced the choice of this site. Firstly, it represented a critical case currently of interest to the government regarding raising the achievement of boys (Burgess, 2009). Secondly, the site was unique as it had a natural occurring sample of boys who were having difficulties with achievement and whose fathers were willing to be engaged to help. Thirdly, the site was convenient, accessible and suitable for a case study action research (Punch, 2009). Participants included boys, fathers, teachers and supporting professionals who had an interest in changing the school for the better. The phenomenon presented itself as a rare opportunity to conduct a study.

The school has a personalised programme for each student which made it easy to put up a programme for fathers and sons to work together. As according to its prospectus, the school operates a personalised and holistic approach which is flexible and learner-centred (see appendix 8). Such an arrangement was ideal to work with fathers as the school could devise personalised programmes. Most of the school's documents have been used to collect data and are referred to in the appendices section. The next section defines the term 'engagement' as it is used in this study.

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1.3 ENGAGING FATHERS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR SONS.

Engaging fathers in the education of their sons encompasses a lot of things. For the purposes of this enquiry, the term 'engagement' refers to the participation of fathers in the academic education that takes place inside the school/classroom. Thus, this study focuses on the education that takes place in the school because it is generally agreed that fathers are responsible for the education of their sons outside school (Rosenberg and Willcox, 2006; Biddulph, 2008). They are also seen as role models to their sons and are responsible for instilling discipline in their families (Sarre, 1996). More often than not, schools have failed to recognise the contribution made by fathers to their sons outside school. This study therefore seeks to capture the influence and inspiration that fathers have on boys outside school and make use of it to improve behaviour and educational outcomes in school.

1.4 THE FATHER AND HIS ROLE AS PERCEIVED IN THIS THESIS

Fathers are critical to their sons' successes during their teenage years in particular (Biddulph, 2008). Research by Mott (1997) suggests that a man becomes a father when his first child is born: this status is fixed. According to the National Health Association a father's role involves his capacity to promise, provide and protect (*National Health Association,* 2010). Recently, a change has occurred in the way fatherhood is viewed and practiced (O'Connor, 2007). Unlike in the past, when fathers were seen as breadwinners, these days, fathers perform many other duties such as shopping and looking after children. There are some fathers who currently describe themselves as 'house husbands.' In my view, fatherhood includes all the child rearing roles, activities, duties and responsibilities that fathers are expected to perform and fulfil. This is regardless of whether the person is the biological father or not. Mott (*op cit*) defined a father as 'the other person that made me'. If the phrase 'made me' means developing a person then this definition covers all types of fathers such as biological fathers, step fathers, foster fathers, adopted fathers and father figures. A search on the current definition of a father yielded no academic definition.

Christians are taught that God is their father. He looks after them, he blesses them and he provides them with whatever they ask for. Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation (Psalm 68:5, New King James Version) Again, this is a historical view of a father (mostly responsible for providing for the family). Adopting God as a father and feeling satisfied with the strong belief that even if one does not see him, he can still talk to him, confide in him and expect

him to play all the roles any father should play for his children shows the importance of a father figure.

 In my view, fatherhood develops over time and is a process, it does not happen overnight. The Oxford dictionary states that the word 'father' can be a title such as a priest. It can mean a lot of other things such as a 'source of something'. For example some people are referred to as the 'father of rock' meaning they contributed to the development of rock. However, the most common word associated with father is man or male. In my view a father is a person, who provides care and protection. Part of the 'care' involves being concerned about education. Fatherhood is therefore not specific and being a father can mean many things depending on context, culture and place.

This study has shown that a father is commonly looked up to as a provider of comfort, protection, advice, confidence, discipline and knowledge (Chapter six and seven). These are attributes that can be used by teachers to improve both behaviour and academic progress in a school. For the purposes of this study only, the term 'father' is used to refer to all types of fathers (biological fathers, step fathers, foster fathers and adopted fathers). It was not possible to find biological fathers for all the participants hence this broad definition.

1.5 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This participatory action research case study seeks to increase the engagement of fathers in our school and raise awareness of the unique contribution they make in the education of their sons. Current studies show that mothers are more involved in the education of their children than fathers (Drexler, 2005; Burgess, 2009; *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). There is also evidence suggesting that the term 'parent' is more associated with mothers in schools (Clough and Garner, 2008; *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). The contribution and importance of fathers in the education of their children is generally overlooked and not given the attention it deserves.

The management of behaviour in schools is of significant concern to both government and local authorities (DfES, 2011). Capturing the influence that fathers have on their sons outside school and bringing it in the classroom by 'engaging' them in the education of their sons, can help improve behaviour (Kelly, 2000; Rohner and Veneziano, 2001). Through a qualitative case study approach, this research project therefore seeks to promote and increase the understanding of fathers in an education setting and find ways of improving their engagement to improve the behaviour of their

sons. It explores the joys, sorrows and fears experienced by fathers as they engage or do not engage in the education of their sons. In order to achieve my aim, I chose relevant methodology in line with the type of participants I had.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, this study can be summarised as defining the problem, sampling, designing the instruments, collecting the information, reducing the information, analysing it, interpreting it and making sense of it. It begins with the context in which the study was carried out, outlining the challenges boys are facing in education (exclusions and difficulties with literacy and numeracy).

Participants were selected using purposive and convenience sampling. The sample consisted of thirty-five participants (10 fathers and their 10 sons, 10 teachers and 5 professionals who work closely with the school (A Social worker, a psychologist, a police officer, a family support worker and a special needs review officer). This sample was small, manageable and relevant to the requirements of the study. As noted by Robson (2002), in a qualitative case study, three to five participants can be enough.

Strategies for engaging fathers are suggested in this study through literature and findings. The strategies from findings are suggested by the fathers themselves through the interviews and meetings held during the study. There is also a section on the roles played by other professionals in engaging fathers; in particular single fathers and young fathers. Organisations such as the Fatherhood Institute, Family Care and Fathers 4 Justice are amongst the many mentioned in this study in relation to standing for the plight of fathers in engaging in the education of their sons.

My research questions formed the basis for this study helping to identify key issues for research during literature review. The choice of data collection methods and methodology was also based on the seven research questions below:

1. How can we improve the engagement of fathers in the school?

2. What is the father's role in the boy's education?

3. What are the experiences of the fathers in working with school?

4. What strategies do fathers adopt to enable their own engagement?

5. What are the barriers to the engagement of fathers in the school?

6. What are the father's aspirations for their sons in the school?

7. How has the role of fathers changed over time and what has been the impact on the education of their sons?

The study adopted a qualitative case study methodology allowing the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Yin, 2002). Through the participatory action research approach, participants identified the problem (lack of engagement by fathers), came up with some solutions to the problem (programmes to engage more fathers), implemented the solutions and reflected on the success of their plans (reviewing the suggested programmes). The plans were refined and implemented again. This process was repeated again and again until it was felt that there was a robust system (model) in place to engage more fathers.

Apart from the literature review and meetings with participants, data were generated through interviews, observations and document analysis. This allowed for a triangular approach in which the views of the participants were verified and cross-checked to ascertain the trustworthiness of the data collected. Unstructured interviews were used to prompt and probe participants for more information. These were recorded using a voice tracker. Observations gave an insight into the operations of the school in 'real time.' Participants were observed in meetings, lessons and during break times. Document analysis was used to confirm claims made by the participants. For example, if fathers claimed that they attended all review meetings in the school, I would check these claims in the school records.

1.5 Basis of the study

My approach in writing and presenting this thesis has been inspired by the 'Living Theory methodology' developed by Whitehead in the 1970s when he questioned his own performance as a teacher and researched on his own work. The' Living Theory' has been defined as an 'explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work' (Whitehead, 2008). The use of action research as a research strategy fitted in well with Whitehead's theory in this study. Such an approach puts the researcher at the centre of his/her own research constantly asking themselves how they can improve what they are doing. As a result of this approach, my position as an insider researcher became a key feature of this study.

As an active participant in the study, I adopted a combination of two styles of writing known as confessional and impressionist tales (Tracy, 2013). These two styles of writing emphasise the presence of the researcher in the study mainly signified by the use of the first person narrative ('I' and 'we'). This highlights the fact that I was part of the research process and I witnessed most of the episodes as they happened. In confessional tales, the researcher's story takes centre stage. My own life as a father, teacher and son is told in this study as it influenced my thinking and response to the issues raised by the participants. Whitehead (2008) calls this influence 'values' and 'personal knowledge' that the researcher should not ignore in the process of conducting research. Such an approach to writing (Confessional tales) also reveals the researcher's motivations and probably 'backstage shenanigans' (Tracy, *op cit*).

1.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS STUDY

The following five major themes that have been referred to as 'redlines' characterise this study and influenced the choice of methodology, style of writing and structure of thesis:

- My personal experiences as a father, teacher and son are profoundly projected in this study revealing some of the major issues that bond and or divide fathers and sons. These experiences and a participatory action research approach resulted in a heavily personalised style of research that runs throughout this thesis.

- The ever-changing role of fathers caused by the socio-political and economic factors is another major issue that forms the backbone of the study.

- The inclusion of participants as fellow researchers is also a major issue in this study, highlighting both the power and vulnerability of participants in such positions.

- My position as an insider participant researcher is presented throughout the study as both a challenge and an opportunity that enabled me to conduct this study.

- The constant reference to Whitehead's 'Living Theory' serves to emphasise the use of my own personal experiences as a father, son and teacher in this PhD journey.

Apart from these major themes, I also constantly referred to my data as 'trustworthy and dependable' instead of common terms; 'valid and reliable.' I found the two terms more relevant to my situation as a qualitative researcher as recommended by Silverman (2011).

1.8 THE STYLE OF WRITING USED IN THIS STUDY

As much as this thesis has been produced for academic purposes, the style of writing I adopted is designed for all participants to access it. I wanted the boys and fathers who took time to take part in this study to be able to read and understand their contributions to this work. Again, this is in line with Whitehead's (2008) approach to researching where he gives an example of a time when he wrote a report about his practice which the academics thought was good but the teachers who took part in the research did not see themselves in the report. Thus, if this report is meant for fathers, boys and teachers, they have to identify themselves with it.

I used simple language and diagrams as well as a narrative form of writing identified by the use of 'I' and 'we' that characterise this study reinforcing my position as an active participant. This style of writing is becoming more common as pointed out by Tracy (2013) and researchers like Arnold and Wyatt (2007) have effectively used it in the past. This personal narrative also reflects my own story and my relationship with my father that influenced this study to a certain extent.

1.9 JUSTIFICATION FOR RESEARCHING ON FATHERS

Working with fathers in social sciences is relatively new (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). There is a relative absence of literature which specifically focuses on fathers and sons and their interactions within schools in the UK. Most literature that I have come across in the last five years has been about fathers and their children or parents and children in education in general. Most studies have been carried out in the USA with only one specific study on fathers and sons in education by Clough and Garner (2008) in the UK. This is despite the increasing lack of interest in education by boys. In the USA, a growing proportion of boys are disengaging from school and colleges and universities are scrambling to recruit qualified academic male staff (Sax, 2007). Thus, fathers and males in general have become new objects of research in recent years (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006)

The role of fathers in education has not been thoroughly explored (*Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). Unlike mothers, fathers' participation in the educational development

of children and young people is not widely acknowledged and researched (Clough and Garner, *op cit*). The substantial body of literature concerning 'parents' in education does little to distinguish between mothers and fathers (Burgess, 2009). Indeed, it has been argued that much of what has been published in respect of 'parents' contains an invariably tacit acceptance that the term parent is synonymous with 'mother' in the school context (Clough and Garner, *op cit)* In contrast, there is substantial evidence of low achievement by boys (Buchanan, 2007), and also considerable public awareness of the need to engage fathers more in the process of schooling (Goldman 2005; *Fatherhood Institute,* 2011).

It has been established through literature that fathers are important in the education of their sons (Biddulph, 2008; Clough and Garner, *op cit*; *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). This study sought to involve more fathers in the education of their sons with the hope that this would raise achievement and reduce unwanted behaviour. I hoped to carry out the study as part of professional development in the school as well.

The role of fathers in the education of their sons is not only a topic of the educational and political 'moment', but is also a long-standing, almost structural feature in the English Education system (Philips and Furlong, 2001). Concerns about boys' reading have been the focus of much media attention. Government initiatives have been launched to support schools in closing the gap between boys' and girls' literacy levels and there is speculation that the wider attainment gap between boys and girls is underpinned by the literacy gap (Ackerman, 2006). This study focused on a key strategy to promote literacy in boys by engaging their fathers as positive role models in their education.

Frater (1997) cited in Clough and Garner (2008) reported that in England there has been a significant growth in recent years in the educational underachievement of boys and their apparent lack of motivation. There is an on-going debate on the causes of this underachievement with some studies claiming that it is the lack of engagement of fathers by schools (Burgess, 2009). It is also reported that boys comprise by far the majority of pupils excluded from school (Clough and Garner, 2008; Biddulph, 2008; Francis, 2005). This supports the notion of lack of motivation and interest in education by boys. The government has set out an agenda to close achievement gaps through programmes such as *Every Child Matters* and *Equality of Opportunities* in schools. Such agendas are not only meant for boys but for all other underachieving groups such as students with special needs and those from underprivileged backgrounds.

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Over the past two years, divorced fathers have monopolised the headlines (O'Connor, 2007). There has generally been a push to highlight the importance of fathers in the education of their sons from various corners of research (Goldman, 2005; Clough and Garner, 2008; *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).The debate about laws that favour mothers to have custody of children has been going on for a long time with no end in sight (O'Connor, 2007). Recently, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron stated that fathers who 'run out' on their families (*sic*) should be stigmatised in the same way as drink drivers (Carlin, 2011). He also encouraged fathers to 'spend time with children at weekends, attending nativity plays and taking an interest in their education (Carlin, *ibid*).

Although there is a relative lack of engagement by fathers in our school, *Action for Children* (2009) reports that in the UK, fathers' involvement has increased since the 1970s and nearly 70% of fathers want to be more involved in their children's education. Also higher proportions of non-resident parents (81%), who are predominantly male, are also keen for greater involvement (*Action for Children*, *ibid).* These positive statistics developed my interest in fathers and their sons' education. However, these statistics are about fathers expressing interest in engaging in the education of their children. They are not yet engaging. I was more interested in fathers who show interest and engage at the same time.

The engagement of fathers has been linked to positive educational outcomes of their sons (Zimmerman, Salem and Maton, 1995; Burgess, 2009). These positive outcomes include better behaviour and better grades in exams (*Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). It is said the more the father is engaged and shows interest in the education of his son, the better the son performs (Howard, Lefever, Borkowski and Whitman, 2006). Boys who are delinquent and disengaged from education are linked to fathers who do not engage (Zimmerman*, et al.*, *ibid*). Thus, the current increase in the number of excluded boys has been linked to the non-engagement of fathers (O'Connor, 2007). Though this is debatable, in the next section, I shall give the context of provision for the excluded boys who took part in this study which links their circumstances to the lack of engagement by fathers. I shall also discuss the process of exclusion and showing how fathers can play a role to avoid more boys being excluded from school.

1.10 PROVISION FOR EXCLUDED PUPILS

It was only in 1992 that statistics on the number of permanent exclusions were first collected (Ogg, 2010). A total of 89% of pupils in alternative provision are of secondary age (11-16), and 73% are male and hence the majority of pupils in alternative provision are, therefore, teenage boys (DfES, 2010). Most of these boys end up in places of education known as Alternative Provisions.

Alternative provision is the term for the education provided to students who are not in mainstream schools or special schools (Ogg, 2010). It caters for a wide variety of young people. There are three types of alternative education provision namely Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), Colleges of Further Education and Independent Alternative Providers set up as limited companies. My school, where this study was conducted, belongs to the Independent Alternative Providers category though it has Independent school status. The success of Independent Alternative Providers like my school is derived from a number of factors that include small class sizes, links to other supporting agencies and high staff/learner ratios. We are also free to design our own curriculum hence we can choose subjects that interest pupils.

Ogg (2010) identified four types of students that are usually referred to alternative provision as;

- Students with 'emotional and behavioural difficulties whose behaviour is so disruptive that it interferes with the process of learning. Usually they have either been permanently excluded from mainstream school, or were at risk of being permanently excluded.

- Students who are very vulnerable, who often have learning difficulties.

- Students who are in mainstream school but have been deemed to require a different educational approach.

- Students who temporarily do not have a school place, usually because they have moved into a Local Authority late in the academic year and particularly during the final year of compulsory schooling (year 11).

Permanent exclusion usually happens after a history of behavioural challenges presented by the young person rather than for a one-off incident (Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser, and Bedward, 2003) Most of the boys in our school are referred to us because of their behaviour and learning difficulties. There are three methods identified by Ogg *(op cit)* by which a student may be transferred to

alternative provision. These are a permanent exclusion, managed move, or a referral. This will be explained later in this chapter. However it is alleged that the greater the pressure upon schools to achieve high academic standards, imposed through league tables, the greater the pressure upon head teachers to exclude their most difficult students (Parsons, 1999). Low-achieving students who are unlikely to contribute to the league table rankings of a school are much more likely to be referred to alternative provision (Ogg, *op cit*).

Research by Sax (2007), Biddulph (2008) and Brown, (2008) concludes that schools are not doing enough to accommodate boys, hence they are more at risk of exclusion. It is alleged that the current education system is stacked against the way boys are neurologically wired to learn (Day, 2011). Current studies show that more boys are excluded from schools (DfES, 2008; Biddulph, 2008; Eastman, 2011). Our school confirms these findings as we have more boys than girls at a ratio of 7 to 1. All the boys who took part in this study experienced exclusion of some sort before they were enrolled at our school. Their fathers had bad experiences with previous schools with most of them feeling that the process of exclusion was either unfair or not properly followed.

Exclusion is defined as a means by which a head teacher of a school can prevent a young person from attending the school either for a fixed period or permanently (*Department for Education and Schools*, 2013; Blyth, and Milner, 1996). This process is considered the last resort and the most stringent response available to schools when faced with a serious breach of their disciplinary code (Pomeroy, 2000). Under the education law, the school may exclude pupils if it is believed that their continued presence in the school compromises the educational well-being of their peers (Munn, Lloyd and Cullen, 2000). In most cases, exclusion is usually a result of a serious incident or a series of incidents. Such incidents involve aggressive behaviour, physical attacks on staff or other students and drug abuse. The most common reason for exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour (Eastman, 2011). This is the main reason why all the boys who participated in this study were excluded for (lack of discipline and disruptive behaviour).

 The dwindling numbers of male staff in schools coupled by the lack of engagement in the education of boys by their fathers has been identified as one of the major reasons for boys' reduced interest in education and subsequent exclusion (Francis and Skelton, 2005; Biddulph, 2008). When a school is faced with a child with behavioural issues, they explore options of further support (Hayden, 1997). These

options still apply today and they include recommending a child to be statemented, transferring a child to a special school, working with parents, particularly fathers to improve behaviour (Gold, 2005) or temporarily suspending the child whilst a solution is being sought. Munn *et al.*, (2000) observed that a child can be excluded for a short period only to allow the school to work with parents in finding ways of avoiding a permanent exclusion. In my view, this should be taken as an opportunity for schools to engage fathers in the education of their sons to help avoid the exclusion.

It has been noted that certain groups of young people (boys, special needs pupils and ethnic minorities) are at risk of being excluded than others (Cooper *et al.,* 2000; Blyth and Milner, 1996). However, our school has more white boys than Afro-Caribbean boys, a fact that disputes the above finding but there are more boys in care and with special educational needs, all excluded for bad behaviour. This raises the question; is it the absence of fathers or the special needs that cause the disruptive behaviour? As teachers, we debated on this during the initial stages of the study with some arguing that some special needs were actually caused by the absence of fathers in education. If we were able to establish that these boys were excluded for other reasons that had nothing to do with fathers, we would not have proceeded with the study.

It has been noted that, generally boys are five times more likely to be excluded than girls (Blyth, and Milner, 1996; Eastman, 2011). Cooper *et al.* (2000) also added that it tends to be boys rather than girls that are excluded from school. This is in line with the observation that boys are more likely to be defiant in school and take risks that result in exclusions (Biddulph, 2008). Also, boys are diagnosed with special educational needs more than girls and are also identified to be struggling with literacy and numeracy hence they are more vulnerable to exclusions (Pomeroy, 2000). As shall been seen in the next sections, boys in the UK are generally underachieving and having more behavioural issues than girls (Gold 2005). The permanent exclusion rate for boys is approximately four times higher than that for girls (Eastman, 2011). The fixed period exclusion rate for boys is almost three times higher than that for girls (DCSF, 2010). Pupils with statements of SEN are around eight times more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers with no special needs (DCSF, 2010).

1.11 THE PROCESS OF EXCLUSION

HMI report (1996) recommended that the following should be done before the child is excluded:

1. The school should interview the pupil and the parent to find out possible ways of avoiding exclusion and the support that can be given to the pupil. This could involve a possibility of enlisting the help of other agencies such as the Social Services.

2. The school should identify if the pupil has special educational needs or needs an assessment.

3. The school should negotiate agreements with parent or carer and pupil on what should be tried by both sides before exclusion.

4. The school should issue a formal warning in writing if all possible pathways have failed.

Only the head teacher or deputy of a maintained school can permanently exclude a child and there can only be forty five days of fixed term exclusion per term per child per year (DCSF, 2008). The Head teacher should inform the Local Education Authority (LEA) of the exclusion and all its details such as length and type of exclusion and its cause. Schools are required to inform the LEA of all exclusions except the ones that are for five days or less (HMI, 1996). The governing body will also consider circumstances in which the pupil was excluded (Munn *et al.*, 2000).

The fathers who participated in this study felt that they were not fully informed of these procedures by both the previous and the present school. Only one father said he had attended an exclusion meeting but contributed nothing in it. In the school we conducted this research, fathers were rarely engaged in the process of exclusion. As teachers, we were worried and wanted to find out why mothers were 'suffering' on their own.

Whilst many schools exhaust all possibilities before regretfully administering a permanent exclusion, this is not always the case (Eastman, 2011). It has been noted that the head teacher usually comes under immense pressure from parents of other children who may be feeling that the education of their children is being jeopardised by one pupil (Blyth and Milner, 1996). This can cause the head teacher to exclude the pupil or seek alternative education without following proper procedures. This has also been mentioned by most fathers who took part in this study.

However, alternative education may be deemed effective if it can be shown that its existence allows mainstream schools to be free from disruption (Munn *et al.*, 2000). The alternatives can be: teaching the child from home, sending a child to a special

unit normally referred to as Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or sending them to an independent training provider. This could be on a full or part-time basis. According to the DCSF (2008), there are four main alternatives to exclusion. The school in which this study was conducted has both independent school and training provider status. Such schools are viewed as offering poor quality education thus most fathers had lower expectations for their sons and only hoped that behaviour would improve not qualifications (see appendix 20. 77).

It is vital that educational settings engage parents in their children's education and throughout the process of exclusion (Eastman, 2011). Where a school placement is not currently secured LEAs are by law required to provide education otherwise than at school (Cooper *et al.,* 2000). However, from this research, we established that not all parents are aware of the process of exclusion and appeals. Due to work commitments and other barriers, fathers displayed very little knowledge on the exclusion process and how to engage with schools in general.

It is important to bear in mind that exclusion does not change the child's behaviour (Munn *et al.*, 2000). On the other hand, remaining in mainstream school will not always help (Pomeroy, 2000). We therefore as a school, felt that the involvement of fathers can reduce unacceptable behaviour resulting in less exclusions. Schools may understandably remove some pupils from the classroom for the benefit of their peers, (Eastman, 2011). Few permanently excluded young people can be readmitted to another mainstream school (Blyth and Milner, 1996). This is probably why our school has more excluded boys.

The *Dearing Review* (1996) observed that some 14 – 19 year olds found the college environment motivating. The excluded pupils reported that the colleges had relaxed rules, with no uniforms, interesting vocational subjects on offer and tutors respected them more (Cooper *et al.,* 2000). Recently, the government has recommended modifications to broaden the national curriculum to include vocational subjects for 14 – 19 year olds (Wolf Report, 2011). Most vocational subjects are provided by independent education providers and some are not registered as independent schools therefore not subject to any checks and this is worrying (Eastman, 2011). Parents may be sceptical about sending their children to such provisions.

1.12 THE EFFECTS OF EXCLUSION

Exclusion is damaging for pupils concerned and for the wider society (Eastman, 2011). The educational future of many excluded young people is questionable (Blyth,

and Milner, 1996). Unless other suitable arrangements are made, all children should be in school and learning (HMI, 1996). Exclusion can have a negative impact on employment prospects and general life chances (Munn *et al.*, 2000). It is common in our school to have both fathers and boys who do not trust teachers and other professionals due to the harsh experiences of exclusion they will have gone through.

The strong criticism of exclusion has been based on the proud principles of the 1988 Education Reform Act which defined the purposes of education in terms of the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of all students. Exclusion has been seen as a betrayal of the principles of this Act (Cooper et *al.*, 2000). It denies the children the right to education. Also the UK is a signatory of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) which asserts that every child has a right to education (Cooper *et al.,* 2000). The provision offered by alternative education providers and PRUs makes it legal to exclude but it does not reduce the unwanted behaviour. Research has proved that engaging parents in general and fathers in particular reduces exclusion (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011)

However, it is from families that children learn unconditional love, understand right from wrong and gain empathy, respect and self-regulation, such qualities prepare children for positive engagement at school (Eastman, 2011). Fathers can help their sons to understand right from wrong and motivate them to learn if they are engaged in education. A child's education starts at home and fathers are the primary educators of boys from age six onwards (Biddulph, 2008). With all their other responsibilities and the changing roles of a modern father, fathers are finding themselves in a difficult position. The current government accuses non-resident fathers of neglecting their families, they are not being treated fairly in court and they are trying to adjust to new expectations (O'Connor, 2007). Understanding fathers is becoming more complex these days and the next section attempts to define the role of the modern day father hence I had a personal interest in the study.

1.12.1 My personal interests in the study

My personal experiences, past and present cannot be separated from this study. I took up this study as part of my self-reflection and learning process as both a father and a professional. I grew up in an African village where working on the land was more important than going to school. My father decided that we should to go school and I have always wondered why he took an option which was considered to be less important during that time. As a father myself and learning from how my father

emphasised the importance of education to us, I have always wanted to do the same for my two boys. As a teacher, I found myself in a position of working with boys and their parents and observing how fathers were interested in their sons' education. Thus, as a teacher, father and son, my interest in engaging fathers in the education grew with the opportunity I had of working in such a unique school.

This process of reflection is not uncommon in participatory action research. It also draws similarities to the personal stories of Madeley (2008) and Obama (1995). Although their works are not academic research, both authors talk about how they became to be what they are as a result of their fathers' behaviour and actions. Obama even went further to travel to Africa in an effort to understand himself as a reflection of his own father.

In our school I observed that more boys were having behavioural difficulties and every time we called for a meeting, fathers rarely attended. Sometimes we got excuses such as the father was at work or there was no mention of the father at all. Mothers were always on their own and struggling to manage the behaviour. I found this to be a naturally occurring sample that needed to be explored further through a case study in which I participated. All this was driven by Whitehead's (2008) main question in Action Research (How do I improve what I am doing).

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has primarily established that there is research evidence that boys are more at risk of exclusion than girls and fathers can help prevent these exclusions. Boys are also over represented in terms of poor exam results, special needs and behavioural difficulties hence their large numbers in alternative education provisions particularly in our school. It is therefore both my personal and professional responsibility to find ways of limiting further exclusions, improve behaviour and outcomes by engaging more fathers in the education of their sons. It has also been stated that this study's main aim is to raise the awareness of the unique contribution made by fathers in the education of their sons. As an action research case study, this research project does not seek to generalise findings but to make a change in one institution as shall be explained later in the methodology section. Also, users and readers of this thesis can make use of the related issues identified in the results chapter if they are applicable to their schools. It is also important to note that this study is not only of personal and professional interest but there has been a global interest in the role of fathers in education. The rationale for this study has therefore

also been driven by current thinking around the issues of gender, behaviour and achievement in education. Through literature review in the next chapter I shall be guided by the research questions in exploring what has been researched so far on the subject of fathers and sons in education. Although the next chapter is an analysis and exploration of the views of other researchers, my own experiences, views and position as an insider researcher are prominent.

2. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of parents in the education of their children in schools continues to develop from strength to strength. In the past, schools did not take much notice of who was involved in their pupils' education. Either parent was considered good enough, but new studies are showing that mothers and fathers can influence their children in different ways (Francis, 2000; McClure, 2008; Biddulph, 2008). Thus, the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons has become a new area of research (Roseburg and Willcox, 2006, *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). This chapter consists of ten major sections on various issues regarding father engagement. The topics were specifically selected to answer some of the research questions in this study and help the researcher understand fathers better. The chapter begins with two sections explaining the importance of engaging parents in education, giving a background to the relationship between parents and schools in the past, dating back to the Plowden era (1967). This is further developed in the third section focusing on controversies that developed as a result of engaging parents in recent years. These controversies threatened to hinder relationships between schools and parents. The fourth section focuses on the main aim of the study; the importance of engaging fathers in the education of their sons and how this is becoming an important issue in education. This is followed by a section on the barriers to engaging fathers that are still being faced by both the school and the fathers themselves. Solutions are suggested in the sixth and seventh sections exploring strategies to engage fathers in education and how fathers can enable their own engagement. The role of other professionals in engaging fathers is also discussed looking at the lack of knowledge on father engagement among relevant professionals and how this can be improved. This is followed by a section exploring the cultural, psycho-social and economic issues affecting boys' achievement in education. This section was included to show the reader that the general lack of interest in education by boys is not only due to the absence of fathers. The last section of this chapter acknowledges the important contribution made by mothers in raising boys with a brief look at the controversies that surround the subject.

This chapter also illustrates two of the four main issues that characterise this study outlined in the previous chapter. My personal experiences as a father, son and teacher are constantly referred to throughout the chapter. Although in this chapter I

am seeking the views of other researchers on father engagement in schools in general, I also involved my own experiences as a father. Thus, the use of 'I' continues to feature in this chapter as well. The ever-changing role of a father is another issue I highlighted in this chapter, bringing out the struggles that fathers go through as they engage not only with schools but with other agencies as well. A few researchers quoted in this chapter recognise the struggles of fathers that come as a result of changes in policy, culture and economy.

2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING PARENTS IN EDUCATION

Research in the last three decades has established a link between parental involvement and children's educational attainment (Horby, 2000; Goldman, 2005; Burgess, 2009). Parental involvement has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Parental involvement affects all aspects of a child's life: emotional, physical, and educational (Goldman, 2005). There is not much a child can do without the advice and help of a parent, but finding a good balance is the key to successful and healthy relationships (Fan and Williams, 2010). It is therefore important to make sure that all parents have opportunities to be involved in their children's learning and education (*The Scottish Executive Department,* 2006)*.*

Parental involvement takes on many forms, including good parenting in the home, this includes the provision of a secure and stable environment and intellectual stimulation (Burgess, 2009). This also involves parent-child discussions, contact with schools to share information, participation in school events, participation in the work of the school, and participation in school governance (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Parents hold key information and have a critical role to play in their children's education (Cole, 2007). Children have two main educators in their lives: their parents and their teachers (DfES, 2001). Although peers have been acknowledged as a major educator for children, parents are still recognised as the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

Children with parents who fully engage with schools pull ahead of the rest whatever their initial starting point (DfES, 2001). Although being an active and involved parent can take a lot of time, effort, and energy, statistics have proven that with the right parental involvement, students' academic achievements improve, self-esteem

increases, and motivation to do better becomes much more evident (Fan and Williams, 2010). Apart from that, their concerns can be sorted out quicker when their parents have a positive relationship with school staff (*The Scottish Executive Department,* 2006).

Fan and Williams (2010) have cited four areas in which children have done well as a result of parental engagement. In their research they found that parent engagement helped students increase test scores and graduation rates. In addition to that, parent involvement increased the number of children attending schools and decreased the number of absences. Also, there was an improvement in motivation and self-esteem in children whose parents were engaging. Fan and Williams (2010) also found that parent involvement decreased the use of drugs, alcohol, and violent behaviour amongst a lot of the students. The Scottish Executive Department (2006) added that children will do better and achieve more and they get access to more activities in and out of school when there are more adults to help.

Goldman (2005) cites the benefits to parents themselves as they gain greater confidence and expertise in helping their children succeed academically. In addition to that, a healthy home-school relationship helps to improve behaviour, attendance and attainment by children (Harris and Goodall, 2007; Skaliotis, 2010). Through a good relationship parents are able to contribute positively to the development of the school and they also feel part of the school (Coleman, 1998). They can also give advice and help around reaching other parents (The Scottish Executive Department, 2006).

Parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of young people through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school (Harris and Goodall, 2007). Comer and Haynes (1991) identified the emotional support that children need in order to learn, indicating that such an environment of support is optimally created when families and school personnel co-operate. This led to Local Educational Authorities coming up with the idea of a parent partnership department with the sole purpose of advising parents on their rights and what their children especially those with SEN are entitled to (Skaliotis, 2010). If parents are well informed of what is happening in the school, they are able to trust the teachers and provide helpful feedback on how the child is at home (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). In my view such a partnership removes suspicions and improves cooperation. Parents who are involved in other representative groups help make sure the education policies link in well with the other policies and provision for people living in

that area (The Scottish Executive Department, 2006). To some extent, schools have come a long way to be where they are now, considering the fact that serious advocacy only started in 1967 with the Plowden Report. The developments in engaging parents in education shall therefore be explored in the next section.

2.2 DEVELOPMENTS IN ENGAGING PARENTS SINCE THE 1967 PLOWDEN REPORT

Parental involvement in schools has a long if somewhat erratic history in England and elsewhere (Clough and Garner, 2008). I decided to look at developments in parental engagement since 1967 because the Plowden report was the first enquiry to recommend that all schools in England should have a programme for contact with parents. Before that, parents were not assigned a role within the school and notices stating 'no parents past this point' were not uncommon in state schools (Tizard, Mortimore and Burchell, 1981). Engaging parents in the education of their children became most prominent following the1988 Education Reform Act. Prior to that and in spite of the recognition given by the 1967 Plowden Report to the importance of parental involvement in education, parents were usually kept at the school gate (Crozier, 2012). They were usually excluded except on formal occasions such as open days and were not assigned a role within the school (Tizard *et al.*, 1981). Recently, legislation, major reports and guidance documents have all set out both the duty and requirements of the school to engage parents in the education of their children (Whitepaper 2005; Harris and Goodall, 2007; Clough and Garner, 2008,). Thus, levels of parental involvement have increased in recent years (Peters, Seeds, Goldstein and Coleman, 2008).

The last twenty years have seen the proliferation of policies calling for the development of home-school relationships (Cole, 2007). Nowadays, parental involvement is every school's desire (Skaliotis, 2010). Legislation has allocated increasing rights to parents over recent years which have culminated in their increased involvement in decision making processes (Blamires *et al.*,1997). This was started by the Plowden Report (1967) that put forward a minimum programme for schools to involve parents by passing on information through prospectuses, school reports and open days (Blamires *et al.,* 1997). Parents can now be fined for not sending children to school (DCSF, 2011). On the 25th of October 2005, the Department for Education and Skills published the Schools White Paper which placed parents firmly at the centre of the drive to raise standards by putting an increasing emphasis upon their involvement in the education system (Harris and

Goodall, 2007). It can now be said that parent-school relationships have become a central part of the education system (Crozier, 2012).

The 'Every Parent Matters' published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007 emphasised the importance of parental engagement in securing higher standards and improved educational performance. Schools are now increasingly conscious of the part which can be played by parents in raising achievement, particularly because of the emphasis placed on parental reports in Ofsted inspections (Harris and Goodall, 2007).

For all pupils with statements of special educational needs, parents are required to attend annual review meetings. The latest proposals in *The Green Paper* (2010) state that parents of children with special educational needs will be involved more in choosing a school for their child and they will also participate in the education budget for their children. Parents now have a right to take part in decisions about their child's education and to be kept in touch at all stages, (Blamires *et al.*, 1997). Ofsted is now required to inspect the effectiveness of the schools' partnership with parents (Blamires *et al., ibid*).

Peters *et al.* (2008) recommended that schools should make sure that parents are aware of the following policies and documents in schools which will apply to their child: the school prospectus, the home-school agreement, the school's discipline and behaviour policy (including information about detention) and the complaints procedures. A recent study by Skaliotis (2010) also shows that parents are now more likely to see a child's education as mainly or wholly their responsibility. This represents a shift from previous years, when parents were more likely to see it as the school's responsibility (Tizard *et al.,* 1981). A survey conducted by Peters *et al.,* (2008) showed that 51% of parents felt very involved in their child's education.

2.2.1   Barriers to parental involvement

Several barriers to parental involvement have been identified. It has been noted that parents of certain ethnic and social groups are less likely to engage with the school (Harris and Goodall, 2007). If parents had a good education and enjoyed schooling, they are more likely to engage (Clough and Garner, 2008). It is also argued that the higher the level of attainment by the child, the more parents get involved (Harris and Goodall, 2007). There is still a long way as parents, teachers and school children all have a range of views on what the parent-school relationship might be and these

often differ from each other's and indeed, from that of government policy (The Scottish Executive Department, 2006).

The shift in emphasis about what parent-school relationships are, or should be, is driven by socio-political factors and policy imperatives (Crozier, 2012). There is evidence of the developments and new thinking from the government regarding the importance of parents in the education of their children (DfES, 2008). However, the extract below shows that since the late sixties, parental engagement was already in place as mothers were actively involved. The most important thing to note in this extract is the absence of fathers, an issue that will be thoroughly interrogated later on in this chapter.

> 'At one school, parents are invited to attend school assembly on each Friday and many accept. Afterwards children take their younger brothers and sisters for a quarter of an hour to their classrooms while the head talks to mothers. Sometimes all the children, including the younger ones from home, stay in the 'hall' (a dining hut) while mothers visit the classrooms to talk to the teachers.'
>
> (Plowden Report (1967) chapter 4 page 38)

O'Connor and Scott (2007) found considerable evidence that the quality of parent-child relationship is connected to a wide variety of child outcomes, mainly behavioural, emotional, psychological, social, intellectual and physical health. Strong positive relationships between children and their parents is associated with a range of benefits that include better behaviour and better exam results at age 16 (Goldman, 2005).

Although the future of parental involvement looks positive, there are still some barriers and challenges to be tackled. The most important area to be clarified as confirmed by both the findings of this research and the literature review, is defining the roles of parents in the education of their children. This study has identified that there are still some questions regarding parental involvement which both parents and schools are still working on. These questions include; Are parents being given too much or too little to do? Where do parents start and stop engaging? How do they know that they have crossed the boundaries and they are now interfering with their child's education? The following section explores controversies that surround the involvement of parents in school activities.

2.3 CONTROVERSIES IN ENGAGING PARENTS IN EDUCATION

The role of parents in the education of their children took time to be properly defined. The idea of involving parents in the education of their children was seen by teachers

as an intrusion on their work (Tizard *et a.,* 1981). Since the mid-1960s educators and policy-makers focused on parental involvement as a promising way to improve educational outcomes for poor and underachieving students, and they developed a variety of models and strategies to promote achievement, attendance and student attachment.' (Williams, Williams and Ullman, 2002). In England, the government's strategy for securing parental involvement was set out in the 1997 White Paper, 'Excellence in Schools'. The strategy emphasised that schools should provide parents with information, give parents a voice and encourage parental partnership.

Studies by Harris and Goodhall (2007) showed that parental involvement benefits all three parties: Teachers will benefit by being provided with vital background information about the pupils they will be working with. Pupils will benefit by raising their achievement and getting better grades. Parents benefit by enriching their relationship with their children as they have more opportunities of communicating with them as well as increasing their control and influence on schools. Such a partnership therefore requires teachers to have a good understanding of parents' perspectives on education (Hornby, 2000).

However, one of the unintended consequences of increased parental involvement is that it seems to have led to tensions, in that teachers have felt that their professionalism is being questioned, challenged and undermined (Crozier, 2000). Educational theorists and others tended to be more convinced of the need to involve parents than head teachers and teachers (Tizard *et al.*, 1981). There have been misunderstandings and suspicions on what the role of the parents would be. Initially, most schools were worried about whether the parents were coming in as helpers to teachers or decision makers (Raffaele and Knoff, 1999). They felt that they were being scrutinised and that parents did not have enough expertise either to help in classrooms or to make important decisions about the school (Tizard *et al.,* 1981). Such tensions will continue to exist. In the planning stages of this study, some teachers raised the same concerns about the increase in father engagement. They wanted to make sure that clear boundaries were set regarding the role of fathers in the school.

Desforges and Abouchaar, (2003) observed that some parents are discouraged by the negative attitudes shown by staff in schools. This happens when parents and teachers fail to share the same goals for the child or when one side oversteps the mark by criticising the other (Raffaele and Knoff, 1999). Schools should therefore be aware of their own organisational climate and the messages about involvement that

they send (Desforges and Abouchaar *op cit).* This is particularly important for parents who have had negative school experiences themselves (Raffaele and Knoff, 1999).

Tizard *et al.,* (1981) pointed out that there has always been scepticism about what the role of the parents would be. Even up until recent years there has been no clear line to show where the parents' input stops and the teachers' input begins (DfES, 2001). However, the Warnock Report (1978) stated that even though educating the child is a joint enterprise involving both home and school, parents should realise that they cannot have the last word. This depends on how much the school establishes boundaries and if these boundaries are respected by parents. The *Plowden Report* (1967) argues that what matters most are the attitudes of teachers to parents and parents to teachers. There should be genuine mutual respect, where parents understand what the schools are doing for their individual children and teachers realise how dependent they are on parental support (DfES, 2008).

Raffaele and Knoff, (1999) suggested that when schools work with parents, the collaboration should be pro-active rather than reactive and this should involve sensitivity to the wide-ranging circumstances of all students and families. Also, collaboration should recognise and value the contributions parents make to the educational process and all parents must be given a voice and that voice must be heard   Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003*).* This is a suggestion we probably have to adopt at our school as we do not have such an approach. Maybe if we give fathers a voice and if we are sensitive to some family set ups, we will be able to engage more fathers.

It should be noted that the school and the parents all have crucial roles to play and the impact is greater if parents and schools work in partnership (DfES, 2001). The partnership requires careful management as some parents may be teachers as well and they will find it difficult to draw a line between these roles (Clough and Garner, 2010). The *Warnock Report (*1978) observed that parents can be effective partners only if professionals take notice of what they say and of how they express their needs and treat their contribution as intrinsically important. Parental involvement nowadays is such an acceptable aim for a school that its desirability tends to be assumed (Harris and Goodhall, 2007).

One latest school prospectus declares that 'all parents/guardians and carers are equally valued as part of our school community (appendix 8). Since the 1967 Plowden Report, schools have moved from talking about mothers only to the

engagement of fathers, guardians and carers and also families (uncles, aunts grandparents etc.) This reflects the changes both in society's thinking and in the family structure. Children are now coming from a family structure that is different from the one in the sixties and this needs to be reflected in school policies, (DCSF, 2011).

It is now generally recognised that when families and schools work in partnership, the children reap the benefits in that they experience a consistent sense of commitment and support from the important adults in their lives (Epstein, 1986, Gold 2005). What is learned at home has a powerful effect upon each child, and therefore, it is important to appreciate the contribution made by parents as educators (Waller and Waller, 1998). Research has shown that parental involvement relates positively to student achievement and parents are now being encouraged to participate in their children's education in a variety of ways both at home and in school, (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Gold, 2005). At home they are asked to read with their child, provide a quiet place for homework, supervise assignments, monitor television and internet use, and promote school attendance, (Waller and Waller, 1998). Schools request that parents attend teacher conferences, "open houses" as well as academic, art, drama, and athletic events (Peters, *et al.,* 2007). Parents are invited to volunteer in classrooms, serve on advisory committees, and support fund raising for special projects (Harris and Goodall, 2007). Despite all these benefits, Fan and Williams (2010) still argue that lack of parent involvement is one of the biggest problems facing the public school system today though most schools have improved.

We therefore as a school acknowledged that there will be challenges in engaging fathers but the benefits will be bigger. This literature informed us of the dangers of not listening to fathers and the importance of establishing a code of conduct regarding the role of the fathers in the school. To further plan and understand the role of fathers in the education of their sons in the school, I looked at the current developments in engaging fathers in education and related services.

2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING FATHERS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR SONS

The importance of a father's engagement in the education of their sons should not be underestimated (Chemnais, 2006). British children say their fathers are the second most important people in their lives to inspire reading outside school, second only to their mothers (Clark *et al.,* 2009). Apart from helping with reading, fathers can inspire their sons to achieve both educationally and socially (Buchanan, 2007). Schools are

currently encouraged to design programmes to engage more fathers to help boys develop more interest in education (The Fatherhood Institute, 2011).

Working with fathers in social sciences is relatively new (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). They are seen as relatively recent objects of study for social scientists (Parke, 1996). Despite the increasing policy interest in fatherhood, fathers are not well served by generic family support services, or widely catered for as parents in their own right (*Action for Children*, 2009). Thus, as pointed out earlier, academic research typically overlooked the role that fathers play in the education of their children, particularly the influence of fathers in their sons' education which this study seeks to investigate further. Thousands of years ago, a father was the hunter, provider and protector of the family, a testosterone-charged pillar of the community (O'Connor, 2007). Fathers were viewed as the chief financial provider for and protector of their children (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). The ability to protect is still today very much tied up with the average man's sense of self and sense of manhood (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). These are qualities that schools can use in fathers to motivate boys to learn.

With the above in mind, as a school, we felt that engaging fathers in the education of their sons is part of the history that teachers can tap into. Historically, fathers perceived their sons as their heirs and tended to shape them in their own image (Shulman and Seiffge-Krenke, 1997; Kenyatta, 1965). They would choose a favourite son to take after them and raise them in the way they wanted (Shulman and Seiffge-Krenke, *ibid)*. The boys observed and imitated their father's craft and learned practical skills which they performed according to their capacities as they matured into manhood and became heads of their own households (Kenyatta, 1965). Fathers were also seen as breadwinners and were responsible for instilling discipline in their families (Sarre, 1996). Due to a variety of factors, the role of the father is changing hence a change in the pattern of engagement in the education of their sons (Sarre, *ibid*). Fathers are not seen only as breadwinners or disciplinarians anymore (Parke, 1996). They are more involved now even before the child is born and this is evidenced through attendance at antenatal classes, help with changing nappies and reading stories to their children (*Action for Children*, 2009).

Fathers are still seen as having a strong influence, especially upon their children's beliefs, values, and plans for the future (Parke, 1996). However, it is important to remember that mothers and fathers often bring different strengths and styles to their parenting roles (*The Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). These roles complement each

other, meaning that they are not interchangeable and are each necessary for a healthy rearing of the child (Parke, *op cit*). Both mothers and fathers play an important role in the education of their sons. However, this study focuses on fathers as their contribution to the education of their sons has not been thoroughly explored (Clough and Garner 2008).

Fathers play an extremely important role in their children's lives, and a plethora of research indicates that father involvement is significantly related to positive child outcomes (DfES, 2001; Goldman, 2005; Biddulph, 2008; Burgess, 2009). The *Fatherhood Institute* (2011) observed that a father's greater interest and involvement in education is statistically associated with better school attendance, exam results and behaviour. However, fathers do not engage as much as mothers do and as much as schools would like them to (DfES, 2001). Because of poor engagement in education by fathers, mothers are playing a crucial role in keeping in contact with schools by attending meetings and helping with homework amongst other activities *(The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Research has shown that the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons, especially in secondary school can be very helpful in improving behaviour and achievement (Burgess, 2009).

There has been an increase in the recognition of the important role that fathers play in the lives of their sons (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). Research has shown that from the age of fourteen, a boy needs a father or male mentors to complete the journey of being a fully grown-up man (Biddulph, 2008). It has also been noted that raising behaviour standards through involving fathers would help improve GCSE results for boys (Francis and Skelton 2005; Buchanan 2007).   .

Fathers exercise a critical role in providing their children with a mental map of how to respond to difficult situations (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). Research by Chemnais (2006) showed that pupil performance and wellbeing go hand in hand. This is further developed by the *Fatherhood Institute* (2011) whose research revealed that children whose fathers are involved in their education are happier at school. Such children have good mental health, achieve more and are likely to be more disciplined and focused than their peers whose fathers are not involved, (Chemnais, *ibid)*.

Boys whose fathers actively engage in their education are associated with less criminality and better mental health (Hango 2007). There is a relationship between father absence and commission of offences (Gullotta, Adams and Montemayor 1998; Hango, 2007). Attachment to a father not only reduces delinquency directly, but it

also lessens exposure to delinquent peers (Gullotta *et al.,* 1998). Also, a higher level of father involvement is associated with fewer behavioural problems and lower criminality and substance misuse, all of which tend to be played out in school and impact on achievement (Pleck and Masciadrelli, 2004; Flouri, 2005). The involvement of fathers and other male carers can increase positive outcomes for a child's socio-economic development with long lasting benefits for the child (Sarkadi *et al.,* 2008). Alongside reduction in the levels of offending and anti-social behaviour, a good father-son relationship improves the chances of forming better quality of relationships in later life (Pleck, 2007). However, all this depends on the type of influence the father has on the son (Gullotta *et al.,* 1998). For example as we found out in this study, if the son looks up to his father as a drug dealer or an armed robber, then there is a more likelihood that the son will follow suit.

The presence of the father in the home is tied to lower rates of maltreatment of children (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). *The Fatherhood Institute* (2011) also noted that fathers' involvement in their children's lives means children have more opportunities to flourish decreasing the chances of suffering from mental health issues. Boys in particular, react positively to the influences of the adult males with whom they have the most regular contact (Brown, 2008). As far as Robinson (2007) is concerned, one thing that all fathers have in common is that they are important in a male child's life. Fathers asking their sons about progress at school either in sport or academic subjects will motivate the son to want to achieve more and please them, (*Fatherhood Institute* 2011). Fathers often push for achievement while mothers stress nurturing, both of which are important for healthy development of their children (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006).

2.4.1   Fathers as role models

Francis and Skelton (2005) revealed that far fewer males than females 'model' interest in literacy or interact with children in literacy activities, in the home or out of it. This, it has been suggested, is contributing to the declining rates of school achievement in boys (Wragg *et al.,* 1998; Trent and Slade, 2001). It is therefore, important for the school to recognise other important male figures in a boy's life such as brothers, uncles, godfathers, mentors, carers and other 'lead male adults (Goldman, 2005).' Francis and Skelton (2005) further observed that schools are feminised by the predominance of female teachers consequently depriving boys of the necessary male role models. This argument may need further justification as the authors do not account for the boys who achieve despite the dominance of female

teachers. The involvement of their fathers at home could be the answer. However, it cannot be conclusively declared that if a boy has no access to a male person in his life, he will not do well at school. Drexler (2005) studied many boys who had no male role models at home but were still successful at school and later life.

A father with a greater commitment to his son's education and his involvement with the school is also associated with the son's reduced risk of suspension or expulsion (Goldman, 2005). School behaviour is strongly linked with educational attainment; and a fathers' influence on that behaviour is significant (Lloyd *et al.,* 2003). Fathers seem to be uniquely successful in disciplining boys, perhaps in part because boys are often more likely to respond to discipline by a man (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). This is because at times boys may misbehave or act aggressively just to get their father's attention (Biddulph, 2008). Without good discipline, it is difficult to achieve both socially and academically (Flouri, 2005).

Boys need fathers as role models, and they respond more to their fathers' encouragement (McClure, 2008). If boys do not find an adult male to relate to around the age of fourteen, they will look somewhere else such as the neighbour, friend's father or teacher (Biddulph, 2008). They want approval and assurance from their fathers. If they do not get it from the right people, they will seek it somewhere else (gangs) (The *Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). Fathers' reading habits can have a substantial influence on their sons' reading interest, levels and choices, (Lloyd, 1999). We found this to be useful and applicable in our school and situation. We suggested for teachers to use such influence to develop reading programmes in the school.

The subtlety of fathers' impact is illustrated by the finding that when fathers perceive their children to be capable of a task, this is linked not only with the children's positive perceptions of their own abilities, but also with the degree to which they value the task (Bhanot and Jovanovic, 2009). This has the effect of raising their sons' self-esteem (Rohner and Veneziano, 2001). Another important function that fathers serve in the lives of their children is as guides to the world outside the home (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). It has been established that fathers are better than mothers at setting clear rules and boundaries to prepare their sons for the real world by being strict, non-negotiable and giving factual information (Bhanot and Jovanovic, 2009). In addition to that, fathers also provide rational analytical thinking and logical analysis (Sarkadi *et al.,* 2008).

The influence fathers have on their children's intellectual development is not limited specifically to helping with school work (Bhanot and Jovanovic, 2009). Fathers can have a positive influence on their children's thinking skills by participating in social activities and sports as well (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). However, it is also important to note that a father can still be significant to his child, whether he is actively involved in that child's life or not (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). Even when fathers provide only limited attention, warmth and affection, and are not around all of the time, their children benefit from their influence in terms of adjusting to new experiences, having stable emotions, and knowing how to get along with others (Amato, 1986). For children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), supportive fathers can have a stronger positive influence on their adjustment to school than mothers (Barkely, 1985). The school in which this study was conducted has over 60% of boys with ADHD and such evidence that fathers can be helpful should be used.

There has not been much written specifically about fathers engaging in the education of their sons. Equally it has been established that the engagement of fathers in local authority services has been less successful (Cullen, Cullen, Band, Davis and Lindsay, 2011). It is therefore important to explore why fathers are historically known for being less involved in the education of their sons, (Clough and Garner, 2008). As noted in the previously quoted *Plowden Report,* in the past, mothers were more involved in education than fathers. Current studies still show that mothers are engaging more than fathers in schools (Goldman, 2005; Burgess, 2009; The *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Father engagement in education requires time and energy that sometimes most fathers do not have, but in order to help teachers to be successful with their sons, it needs to be done (Fan and Williams, 2010). They need to find a balance so that they can be involved in their sons' education. It is therefore, important to explore the barriers that fathers face in their effort to engage in the education of their sons. The following section focuses on these barriers and possible solutions.

2.5 BARRIERS TO ENGAGING FATHERS

Although there is considerable evidence that schools are making efforts to engage more fathers in the education of their sons, barriers continue to exist (Burgess, 2009). Section 2.3.1 discussed some of the barriers faced by parents in schools. This section looks at specific barriers faced by fathers because despite government interest in fatherhood, services for men as parents remain poor and lag behind those

for mothers (Crozier, 2012). The school itself can be a barrier to engaging fathers through staff attitudes, systems and procedures as shall be explained later. As observed by Carpenter and Towers (2008), fathers are a heterogeneous group and therefore, have differing needs hence they have different issues as barriers. These barriers include custody issues, unemployment, domestic violence and incarnation (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). This section will focus on the general issues identified as barriers to engaging fathers in the education of their sons. These issues vary from socio-economic and cultural to the personal.

2.5.1   Psycho-social barriers

Clough and Garner (2008) noted that in some cases, fathers themselves carry with them a range of misconceptions, beliefs and histories that inhibit them from engaging. These could be cultural, historical or personal. Some fathers see engaging in education as a mothers' responsibility and others, as mentioned before, may have had bad experiences in school themselves and therefore, would not want to engage (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Thus, if fathers see education as a woman's job, they will not engage. For example, it is difficult for some men in some cultures to speak to a woman about the family and fatherhood (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006).

Schools have been advised to divest themselves of harmful stereotypes about teen fathers and to employ rapport-building strategies (Horne and Kiselica, 1999). If fathers are seen by school staff as non-cooperative and 'hard to reach' they may not be able to work together effectively to raise the achievement of boys (Desforges, 2003). It has been observed that teen fathers are simultaneously rejected and ignored, disparaged and excluded, condemned and punished for their role in the pregnancy (Horne and Kiselica *op cit*). There is a common perception that teenage boys are reluctant fathers, and they face major question marks over their competence as fathers (Clough and Garner, 2008). Such perceptions will exclude some of the fathers, therefore, depriving the boys of some of the support they should be getting. However, in this case, it is almost impossible to have teenage fathers with children at Key stage three, but if they are not taken seriously at primary school, it will be harder to engage them in secondary school.

While fathers might want to increase the amount of time spent with their children, there are family, personal, structural and cultural barriers that may hinder increased involvement in family life (Ackerman, 2006). The very word "parent" in relation to services can have the effect of excluding fathers both because fathers often perceive the term to mean "mothers" and because this can be reinforced by the approach of

practitioners whose habits of working mainly with mothers are deeply ingrained (*Action for Children,* 2009).

Many young men struggle with the concept of what is a man's role in his home and community (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). Parenting and family issues are subjects that should be integrated into the national curriculum to build an understanding and family responsibility (O'Connor, 2007). Many men do not know how to be good fathers and may have never had an opportunity to be one, in the end, they just give up and keep themselves to themselves (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). Thus, the lack of knowledge and education on how to be a good father can be barrier on its own.

Effectively involving fathers in case planning and service provision presents unique challenges for case workers and other professionals, this may explain in part why most professionals exclude fathers (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). In many cases, schools have to deal with the mistakes of other professional bodies (Horne and Kiselica (1999). This is made worse by the current legal system that is in favour of mothers with fathers being excluded in many aspects of their children's lives (O'Connor, 2007). For example during divorce, some fathers are likely to be involved in disputes with other family members leading to their exclusion (Gardiner, 1992). This could be the reason why it becomes difficult to involve them in the education of their sons as professionals often find themselves embroiled in the family disputes. Thus, in some cases, the quality of mother-father relationship is one factor that strongly affects a father's willingness and ability to be involved (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). In my experience, schools are not keen on family politics and would rather work with one parent than having both arguing in a meeting.

Flouri and Buchanan (2003) observed that in some cases teenage boys may not feel comfortable with having their fathers in the school. This will result in them making every effort to block communication between the school and their fathers. In some teenage circles, it is not 'cool' to be seen with your dad in the school (Francis and Skelton, 2005). This is particularly found in this country where children are accompanied by their parents to school until they go to secondary school. Some boys want to show that they have now grown up and they do not want their fathers to be with them in school (Harris and Goodall, 2007).Thus, there are often more opportunities at pre-school than secondary school for fathers to be involved (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). In pre-school and primary school, fathers have the opportunity to take children to school and play with them as well. In secondary

schools, fathers can still engage in many other non-academic ways including: parents' evenings, showing interest in their sons' work, participating at assemblies or being on the board of governors (Goldman, 2005). However, some fathers may not be fully informed of all these opportunities hence schools have to develop a robust system of educating fathers on how to engage (*The Fatherhood Institute,* 2011*).*

One of the emerging barriers is the failure of schools to acknowledge the changing patterns of parenting and families (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). There has been an increase in the number of children in school who live with a lone parent (Harris and Goodall, 2007). This is especially important since many of the most vulnerable boys will be from such families (Clough and Garner, 2008). Almost half of the boys in school are living with their step-fathers or with single mothers (*The fatherhood institute* 2011). Contacting non-resident fathers can prove to be difficult and engaging step-fathers can be equally as difficult, especially if they do not have a good relationship with their step-sons (Biddulph, 2008). While it may take an extra effort to engage a non-resident father, it is usually in the best interest of the child (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006).

2.5.2 Provision in the school as a barrier

It may be a challenge for schools to cater for individual fathers' needs (Goldman, 2005). For example some fathers may say they cannot attend the meeting in the mornings and others will say they cannot attend in the evenings. In other cases, some fathers may have had a difficult experience during their school life (Clough and Garner, 2008). They may not like school themselves and to engage them in issues they do not like can prove to be difficult.

Teen fathers have been cited as a group that is more likely to drop out of school, (Horne and Kiselica 1999). If a father dropped out of school, there is a very little chance that they will want to engage when they grow up. Clough and Garner (2008) added that adolescent fathers face education related difficulties. These may include literacy difficulties, negative attitudes as a result of past experiences in school and a general lack of confidence to engage with teachers (*Family and Parent Institute,* 2009). Such difficulties may result in some fathers not wanting to engage with schools. There is not much a school can do with fathers who have personal issues with education. As suggested by Burgess (2009) schools have to be father-friendly but engaging is a two way system, fathers need to play their part by being positive.

Some fathers feel that their own lack of knowledge or skills puts them at a disadvantage in working with schools (*The Scottish Executive Department,* 2006). The language used, and the atmosphere created by the school may not be conducive for a father with literacy difficulties. Crozier (2000) found that middle-class parents were also seen by teachers as interfering and pressurising. Thus, fathers who feel inadequate about their schooling are intimidated by teachers while those who are confident feel that they are seen as interfering (Tizard *et al.* 1981). Some parents from ethnic minority backgrounds feel racist attitudes and behaviours limit their involvement with schools, (Crozier, 2012). Such complications show that schools have to plan carefully if they are to develop a successful working relationship with fathers.

Flouri (2005) observed that sometimes fathers find it harder to engage with schools due to various other commitments they may have. It takes time and sacrifice to engage in other activities apart from work commitments (*The Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). Schools operate a rigid Monday to Friday timetable, which may not be suitable to some fathers (Carpenter and Towers 2008). Fathers may be more likely to be at work during the day (Ackerman, 2006). Also, some fathers and pupils may have to travel some distance to the school and may have difficulty with transport or have to walk through unsafe areas (The Scottish Executive Department 2006). It should, however, be noted that some schools are now opening during the evening to break these barriers and to accommodate working fathers during consultation meetings (*The fatherhood institute,* 2011).

Apart from the above, the predominance of female staff in schools may make other fathers from different cultures feel out of place (Francis and Skelton, 2005). There is evidence of more female than male staff in secondary schools though the situation is getting better Burgess (2009). Family and Parenting Institute (2006) argued that there may be mostly mothers at the school gates so fathers feel they do not belong. Fathers often stand in isolation outside the school gates feeling uncomfortable and frequently excluded from the mothers' conversations (Clough and Garner, 2008). Such a situation may intimidate men and make them uncomfortable to attend meetings at school.

Fathers like to engage in learning that is practical, work-related and, which offers immediate, tangible rewards (*Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). Schools that engage fathers in activities that are not practical or masculine oriented may not be successful (Francis and Skelton, 2005). This is not true of all fathers though, but it is important

for schools to come up with activities that are suitable for both fathers and sons to engage. For example, it is assumed that most fathers are interested in football. Organising an activity around football may help to attract more fathers though not all (Buchanan, 2007).

As mentioned before, some fathers see themselves in their sons and failure in school embarrasses them to the extent at times, of not wanting to be associated with their children (Family and Parenting Institute, 2006). In some cases the failure of a son in school causes the father to question his abilities as a parent and a man (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006).

2.5.3   Economic and political barriers

The behaviour of some agencies and professionals who work with fathers make it difficult for fathers to engage with schools and see their sons (Gardiner, 1992). It is reported that 50% of the fathers who lose custody in court lose all contact with their children after three years (Hayward, 2013). Many men now consider the state to be their enemy (Gardiner, 1992).

If fathers feel that their opinions are not being valued, they will see engaging in school activities as a waste of time (Buchanan, 2007). It has been observed that asking fathers for opinions and not making use of them may discourage them from engaging again (Goldman, 2005). Schools should therefore ensure that they implement what is raised in consultation meetings with fathers.

Other barriers include isolation due to loss of work, lack of networking and activity in local communities (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). This is most common to fathers with learning difficulties, ethnic minority fathers or fathers with reading difficulties (Cullen *et al.,* 2001). It should be noted that fathers and mothers face almost the same problems in raising children: time, stress, money but it is how fathers react to these problems that is grounded in cultural views of manhood and fatherhood (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). It is how they respond to these difficulties that can make the difference. Some fathers can be difficult to reach, and schools have to come up with a variety of ways of communicating with all fathers whose sons attend the school. Also, underemployment and unemployment can be experienced by the father as a direct insult to his self-perception as a man and a father (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). This can make a father lose confidence and find it difficult to engage with the school. Unemployed fathers should be easy to engage as they have more

time, but if they feel that they are undervalued, they will not engage (*Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

In most cases, probation officers deal with mainly male criminals which does not give fathers a good image (Gardiner, 1992). Where forty years ago, fathers were held up as respected pillars of the community, today politicians and the media in general persist in raining a hail of abuse down on fatherhood (O'Connor, 2007). With courts on the mothers' side, the likely result of mother custody is that fathers lose contact with their sons and fail to engage in their education (Gardiner, 1992). Such biases result in fathers feeling disrespected yet respect has a special meaning to men and fathers (O'Connor, 2007).

Fathers are most often represented as homogeneous, thus ignoring their raced, classed and gendered identities, whereas other research has overwhelmingly shown that mothers are the most active parents in relation to their children's school education (Crozier, 2012). Therefore, for the school to be more effective in working with fathers, socio-political and economic factors have to be considered seriously. Having looked at all these barriers, it is also important to explore strategies of engaging fathers in the education of their sons in secondary schools. These strategies may help in overcoming some of the barriers mentioned above.

2.6 STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE FATHERS IN EDUCATION

Fathers have been described as 'hard to reach, the invisible parent, peripheral parent, just a shadow' (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). Although some of the fathers are engaging, these descriptions reveal current thinking on father engagement in schools. It is therefore important for schools to come up with specific strategies to engage fathers in the education of their sons. This section focuses on strategies that schools can adopt to improve the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons. These strategies may work for one school and may not work for another. They are suggested for a specific school where this study was carried out.

Clough and Garner, (2008) advised that engaging boys who will become fathers in their own schooling presents a great opportunity to break at least one of the cycles of the disadvantaged that punctuates education and the society of which it is an expression of. It is important therefore to make sure that from the early age, future fathers know the importance of education to themselves and their sons. However, most fathers indicate that they want to engage but they do not know how to (The *Fatherhood Institute* 2011). It is therefore important for the school to take further

steps and find out if fathers know exactly what is available to them (Clough and Garner, 2008). This can be done through survey questionnaires or through school leaflets, (Chemnais, 2006).

It should be noted that fathers do not necessarily have anything in common except that they have sons in education (Goldman, 2005). It is therefore important for schools not to put fathers together as a group that needs to be dealt with in the same way (Blamires *et al.,* 1997). Fathers have different needs and schools should look at each father as an individual with a specific need that is different from other fathers (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). The needs of a step father are different from the needs of a teenage father, disabled father or an absent father (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). As noted by Goldman (2005), single parent fathers tend to be more involved than any other group. From experience, I would advise teachers not to take it for granted that single fathers will engage, they may not.

A recent publication by the Secretary of Education encouraged schools to step up communication with absentee fathers (DCSF, 2010). Communication is important as it helps fathers to understand what they are required to do. However, it is the means of communication that schools need to improve on (Clough and Garner, 2008). Research by the *Fatherhood Institute* (2011) revealed that some fathers may be uncomfortable with the means of communication used by schools. This includes writing letters to fathers who may be having literacy difficulties or communicating in English to fathers who cannot speak the language, (Skaliotis 2010). For example, contacting the father only when the child has misbehaved may not yield good results (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Again, contacting the father during a divorce in which he has been barred from seeing his children may be worse (Skaliotis, 2010). Schools should therefore be more creative not only in the means of communication they use but in the timing of the communication as well. Researching into the boy's background and gathering all the background information upon the boy's enrolment can help to avoid the aforementioned problems (The *Fatherhood Institute*, *op cit*).

Fathers do not respond to outreach efforts as well as mothers which helps to advise professionals to approach fathers with an understanding of their unique needs (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). *The Fatherhood Institute* (2011) encouraged schools not to approach fathers as if they do not know what they are doing. They will feel more respected and valued if they are asked for suggestions and if their suggestions are put into practice (Burgess, 2009). Since almost all fathers of young children are involved in their children's literacy and other educational development at home, even

when they are not sure how to help, it is important that interventions by the school acknowledge this and build on the fathers' existing knowledge, skills, culture and participation rather than approaching fathers as if they are not involved at home and are not interested (Morgan, Lyet and Condran, 1988).

Apart from the above, it is also important for a school to recognise that due to work commitments, some fathers may not be able to attend some of the functions. Most schools operate only within defined hours, Monday to Friday and this gives little or no opportunity for fathers to be engaged (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). A simple suggestion would be to organise these events in the evening or at weekends when there is the chance that a higher number of fathers may be available. It should also be noted that not all fathers can be engaged in one day, thus having the same event over two or three days would help (The *Fatherhood Institute* 2011). How teachers understand the way fathers react to these problems is key to their ability to engage them in the education of their sons (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006).

As mentioned before, it is important to recognise the differing needs of those fathers who may not be resident with their children as well as those of step and adoptive fathers (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). In some cases, fathers do not live with their sons and letters are sent to where the son lives (The *Fatherhood Institute* 2011). By so doing, the father is left out (marginalised) and will miss out on dates for important events in the school. Sending fathers who do not live with their children copies of school reports, school surveys and school prospectuses helps to keep them informed, involved and engaged (Chemnais, 2006). It has been suggested that however sensitive it may be in some cases, schools should ask if the boy's father is available for contact (The *Fatherhood Institute* 2011). The school should take it upon itself to make sure that every effort is made within the law to contact the child's father regarding education (Skaliotis, 2010).

Morgan *et al.* (1988) encouraged schools to formally and informally recognise the involvement of fathers in the school. Clough and Garner (2008) added that opening lines of communication directly with fathers will improve their engagement. Research by The *Fatherhood Institute* (2011) revealed that when a letter is addressed to the parent, it is usually assumed that it is for the mother. Acknowledging and supporting fathers' contribution is likely to make fathers feel valued in this role and motivate them to remain involved (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). Schools should therefore not take it for granted that a father is invited when they address letters to the parents. Wherever possible, letters should state that fathers are also welcome to attend (*The*

Fatherhood Institute, 2011). This may seem trivial but research has shown that every little effort made in engaging fathers can change the statistics in a positive way (The *Fatherhood Institute ibid*). A crucial factor is to communicate to the father that they are recognised by the school as partners in their son's education (Clough and Garner, 2008).

Involving fathers in their children's education should be seen as being beneficial to not only the children but to the fathers themselves, to the families as a whole and to the schools (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). A father-friendly environment in the school can help achieve this. Fathers are more likely to engage if the school environment is father-friendly (Goldman, 2005; Clough and Garner, 2008). A school that is dominated by female staff, labelling fathers as non-cooperative is more likely to discourage fathers from engaging (Francis and Skelton, 2005). To work with fathers, professionals must understand their own biases and preconceptions regarding fathers and fatherhood (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). In some cases, schools have to look at their own staff and identify training requirements regarding working with fathers (Clough and Garner, *op cit*)

2.6.1 Creating a 'father-friendly environment' in the school

A father-friendly environment can be achieved by organising special days for fathers only to come to the school (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Days such as Fathers' Day where fathers can be invited to the school to participate in various activities can help attract more fathers to engage (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). Appointing more male staff in the school either as mentors or teachers and assigning them to engage more with fathers has proven to be successful (The *Fatherhood Institute ibid*). It is also another way of creating a father-friendly environment. Fathers have been found to relate better to other males when they are approached to engage in the education of their sons (Goldman, 2005).

The first step in increasing fathers' engagement in a school is to work with other males in and outside the school to motivate and to equip them to encourage father involvement as part of parent involvement (Robinson, 2007). Goldman (2005) suggested that if a school decides to employ male workers, they should be men whom local fathers can identify with or can accept as their advocate. However, this is not to say women cannot work very successfully with fathers. The most important factor is training and awareness of the needs of the fathers (Carpenter and Towers, 2008).

Fathers from black and ethnic minority communities may have different roles in relation to their children's education (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). Schools have to acknowledge this and adopt a strategy for engaging them. Targeting certain groups of fathers may help reduce the disengagement (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Groups such as non-resident fathers, step-fathers and teenage fathers are more likely not to engage (Horne and Kiselica 1999). Rosenberg, and Wilcox (2006) advised teachers to observe the following when working with fathers:

1. Understand what type of relationship the father has with his son.

2. Learn how the father fits into the current family dynamics.

3. Understand the fathers' role in the education of his son.

4. Some fathers will take time to seek help or will not seek it at all (Gardner, 1992).

This helps to approach fathers in an appropriate way and strengthens partnerships.

Children are often the biggest motivator for fathers to engage (Burgess, 2009). Sons can influence their fathers in the same way that fathers can alter their son's development (Parke, 1996). Schools should work closely with the boys and encourage them to encourage their fathers to be involved. However, this may be a sensitive issue for boys whose fathers are absent (*The Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). This may also not work for some boys who see the involvement of parents at secondary school as embarrassing. However, it has been argued that if boys are made aware of the rationale behind their fathers participating in their education, barriers to engagement may be overcome (The *Fatherhood Institute, ibid*).

Closely linked to the above, the boys' mothers can be a big influence in encouraging fathers to be involved in their sons' education especially if they are living together or if they have a good relationship in case of non-resident fathers (Clark *et al.,* 2009). Schools can encourage mothers to bring along fathers to events. As with the boys, results are improved if the mother can see the rationale behind this.

Schools should audit their practice on father engagement to find out how effective it is (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). Attention needs to be given to staff in the school about their attitudes and beliefs regarding men (Clough and Garner, 2008). Some of the teachers' attitudes may turn-off the fathers from engaging with the school especially those who may have been brought up with the belief that engaging in the

child's education is a mother's responsibility (Carpenter and Towers, *op cit*). Thus, staff training is key to improving the engagement of fathers.

Schools that offer bespoke forms of support to these fathers are more likely to engage them in their children's learning (Harris and Goodall, 2007). Programmes such as reading classes, dyslexia support and parenting classes have proved successful in engaging parents in general (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). However, it is also important for fathers to be proactive about their own engagement. They should come up with strategies of their own ways to engage with the school. The following section discusses strategies that fathers can adopt to enable their own engagement.

2.7 WHAT FATHERS CAN DO TO ENABLE THEIR OWN ENGAGEMENT.

Schools and other professional organisations can implement all the available strategies but they may not work if fathers themselves do not find ways to enable their own engagement. If fathers are not forthcoming, schools can only rely on researched information on how to engage them. It is important that they help the schools to help them. This section covers strategies that fathers can implement to help their sons achieve in school. Various issues will be explored including those strategies that fathers can implement as a group or individually.

According to Gass and Gass (2013), every father owes their son three things: firstly, a father should connect with his son by at least knowing about them, their struggles, friends, heroes, music. This cannot be done by schools or other professionals. The father has to make an effort to understand his own son. Secondly, a father should listen to his son, what they are saying or not saying. By listening, a father will get to know and connect with his son and lastly, a father should believe in his son by making sure that his voice is the loudest in his son's life. If the son hears other people's voices more, then those people are more likely to have more influence. Confidence and self-esteem should come from the father when no one else can believe the son (Biddulph, 2008). These three things listed by Gass and Gass (*ibid*) are a good starting point for fathers to engage with their sons and get involved in their schooling.

Fathers should make an effort to model behaviours and attitudes that they want to see their children display when they grow up (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). Sometimes there is very little the son can learn from his father due to various circumstances but it is important for the father to let his son see something good in

him (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). This could be something as simple as being polite or hardworking, something that cannot be bought but taught (Gass, and Gass 2013). Thus, by engaging with the school, a father will not be talking to his son but showing him that education is important.

Changes in law that were implemented in 2003 gave parental rights to fathers named on their children's birth certificates, whether or not they are married to the mothers (O'Brien, 2005). Fathers should make use of these changes in law and exercise their rights lawfully by engaging with schools provided they are named on the birth certificate (FPI, 2006). They now have rights to be involved and engage in their children's (in this case sons) education, helping with homework, discipline, motivation and other educational activities. Unfortunately not all fathers are aware of these laws and they may need support to understand what is available for them. Schools can help fathers in such circumstances or they can join other organisations such as *Fathers for Justice, The Fatherhood Institute and Fathers.com*. Through these organisations, they can be supported with information on how to engage. They can also get some information on other services available particularly legal services (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

Research by Tizard *et al. (*1981) revealed that fathers often failed to respond when teachers attempted to involve them. However, since then, there has been a shift in the thinking about what fathers are expected to do. O'Brien (2005) observed that British fathers are now expected to be accessible and nurturing as well as economically supportive of their children. Fathers can take advantage of this general expectation by society and engage. In most schools they are now expected to engage more than before, therefore, their presence will be more welcomed than shunned (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

When most boys reach secondary school, they become more interested in current events (Biddulph, 2008). These could be politics, cars or football. It is recommended for fathers to subscribe to the local newspaper and to have a number of magazines of interest available to their sons (*The Fatherhood Institute,* 2011). That way, the fathers will be keeping the reading culture in the house going.

Apart from that, fathers identified that improved support information and the opportunity to access services would enable them to engage more with their sons (Carpenter and Towers, 2008). Schools cannot guess what fathers are thinking. In order to convey this information, fathers should take it upon themselves to read the

school prospectus and any letters that schools send them (Family and Parenting Institute, 2006). By participating in surveys and attending meetings, fathers are able to feedback to schools how they want to be engaged and the type of support information they need (Goldman, 2005).

It is not only the school that should make an effort, but fathers should also find strategies on how to engage in the education of their sons (Robinson, 2007). In one school, fathers formed a group to meet one day per week and discuss their boys' education in a pub (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). This helped them share ideas and understand their children better. A Fathers-only group gives them safety, helps them to open up about their doubts and fears and other emotions (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). It is encouraged that fathers seek such groups to get some help.

Some fathers think that helping with homework is the only way to engage (Burgess, 2009). Ortiz *et al.* (1999) recommended supporting fathers to integrate learning activities with their sons into natural daily routines such as travelling together, telling/reading bedtime stories, watching television, reading newspapers and magazines. Learning from other fathers and asking for help from teachers on how to engage in school activities can help as well. (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

As much as fathers may come up with their own strategies, it is still important that professionals help them engage (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). However, the work of other professionals involved with fathers and education can be both a barrier and a blessing to father engagement. Thus, the role of other relevant professionals in engaging fathers is discussed in the next section.

2.8 THE ROLE OF OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN ENGAGING FATHERS

Any professional who has a good working knowledge of why fathers are important to their children's development, what makes for good fathering and how to work with fathers is equipped to make important progress with the family (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). The nature of the roles that fathers play in their children's life is of much interest to researchers, policy makers and professionals (Reeves, 2008). This section discusses the role of other agencies in engaging fathers in the education of their sons. I shall explore the role played by social workers, The Youth Offending Service, and medical bodies such as The Psychological Services. These are the main organisations with an input in the boys' education at my school. I chose to explore the role of these professionals because they are more relevant to the work we do in our school.

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Since the 1980s parents have had a legal obligation to send their child to school (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). Schools can use this law to enforce more fathers to work with them if they are living with their sons. However, it has been noted that social welfare and legal agencies are not engaging with fathers especially those who do not live with their children (Baker, 1994). With complications in family arrangements, some agencies find it difficult to engage fathers (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Some cases are too sensitive to ask about the whereabouts of the father hence, professionals end up working with whoever is available (DCSF, 2010).

The role of fathers has generally been affected by contemporary changes in family practices and forms (Reeves, 2008). What these agencies have to realise is that families come in all shapes and sizes these days and the evidence is clear that stable and loving relationships between parents and with their children are vital for their progress and well-being (DCSF, 2010). The sheer diversity of family life now rules out a 'one size fits all' approach (DCSF, *ibid*). Society and agencies must be willing to accept complex family configurations if they wish to assist in preparing men to assume their new roles (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). As mentioned before, men are no longer breadwinners only; they are participating actively in raising their children (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). Increasingly, fathers want to be more involved and a significant number of parents say that they would like fathers to be able to take a longer period of leave from work (DCSF, 2010).

Becoming a father is one of the most unique experiences in the life of any man (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). It is therefore important that professionals be more active in engaging more fathers in the education of their sons. Literature that informed practice of social workers in the 1950's emphasised the mother as the main carer and the father as the worker or supporter (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987). This is probably because fathers are considered experts in the world of work and its vicissitudes (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). However, it has been noted that most fathers find it difficult to engage in the life of their sons when they have been excluded from them through divorce or separation (Gardiner, 1992). In the UK, family courts award more mothers than fathers sole custody of the children (O'Connor, 2007). This alone limits the participation of fathers in the lives of their sons.

In the past, fathers were often seen by agencies as important background figures but now being a successful parent is increasingly becoming important to them (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). Fatherhood and fathers are now firmly on the agenda but there is still a long way to go (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987). Research with young fathers shows

that the vast majority want to be involved with their children, and 78 per cent of births to teenage mothers are jointly-registered (DCSF, 2010). Schools should be able to recognise this shift and encourage more fathers to engage (Burgess, 2009). However, a major problem in delivery of services to men is that under the present conditions, males have little access to information (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). Giving families access to information, advice and support of various kinds that they can use is much more likely to be effective (DCSF, 2010).

It is important to note the diversification in patterns of living arrangements for fathers (Reeves, 2008). The numbers of step-families are growing (DCSF, 2010). Some of these step-fathers may not know their roles as far as the education of their step-sons is concerned. They can be educated about their impact on the lives of their adolescent sons and can change in ways that will benefit them and their children (Hanson and Bozett, 1985).

Establishing fatherhood initiatives is not enough, professionals should also assess if they provide father-friendly environments (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). Coming up with fair laws that see fathers in the same eyes as mothers can help (O'Connor, 2007). Although a mother who stops or disrupts contact defined by a court order may be jailed or fined for contempt of court, very few mothers have been jailed for this as they will be the sole guardian of the child (Hayward, 2013).

2.8.1   Professional biases against fathers

In the US, worker bias appears to be the most widely researched barrier to fathers' participation in child welfare case planning (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). Although this data are from the US, I found it to be true if compared to the findings of this study which has also been supported by Baker (1994) who argued that some services, and voluntary organisations are at best peripheral to the problems of many lone fathers. Recently, it has also been noted that policies that focus on children and families have tended in the past to operate on the assumption that families are synonymous with mothers (DCSF, 2010).

It should however be noted that mothers were, and still are, the main carer in most cases and that they play a vital role in the education of their sons (DCSF, 2010). Studies by Baker (1994) show that it is not all doom and gloom, as in lone father families, men are invariably not at the periphery, they are well engaged. What a particular father feels, thinks or does is obviously dependent on his own experiences

and personality (Hanson and Bozett, 1985). However, the fact still remains that they all need help to engage.

Helping men understand what an invaluable and irreplaceable role they play in the development and lives of their children can lead them to make a greater commitment and investment in their family (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). The government introduced statutory paternity leave and pay for the first time in 2003 and over 90 per cent of fathers now take time off work at the birth of their child (DCSF, 2010). This shows how seriously the government is taking the involvement of fathers in the education of their children in general. Fathers are able to take up to six months of additional paternity leave if the mother returns to work with maternity leave outstanding (DCSF, *ibid*) This is mainly because most working fathers do not spend enough time with their children (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987).

Although in some cases, as has been noted above, some professionals make it difficult for fathers to engage with schools, there are other issues causing the underachievement of boys that are not related to the lack engagement by fathers. There are a lot of boys who come from stable families or are well supported by other agencies who are not motivated to learn. These issues are investigated in the next section.

2.9 PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES AFFECTING BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT.

There are social and cultural factors that contribute to what the boys can become in the future (Day, 2011). Issues affecting boys' achievement are very wide. Engaging fathers in the education of their sons to improve achievement is not a panacea to the problem. Boys' achievement and adjustment are influenced by many people, processes and institutions (Wilson, 2007). Thus, the issue of boys' underachievement is extremely complex, simple solutions and quick fixes should be avoided (Stevens and King, 2008). Parents, the broader family, peer groups, neighbourhood influences, schools and other bodies are all implicated in shaping boys' progress towards their self-fulfilment and citizenship (Neall, 2003). The boys themselves, of course, with their unique abilities, temperaments and propensities play a central role in forming and reforming their behaviour, aspirations and achievements (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). This section focuses on various issues perceived as affecting boys' achievement and father engagement in education. The issues discussed include social, cultural, psychological and to some extent economic issues. Factors such as family background and home environment,

peers, teachers and the school, play a pivotal role in achievement. As noted by Francis (2000), boys' underachievement is as a result of the teacher, the school and the learning style. Francis (*ibid*) does not consider the engagement of fathers as an issue that needs attention in order to raise boys' achievement. Thus, this section shall explore some of the issues not mentioned above that can affect boys' achievement and father engagement.

Boys' underachievement in literacy has been described and analysed in terms of different perspectives: personal factors, such as motivation, or lack of it (Ofsted 1993 and 2003); the lack of strong male literacy models (Barrs and Pidgeon, 1993); teachers' perceptions of behaviour (Myhill, 2000); classroom approaches (Frater, 2000); the content of the literacy curriculum (Marsh and Millard, 2000)) and class and ethnicity (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). The complexity of the area is matched by the range of different types of evidence which inform debate. Connolly (2004), observed that apart from the above, there are several other theories to boys' underachievement that include; biological explanations, schools being biased in favour of girls, poor teaching, crisis of masculinity, increase in girls' aspirations and the laddish behavior (Francis and Skelton, 2005). Some of these theories will be explored further in this section. However, it is important to note that no two boys are alike (Wilson, 2007). Teachers are advised to treat each boy as an individual in their classroom (Wilson, *ibid).*

A study by Barber (1994) on attitudes of boys with behavioural problems to education revealed three types of boys; the 'disappointed', the 'disaffected' and the 'disappeared'. The 'disappointed' endured school, causing a minimum amount of trouble, just enough to preserve their peer relationships. But, beyond attending school, they were not disposed to do much work there. The 'disaffected' used the school as their theatre for non-co-operation and worse. The 'disappeared' tended to cause less trouble at school simply because they were not there much. They were known for causing trouble in the community and non-attendance.

2.9.1   The unsuitable school environment for boys

It is alleged that boys are getting a raw deal because the education system dramatically favours girls (Frater, 2000). Boys are naturally gregarious but reading is an anti-social activity for them. It is a solitary occupation, unless others have read the same book (Brown, 2008). There are also allegations that female teachers have been accused of promoting girls' learning styles and the kinds of learning behaviours associated with females such as cooperation and studiousness (Francis and Skelton

(2005). Some theorists argue that because of the dominance of females in schools, the content of the curriculum no longer reflects boys' interests (Connolly, 2004). Boys are actively discouraged from expressing many emotions at all in schools, (Wilson, 2007). Because of lack of proper teaching methods for boys, they are less likely than girls to ask for help to understand their emotions and how to deal with them (McClure, 2008). Such difficulties can result in a very fine line between encouraging and discouraging boys to learn. (Neall, 2003).

There are some teachers who still hold the belief that in order to discipline boys properly, one has to be harsh (Wilson, 2007). This harshness may cause boys to rebel and dislike school leading to behavioral problems and lack of achievement (Neall, 2003). It requires a lot from the teaching profession to enable this generation of boys to become the kind of men, partners, husbands and fathers that we would like to have in society (Neall, *ibid*).

There has been a debate on the suitability of the national curriculum, the methods of teaching and assessment with allegations that current assessment procedures are biased towards females (Francis and Skelton, 2005). Most of the current assessments are based on projects and coursework which favour girls' learning style (Connolly, 2004). At the same time, success at school relies more on language, especially written language, wads of information and analyses of it (Francis and Skelton, 2005).

What often comes as a surprise to schools is that once given the incentives, boys can often get extremely involved in fiction reading (Wilson, 2007). There is very little in the system which rewards boys' strengths, such as quickness, getting to the point, doing things efficiently (Neall, 2003). Boys differ from girls in their learning strengths and weaknesses (Francis and Skelton, 2005). Unfortunately by denying the nature of boys, education theorists can cause them much more misery (Connolly, 2004). It is recommended that teachers should value male attributes of energy, boldness, humour, competition, risk taking and creativity (Neall, 2003). Knowing about the differences in boys' brains helps to explain some practical difficulties that boys have and what to do about them (Biddulph, 2008). Day (2011) recommends that teachers take into consideration how boys think, play, talk and socialise. This will help teachers plan and prepare to deal with what they call 'challenging behaviour' most of the times. Such differences in brain development and structure affects behaviour and performance which are the two main issues raised about boys that are currently being ignored by the system.

However, Wilson (2007) maintains that as much as all these factors are important, peer pressure is the most significant barrier to boys' achievement. Boys who are academically focused risk being ridiculed (Francis, 2000). In order for some boys to fit in with their friends, they have to misbehave, fail in school and disregard school rules (Wilson, 2007). In addition to that, the laddish construction is seen as anti-academic hence having a negative impact on achievement (Francis and Skelton, 2005). Boys who do well academically are seen as soft and not man enough. Wilson (2007) talks about the 'the peer police' referring to boys who influence others to behave in certain ways. In my school, this 'peer police' is known to very often patrol the behavior boundaries by making sure that their peers are 'terrorising' the school. In the eyes of the 'peer police,' academic achievement is seen as non-macho and boys who may excel academically risk being marginalized (Francis, 2000). It has been observed that literacy is often more associated with women and girls and this may have a negative effect on boys' attitudes to school-based reading (Solsken, 1995, Wilson). Generally boys are more interested in practical subjects and probably this explains why they do not do very well in literacy (McClure, 2008). Boys like equipment, they need to build or make and are drawn to the equipment they need (McClure, *ibid*). Probably to change such views, it is important for boys to have more male role models such as fathers engaging more in reading programmes at school. To achieve this, fathers need to show their sons that they have respect for their teacher and their education by engaging with schools (McClure, 2008).

It has been argued that devaluation of masculinity is causing the decline of males in education (Sax, 2007) Schools have no place for moody and argumentative teenagers (Sax, *op cit*). It is a fact that as they get older a significant proportion of boys may be observed to be generally less eager in reading than many girls (Brown, 2008). It is what they read about and how they are asked to read that matters (Francis, 2000). Girls are brought up to relate well to other people, to have responsibility for themselves and others, and to communicate effectively with others (Francis and Skelton, 2005). In contrast, boys tend to relate to objects rather than people, they are 'doers' and parents tend not to converse with them (McClure, 2008). Boys prefer the immediate rewards to be reaped from manipulating objects or situations (McClure, *ibid).* Boys often quite naturally become more highly engaged in learning when there is an edge of competition to a project (Stevens and King, 2008). Consequently, their oral and social skills are much weaker and they lack interest in the functions and social and personal power of language, and thus the processing of

information and deductions to be made from it (Frater, 2000). Such skills and realisations are at the heart of current progress at school (Connolly, 2004).

2.9.2 Family background

There are other issues that may cause the lack of achievement by boys in school and the lack of engagement by fathers. Stainworth (1983) pointed out that boys from working class are less likely to be motivated to do well in school. Francis (2000) added that factors such as social class and ethnicity also affect boys' achievement. Francis and Skelton (2005) noted that socio-economic factors can impact upon achievement in exams. It has also been noted that boys from middle class background are more likely to achieve both socially and academically than their working class counterparts (Francis, 2000). Similarly, boys from the working class background are less likely to go to university and more likely to commit crimes or drop out of school (Francis, *ibid*). Socio-economic class determines where one is educated and what job they will get (Sacker *et al.,* 2002). This may also affect ambitions resulting in poor educational attainment being transmitted down generations (Stainworth, 1983).

A key influence in a boy's educational attainment is the attainment of his father, along with the interest that a father shows in his son's education (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Improving educational outcomes for one generation is a key factor in helping to break this cycle of deprivation (Desforges and Abouchaar, ibid). It has been well known for decades that pupils' educational achievement is related to parents' social class (Sacker et al., 2002). Neall, (2003) argues that to be successful in their education, boys need three important skills. Firstly, they need emotional literacy. This is the ability to recognise their own feelings and those of others. Secondly, they need to be able to communicate. This involves the ability to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings constructively and lastly, they have to exercise self-discipline which includes setting own boundaries and channel own energy.

In America, there are more black males in prison than in college (Bank and Hall, 1997). It has been observed that boys are more likely to commit crimes and misbehave in school if they come from a family with a criminal background (Clough and Garner, 2008). Rather than being in the world of good men, boys are inclined to be engrossed in a virtual world of today's technology (McClure, 2008). Most of these boys play video games and music that seldom connect with the real world (Sax, 2007). An example has been given of musicians who influence most boys mainly through their music which encourages rebellious behaviour. It is now almost

impossible to imagine a pop star singing about gaining a grade 'A' so that he can impress a girl at school or university and that song becoming a hit (*Sax, ibid).*

2.9.3 Boys' special needs

In the early sections I briefly discussed exclusions. It is on record that up to 80% of boys excluded from school in years 10 and 11 have problems that can be traced back to poor literacy levels in years 3 and 4 (Lloyd, 1999; DSCF, 2010). It has been noted that more boys exhibit dyslexic symptoms than girls, a condition that affects reading and writing (Neanon, 2005). Although an equal number of girls are affected, boys tend to exhibit it more at a ratio of 4 boys to 1 girl (Neanon, *ibid*). Many more boys than girls have ADHD or similar disorders with boys being three times more likely than girls to develop ADHD (Brandau and Pretis, 2004 McClure, 2008). This condition affects the ability to sit still and listen which may result in exclusions and lack of achievement (Brandau and Pretis, 2004). All such conditions may affect attainment in boys if teachers are not able to develop skills to manage them.

Biddulph (2008) confirmed that testosterone affects boys' mood, energy levels, and it influences brain activity. It also causes some boys to be concerned more with rank and competition (Connolly, 2004). Not working at school, not doing homework, not revising for tests, disruptive behaviour and truancy were found to be 'cool' amongst some boys (Biddulph, 2008). Research conducted by the local authority in Devon showed that some boys were constantly worried about their street credibility more than academic achievement (DfES, 1995). Boys especially need to learn how to deal with conflict (McClure, 2008). The ability for boys to accept rewards and celebrate success is limited by the power of the 'peer police' (Wilson, 2007).

It is therefore important for teachers to recognise other factors affecting boys' behaviour and performance in school. Fathers can help redirect these boys to what is real and unreal. The increase in the use of technology pointed out by McClure (2008) needs to be addressed as it is currently the biggest factor of loss of interest in education in our school. Fathers can help by turning off or restricting use of these gadgets at home and showing more interest in homework and school. Understanding how boys think can also help teachers understand how men think in general which may help with engaging more fathers in the school. However, the next section will explore the influence of mothers on their sons' education.

2.10 THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHERS ON THEIR SONS

Although most women say they feel more confident with a baby girl, their influence on the boy child cannot be underestimated (Biddulph, 2008). Despite the fact that single mothers are twice as likely as married mothers to experience a bout of depression and higher levels of stress, this study acknowledges that most mothers play a pivotal role in engaging fathers and influencing boys to behave and achieve. It is commonly assumed that if a woman is left to raise a boy on her own, she is somehow going to damage him (Drexler, 2005). This is not always the case although Freud (1960) maintained that it is a father who makes a boy into a man. Drexler (2005) further argues that parenting is either good or deficient not male or female. This view is respected and taken into account throughout this study.

Evidence from research in many countries, is explicit in defining the clear connection between the involvement of the natural father and a child's educational, psychological and social outcomes (Kenyatta, 1965; Clough and Garner, 2008). However, boyishness is a quality that can be nurtured by mothers too as it is the quality of the parenting that counts (Drexler, 2005). However, single mothers can raise boys well but must search carefully for good safe role models because a woman cannot claim to know what it is like to be in a male body (Biddulph, 2008).

The quality of the relationship between the mother and father has an important indirect effect on the behaviour of the child (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). Gardiner (1992) discovered a pattern of behaviour exhibited by parents going through a divorce where one parent prevents another from accessing children. He called this behaviour Parental Alienation Syndrome, commonly found in mothers. The purpose of the alienation is normally to gain or retain custody without the involvement of the father (Hayward, 2013). This is despite the importance of the role a father plays in the life of a boy child as noted in the previous sections.

It has been noted that a woman's own male history has an effect on her mothering (Biddulph, 2008). If a woman had a good relationship with her father and brothers, she is mostly likely to respect and understand her son better and the opposite is true (Biddulph, *ibid*). O'Connor (2007) claims to understand the anguish of fathers who are trying to maintain a good relationship with their children and are facing difficulties in doing so because of what they perceive to be obstructive and difficult partners. In most cases mothers have been accused of indicating that they want their sons to visit their father but their actions indicate something else such as planning other activities on the day that the father is supposed to see his son (Hayward, 2013).

Some fatherless homes can fare better than the nuclear family at raising boys Drexler (2005). The relationship that the father develops with the mother and the rest of the family is important in teaching the son to be a better future father and a boy's morality and masculinity can be cultivated without a live-in father (Goldman, 2005). Biddulph, (2008) acknowledges that single mothers can help boys understand the opposite sex better, through their love and tenderness, a boy can learn how to relate to females in later life. Although mothers play a vital role in raising a boy child, a link has been established between the educational and social performance of boys in school and that of their fathers when they were younger (Clough and Garner, 2008).

From personal experience and findings of this study, it is possible for mothers to play a part in building or destroying the relationship between the father and his son. Schools are advised to be inclusive in their approach to capture the influence of fathers on boys. Leaving mothers out can be detrimental to the process of engaging fathers.

2.11 SUMMARY

Having considered all discussions in this chapter, the development of parental involvement has come a long way and it shows that schools have made great strides towards engaging fathers. The fact that fathers are important in the education of their sons cannot be disputed. They exercise a strong influence on their children through the type of life they live in and outside the home. It has also been seen that fathers are facing barriers in the education of their sons. Despite these barriers, they should make their own initiatives to engage with the schools to improve the achievement of their sons. Although schools cannot cater for the individual needs of all fathers, they need to acknowledge that some fathers want to engage but do not know how . It should also be noted that to improve behaviour and achievement, schools have to look beyond engaging fathers as there are other factors. This review of literature has provided a guideline and suggestions on what we can do in our school. However, apart from suggestions made by Clough and Garner (2008), there seems to be a lack of practical solutions on engaging fathers in secondary schools that are informed by research. Most suggestions on working with fathers are made by charity groups or other organisations that work with fathers like *Fathers for Justice* and *The Fatherhood Institute.* There is still a gap between what fathers want from schools and what schools expect from them. Ways of engaging fathers have not been fully defined and it seems from this literature review, fathers are expected to turn up at school all the time to show that they are engaging. My research therefore focused on

designing a father engagement model suggested by fathers themselves. The model was tested in the school and found to be working. In order to design this model I needed to choose the appropriate methodology to collect and analyse data from the fathers and other participants. The next two chapters shall therefore focus on the methodology chosen for this study.

3. INTRODUCTION

The methodology I chose in this chapter reinforces my position as an insider researcher actively engaged with participants both physically and emotionally. As mentioned in chapter one the influence of the 'Living Theory' (Whitehead, 2008) can be seen in the choice of methodology in this and the next chapter. The Living Theory is based on the idea that individuals can generate their own unique explanations for their educational influences in their own learning. For example, a qualitative methodology is employed in this study to seek an understanding on how more fathers can be engaged in the school through ideas suggested by the fathers themselves. This and the next chapter therefore cover all issues regarding methodology. This chapter mainly focuses on the general framework, context and guiding principles within which this study is conducted. Chapter 4 focuses on research strategies and methods of collecting data used for this study. However, I shall begin by discussing the qualitative research methodology on which this study is based. I shall also explore challenges and opportunities presented by the qualitative methodology in relation to my research in this chapter. The four main characteristics of this study discussed in the first chapter continue to show throughout this chapter again. My position as an insider and how it affected the study is significantly highlighted together with the inclusion of participants as core-researchers. My personal experiences are also mentioned but to a lesser extent. The interpretive approach combined with the inductive reasoning explored in this chapter gave me the opportunity to adopt a qualitative methodology that suited my position as an insider. Thus, the use of the 'I' pronoun is highlighted more in this chapter, reinforcing my active engagement in the study. I shall therefore discuss the qualitative methodology as an overall approach to my study in the next section.

3.1 HOW THE QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY FITTED IN MY RESEARCH

Qualitative and quantitative methodology are the two main research paradigms in social research although the use of the 'mixed methods' approach has gained momentum in recent years (Robson, 2002). Although Tracy (2013) identifies some similarities between the qualitative and quantitative methods, whatever approach one adopts, there are always strengths and weaknesses and there will always be criticism. This study employed a qualitative approach to both collecting and analysing

data because of its flexibility and ability to study what participants are doing in their natural context (Silverman, 2011). Such a methodology was more suitable to the needs of the fathers and boys who required a less formal approach to collecting data for them to feel less intimidated.

Qualitative methodology has its roots in social sciences and is more concerned with understanding why people behave as they do: their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, fears (Tracy, 2013). It is more concerned with meanings and the way people understand things (Denscombe, 2003). In qualitative research, human activity is seen as a product of symbols and meanings that are used by members of a social group to make sense of things (communication) (Gray, 2004). These symbols and meanings are interpreted in words not numbers using the narrative approach (Silverman, 2011). With such an approach, I was not detached from my colleagues in the school and I was actively engaged with participants observing action as it unfolded.

In their research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) found out that the qualitative approach is mainly useful in two areas. It is useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth and it is useful for describing complex phenomena. These are the two main reasons I chose this approach as I studied a single case with a complex phenomenon. The research site was probably one of the few schools in the country with a naturally occurring sample of boys who have been removed from mainstream schools due to lack of both social and academic achievement. The interaction and relationships that occurred amongst teachers and fathers and fathers and the boys is a complex phenomenon and cannot be described by figures.

My choice of the qualitative approach was also influenced by Patton (1990) who argued that qualitative methods permit the researcher to study selected issues, cases, or events in depth and in detail without being constrained by preset categories of analysis. As a unique case study where three quarters of the school consists of boys with behavioural difficulties, I chose one issue (engaging fathers) and studied it in detail. The qualitative method allowed me to explore in depth, a selected single case. I was able to use naturally occurring data to find the sequences in which participants' meanings were deployed (Silverman, 2011).

The above assertion is supported by Bryman (2004) who stated that qualitative research seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behavior of humans and their groups from their point of view. This was well in line with the methods I I chose to involve teachers, boys and fathers in participatory action research. Their views were

sought to find better ways of engaging fathers in the school. All the suggestions and ideas came from the interviews and meetings I held with the participants hence the study was described as 'a study on fathers, for fathers by fathers.'

Like most qualitative researchers, I wanted to tell a story (Travers, 2001) about fathers' influence on their sons' through their active participation in education. I told this story in a narrative form giving my own views and experiences through the adoption of four different positions (father, teacher, son and researcher). I was more interested in the activities of the participants such as relationships, traditions and the way these were expressed as patterns of behaviour or types of language (Travers, *ibid).* However as shall be expressed later, my identity, values and beliefs were not entirely divorced from the research process, (Opie, 2004).

The qualitative approach allows for the possibility that a different researcher might reach different conclusions despite using broadly the same methods (Denscombe, 2003). Because of my personal views and the position I took in this study, a different researcher may come up with different outcomes. As mentioned before, this should be celebrated as it enriches thinking and promotes further research and debate (Tracy, 2013). This is seen as tolerance of ambiguities and contradictions in qualitative research (Silverman, 2011). It allowed fathers and teachers to express different views which were all taken into consideration. However, it is important to note that the descriptions and theories that qualitative research generates are grounded in reality (Denscombe, 2003). In this study all the findings and recommendations came from discussions with fathers, teachers and boys who actively took part in the study to make a change in the school. As core-researchers, participants were not interested in proving anything but to improve the engagement of fathers. They were not interested in what was happening around the world, all they wanted was a change in the school.

Bryman and Burgess (1994) state that qualitative research tends to be associated with participant observation and semi-structured or unstructured interviews. I used these data collection methods and found them effective in exploring participant feelings and actions as shall be explained later in chapter five. Travers (2001) encouraged the use of qualitative research arguing that it allows the subjects being studied to give much 'richer' answers to questions put to them by the researcher, and may give valuable insights which might have been missed by any other method. It also provides valuable information to certain research questions in its own right (Travers, *ibid*). Usually questions that start with 'how, why and what' require a

qualitative approach (Bryman, 2004). Looking at my research questions, they could only be answered through qualitative methods. For example seeking the views of the teachers and boys on the engagement of fathers in the school required explanations and a description of feelings, situations and reactions.

It is also advised that qualitative researchers should understand the grounds of their knowledge, especially the validity and scope of the knowledge that they obtain (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). This study was a critical analysis of how fathers are engaged and engaging in the education of their sons. Many issues were explored including attitudes, concerns, history and beliefs of participants in coming up with findings. In order to understand fathers and their interaction with their sons, teachers and other professionals, I found the qualitative methodology more applicable.

The quantitative approach advocates for educational researchers to eliminate their bias and to remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Such an approach would not have worked in this study. I would not have collected meaningful data from the boys and their fathers if I had chosen to be distant and treated them as objects of study. It was too sensitive for me to do that.

3.1.1 The opportunities presented by the qualitative methodology in this study.

Qualitative approaches are responsive to local situations, conditions and stakeholders' needs (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This was very suitable to the action research adopted for this study. Action research requires that stakeholders (participants) be involved and that they have an input in changes being implemented (Hammersly, 2000). This study sought to make local improvements in the school and the views of the fathers, boys and teachers were central to the study.

In qualitative studies the researcher is able to study dynamic processes such as documenting sequential patterns and change (Johnson and Silerman, 2011). I was also able to respond to changes that occurred during the study, for example in the first cycle we decided to have separate meetings with each group of participants but as the study progressed, participants requested to have meetings together as they discovered that despite their differences, they were all working towards one goal, to engage more fathers in the school. Together with the participants, we planned changes on how to engage fathers; we implemented the plan, observed it and reviewed it. We were able to make the necessary changes as a group depending on

the success of the first cycle. Such a strategy can only be possible and more suitable using qualitative research.

As suggested by Punch (2009) as a user of qualitative studies, I had opportunities to determine the causes of an event because qualitative researchers are more concerned about human beings and what surrounds them. I was able to take into consideration the moods of the boys and to back off when they were upset. I was able to determine the causes of certain events such as giving an explanation for cancellation of a review meeting. By doing so, I was able to treat participants as human beings and not objects. In addition to this, with the qualitative approach, I was able to provide descriptions of people's personal experiences of phenomena (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As an insider, I had credible knowledge about my participants and their background information, particularly teachers and the boys. I used this to phrase my questions to their level and avoid sensitive topics.

Qualitative studies aim to describe and explain a pattern of relationships (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). This includes describing a phenomenon in great detail, emphasising a holistic description of the phenomenon as opposed to testing hypotheses about relationships (Heck, 2004). Feelings, impressions and judgements are all part of data collection (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). Through such an approach, I was able to describe feelings and emotions that I observed amongst participants. This helped me to understand why some participants behaved as they did. I had opportunities to investigate and explain the absence of fathers from the meetings. My interaction with their sons gave me an insight into different cultures and the changes taking place in family formations that schools need to cater for.

Qualitative design favours a flexible approach such that the inquiry can evolve as contextual situations change (Heck, 2004). This again was in line with the research strategies I used in this study (case study and action research). This flexibility and ability to make changes as the study progressed fitted in well with the cycles in the participatory action research where I was required to plan, implement, reflect, make some changes and re-implement the plan again. I was able to make changes as the study progressed through continuous consultations and discussions with participants in meetings. The use of participatory action research is further discussed in chapter four.

Heck (2004) observed that it is common for qualitative researchers to begin organising and analysing data while they are being collected. This process helps

patterns and interrelationships to be formed, checked and refined through further data collection. Through each cycle where I met participants, we were able to identify main issues (themes) and establish patterns and interrelationships. For example all fathers identified lack of flexibility in organising meetings by the school and that led to a pattern where most working fathers were not able to attend meeting between 9am and 3pm. I was able to analyse such situations and explain reasons behind the fathers' absence. Whenever there was a misunderstanding, I revisited the area in the next cycle and clarified issues. Every day I wrote memoirs and notes of what i was observing and through this, I could see the emerging patterns.

Findings in qualitative research are often presented as verbal descriptions not numbers (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). Findings from this study were presented in narrative form hence the choice of this approach. There was very little use of statistical data. My aim was to explore views of participants and their feelings towards engaging more fathers in the education of their sons in the school. These views and feelings could not be explained by numbers or statistics. Although this may raise issues of bias and misinterpretation as is typical of qualitative research (Heck, 2004), the use of triangulation helped to produce valid conclusions.

Burgess *et al.* (2007) also added that qualitative approaches help elucidate and explain complexities. Through interviews and observations, I was able to explain the barriers affecting father engagement in the school and other issues raised. For example, I witnessed anger, frustration and denial by boys in their review meetings and I was able to discuss their concerns. This made me understand more why fathers were important in their sons' education. As noted by Gray (2004), qualitative methods have the capacity to intimately connect context with explanation thus ensuring that research produces well-founded cross-contextual generalities rather than de-contextualised studies. The semi-structured interviews gave me the opportunity to ask further questions and I was able to connect context with explanation through a combination of my data collection methods.

Qualitative research can demonstrate a variety of perspectives on the objects of study and includes subjective and social meanings (Punch, 2009). Seeking the views of various participants (boys, teachers, fathers and other professionals) gave me the opportunity to gain various views on father engagement, producing rich data. Gray (2004) highlights the need to recognise the views of different participants to build greater understanding of the field. To understand the plight of fathers in engaging in the education of their sons, the qualitative methods allowed me to seek the views of

other people (other professionals) who had an effect on their engagement. Thus, employing a holistic approach and not explaining the phenomena in isolation.

Heck (2004), further argues that many substantive issues in education are rarely addressed and that many of the most important questions in education can only be asked through qualitative methods. I could not have understood the complexities and legalities of engaging fathers using quantitative methods. Through the qualitative methods, I was able to explain and describe situations. Rather than deny our way of seeing and being in the world, qualitative approach enabled me to acknowledge and even celebrate it (Tracy, 2013).

Mason (2004) stated that qualitative research has an unrivalled capacity to illuminate how things work in particular contexts. Such an approach is gaining increased usage and importance in the social sciences including in education studies (Silverman, 2011). This is because human behavior is complex and cannot be seen from a single point of view (Punch, 2009). There have to be explanations for the cause of certain behaviour and qualitative methods such as observations and document analysis used in this study provided reasons and explanations to specific behaviours (Tracy, 2013). My choice of such an approach was influenced by the interpretative view that seeks to listen to and understand the voice of the participant (Punch, 2009). The next section explores this view.

3.2 THE INTERPRETATIVE VIEW AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THIS STUDY

Research philosophies differ in terms of the extent to which the researcher is involved, and the degree to which values and human consciousness are incorporated, bracketed and reduced (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). It is very important to identify the research philosophy underpinning any research study because it enables the researcher to clarify and specify the research methods and strategies to be used in the study (Robson, 2002). There are two main contrasting research philosophies namely the positivist view and interpretivist view (Silverman, 2011). Whilst, there is a lot of credibility in the claims made by the positivists, the research philosophy underpinning this study is interpretive which reiterates my position as an insider and active participant.

Interpretivism is an epistemological position that advocates the importance of understanding the differences between humans in their role as actors (Bryman, 2004). This approach to study is a rejection of the use of scientific methods in the study of social sciences (Walsh, 2001). Interpretivists like me believe that the nature

of human social life is so complex that it cannot be understood through the use of scientific methods (Robson, 2002), hence my choice of the qualitative research methodology discussed previously. For example I asked the same question to ten fathers in my case study and some of the times I got ten different answers to the same question. All the ten different answers were analysed individually. As an interpretivist I was interested in the fathers' thinking, reactions, influence and manipulations of the study and I took all the ten answers into consideration.

In interpretive research, the researcher's attitude, perception, prior knowledge, and values are an essential part of the research and have an impact on the study (Denscombe, 2003). Tracy (2013) pointed out that we all have a history and a 'baggage' that we bring to our studies. My personal experiences with my own father coupled with my position as a teacher and researcher in the school had an impact on the study. I played four roles (father, son, teacher and researcher) in the study which to some extent influenced the progress and findings of the study. It cannot be denied that I had prior knowledge of the teachers, fathers and boys who participated in this study and this prior knowledge presented both challenges and opportunities in different ways as shall be explored later.

Interpretivism argues that the world of humans has symbols, rules, norms and values that shape language and behaviour (Seale, 1998). In order to make sense of the social world, the researcher needs to understand the meanings that form and are formed by interactive social behaviour. Human action is given meaning by interpretive frameworks (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). This view fits in well with the way I interacted with participants, particularly the fathers and teachers in the school. This philosophy allowed me to observe the boys' and fathers' interaction and I was able to derive meaning from this interaction. Through this approach I was able to interact with all participants, having a rare opportunity to discuss issues affecting fathers in the school and trying to find a solution to engaging more fathers.

It is argued that the interpretivist perspective is suitable for social research because the researcher adopts an empathetic stance and enters the social world of research to understand the subjects from their view point (Robson, 2002). I employed a participatory action research approach which allowed me to identify with all participants as a father, son and teacher (this shall be explained later). Although there were trustworthy issues raised regarding adopting an empathetic stance (Punch, 2009), I was able to gain the participants trust and got accepted as one of them which allowed me to gather data freely and efficiently. Such an approach

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allowed me to understand the patterns of engagement adopted by fathers in the education of their sons.

Interpretivism respects the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and objects and the requirement to understand the meaning of social action (Bryman, 2004). I share the view that participants are not objects, they should be involved in the study and feel empowered to make a contribution. In this study, the participatory action research gave me an opportunity to use a democratic approach in which all participants had an opportunity to suggest better ways of engaging more fathers in the school. I was researching 'with them not about them' (Rose, 2002).

The interpretive research process begins with understanding the context of emerging themes not from theory and hypothesis as in the positivist framework (Burgess *et al.*, 2007). Through the use of grounded theory in data analysis all themes emerged from the collected data. Through a participatory action research approach, I was able to have more interaction with participants as co-researchers. This interaction through a cycle of stakeholders' meetings generated more understanding of the context of emerging themes. Chapter four of this study describes in detail how the participatory action research effectively enhanced my relationship with participants in the research process. The data analysis chapter (chapter 5) also demonstrates how the grounded theory was used to identify the main themes and develop a model for engaging more fathers in the school.

3.2.1   Challenges I faced in using the interpretive approach

The interpretive framework is critiqued for its general lack of structure and undefined research methodologies which tend to produce highly subjective studies (Robson, 2002). As shall be demonstrated later on in the study, there is structure and well defined research methodologies in the interpretive framework. Although the question of subjectivity (partisanship) cannot be denied, it should always be remembered that every researcher comes from a certain position despite the type of philosophy they choose (Punch, 2009). If this was a study of objects that have no language, feelings, norms and values, I could have adopted the positivist approach. The interpretivist perspective is suitable to this study as I had to take into consideration human culture, language and non-verbal communication. I observed teachers, boys and fathers interacting, developing patterns, creating debate and raising more questions for further investigation. I analysed these interactions as well as took meaning from them.

Although there are doubts in interpretive research over the possible use of data from misinterpreted actions and situations (Robson, 2002), the use of triangulation helped me to make sure that all data collected were valid. Whenever I doubted my understanding of a situation I was able to go back and clarify with the participants as I worked at the site and met most of them every day. As much as I appreciate the strengths of the positivists' views, the nature of my study required that I adopted the interpretivists' view. This view is based on a broad method of reasoning called induction which I shall discuss in the next section.

3.3 INDUCTIVE REASONING

There are two fundamental ways of engaging in the research process. These are deductive and inductive reasoning. The two approaches are also referred to as 'broad methods of reasoning' (Silverman, 2011). This study is based on the inductive approach which advocates moving from specific observations to broader generalisations and theories (Bryman, 2004). For example, this study looked at specific issues such as barriers to engaging fathers and the boys' lack of achievement before making any generalisations. These issues developed into patterns that resulted into themes. It follows a "bottom up" approach and there is a degree of uncertainty, normally referred to as tentative hypothesis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This approach fits in well with the interpretive view discussed above that accommodates different views from participants and has space for more than one outcome. While deduction begins with the general and ends with the specific, the inductive approach moves from specific data to more analytical generalisations (Huberman, *op cit*).

The inductive reasoning is more associated with qualitative research and it begins with specific issues such as observations of individual cases (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Based on the accumulation of such observations, the researcher builds a general idea. With an inductive stance, theory is the outcome of research (Bryman, 2004). This is further illustrated through the use of grounded theory in chapter 5.

Gray (2004) further observed that research in education, the pre-theory paradigm is like a jigsaw with missing pieces and there is a need to find the pieces before analysing how they connect together. As a researcher, I was more concerned with the patterns of engagement adopted by fathers in an effort to engage in the education of their sons. The study gathered evidence on the fathers' concerns in the education of their sons, the teachers' experiences in engaging fathers, the school's

policies on father engagement and the boys' views on engaging fathers in their education. I used this evidence to come up with new ideas and a model on engaging more fathers in the school using the bottom-up approach as seen in Fig 1.

Figure 1: The Bottom-up Approach
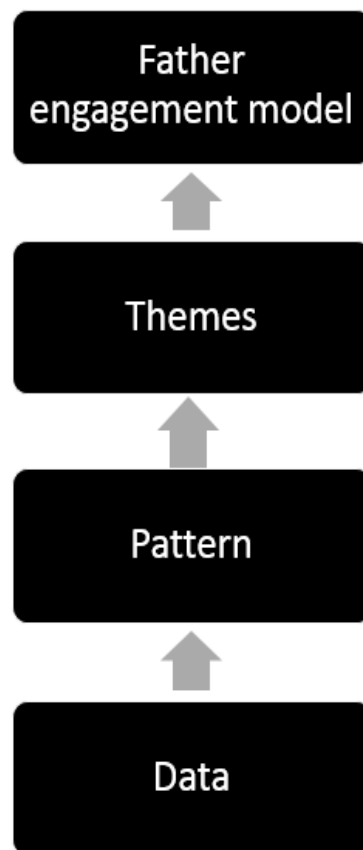
I adopted this approach in the data analysis process (Chapter 5) where I collected data and grouped it into different codes that formed a pattern. The patterns resulted into themes and theories. This way of developing themes comes from the grounded theory analysis developed by American sociologists Glaser and Strauss in 1967 to describe a new qualitative research method. Grounded theory discovers the concepts grounded in the data and uses those concepts to build theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) insisted that preconceived ideas should not be forced on the data by looking for evidence to support established ideas. I explained this further in chapter 5.

3.3.1 My own experiences of using the bottom-up approach

In my own experience of generating data using the bottom-up approach, I found it almost impossible not to refer to my own personal and professional experience

during the study. What I decided as a code or a theme emerged from data but it was supported by what I had experienced as both a teacher and a father (Living Theory). In addition to that, a review of the relevant literature established current thinking in the areas of working with fathers and parental engagement in general. Dey (1993) referred to this (personal experiences) as accumulated knowledge whilst Strauss and Corbin (1998) saw the use of literature as a basis for professional knowledge. Whitehead (2008) see all this as 'personal knowledge or embodied knowledge' which is defined as previous knowledge gathered in the process of learning and life experiences that is used by researchers to validate data and generate new knowledge. This approach fits in well with qualitative studies as I mentioned in section 3.2. and 3.2.1. However the building up of concepts and categories through axial coding had nothing to do with my preconceptions. By comparing each concept in turn with all other concepts, further commonalities were found which formed broader categories (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that grounded theory (which is further discussed in chapter 5) should provide understanding, generality and it should state the conditions under which the theory applies, describing a reasonable basis for action. The aim was to develop a father engagement model that emerges from data and is connected to the very reality that the model is developed to explain.

In the next section I shall discuss the challenges I encountered in using the qualitative methodology which was driven by both the interpretivist view and inductive reasoning. I shall also explain how I overcame these challenges.

3.4 CHALLENGES I FACED IN MY PREFERRED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Using the qualitative approach in research is not without its own problems. Robson (2002) warned that the downside of qualitative research is that invariably, only small numbers of subjects can be studied because data collection methods are so labour intensive. Although the use of interviews, meeting minutes, document analysis and observations took a lot of time in reading, coding, organising and cross-checking, this was a study of one school only and as a case study, it was meant to be in-depth (Yin, 1994).

Denscombe (2003) warned that in qualitative data analysis, words can be taken out of context. This was a real danger in my study as the boys used language differently. For example to them, words such as 'sick' and 'wicked' meant 'good'. Every time they used these words I would ask what they meant by this. Also, as I speak English as a

second language, there was a danger of misunderstanding some of the issues due to differences in culture and accents. I was very careful with this and I sought clarification from my colleagues and participants on words that I did not understand. I took advantage of the nature of participatory action research which afforded me the opportunity to go back to my participants to seek clarification on areas I identified as unclear. Interviews were recorded and played back to participants to ensure that they were not misquoted or misunderstood.

Heck (2004) also pointed out that in qualitative data there is a lack of reproducibility and generalisability of the findings (i.e. findings may not be applicable to other subjects or settings). It should always be remembered that this study sought to produce new knowledge to improve practice within the school and not to generalise the findings. Any other school in a similar situation can adopt the findings or even further develop them to improve their practice. As noted by Foreman-Peck and Murray, (2008) participatory action research aims to change or improve a situation, for example improving the engagement of the fathers in the education of their sons.

As mentioned before, there may be more than one outcome from the same study when using the qualitative methodology (Tracy, 2013). Such ambiguities can be frustrating but it should always be remembered that social phenomena are complex and the analysis of qualitative data needs to acknowledge this and avoid attempts to oversimplify matters (Denscombe, 2003). For example, there are several complex reasons why some fathers do not engage with schools and these complexities can only be explained through qualitative methodology and not through facts and figures. The possibility of having more than one outcome adds to more debate and more research.

Burgess *et al.* (2007) reiterated that the qualitative approach has also often been criticised for being subject to researcher bias. This is because the researcher has to make judgements based on observations and on the body language exhibited by the participants. Unlike the quantitative approach where the researcher does not consider the emotions and other signals given by participants, the qualitative approach sees all this as important (Silverman, 2011). I saw value in non-verbal communication such as the nodding of the head, frowning of the face or some other body language. Although there was a danger of misunderstanding such actions, the use of triangulation by data and method, helped to confirm or dismiss some of the findings. The behaviour displayed by boys in the school and their non-verbal communication with teachers and fathers was observed and recorded. No

conclusions were made without validation through triangulation. However, my biggest challenge related to bias was dealing with the issue of partisanship which I shall explain next.

3.4.1 Partisanship and my position

There was a danger that as a researcher, I could align myself with some particular group in the research so as to serve that group's interest or become a spokesman for the school (Hammersley, 2000). The pitfalls of partisanship are that the study can be rendered invalid, subjective or weak yet Lumsden (2013) maintains that value neutrality is a myth and an unattainable goal in qualitative research. As an employee at the study site, I had personal interests in the development of the school. Apart from that, upon my employment, I had signed a confidentiality form pledging that my behaviour would not put the name of the school into disrepute. This meant that even though I had adopted the position of the researcher, I was still bound by that pledge not to put the school's name into disrepute. This limited my study to certain issues only.

As a fellow father, it was almost impossible to be without bias and preconceptions about fathers (Rosenberg, and Wilcox, 2006). In their research on fathers and sons, Clough and Garner (2008) also admitted that both of them were far too close to living as fathers and sons to claim neutrality. I was in the same position as well and my participants helped with checking my neutrality on the phenomena. However, there were times I became emotional with the way some fathers were treated in the school or spoken to by their sons hence issues of partisanship came into play. I took a decision to remain committed to my values as a researcher and did not interfere with any group in any way that influenced the results of the study. The democratic nature of the study meant that I was liable to reporting the findings to the participants who had the power to reject them.

Although all researchers are influenced by their past experiences (Punch, 2009), it is argued that research should be free from the influence of all values (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). In an ideal world, all researchers want to be non-partisan but Lumsden (2013) claims that 'you are what you research' and it is not possible to be non-partisan. In my case, I approached my research from the perspective that all academic inquiry is part and parcel of the academic world it studies: that it does not operate outside that world in some pure realm of autonomy (Hammersley, 2000). The socially situated character of my research meant that my key objective was to facilitate participants to express themselves in their own terms. The predominantly qualitative nature of my

research implied that my inquiry could not but be partisan. However, my research belongs to a category of partisan research that retains a commitment to objectivity and to the possibility of knowledge that is valid from all points of view (Hammersley, *ibid*). The multiple methods I adopted ensured that there was diversity of perspectives. Although I started off with both factual and evaluative assumptions, my research was sufficiently based on existing knowledge. As a researcher, I had a responsibility to think about the role my research plays or might play in the ethical and political contexts and contests in which it is located. I ensured that my value commitments did not undermine the rigour and independence of my work. I therefore avoided any behaviour that could be seen to be aligned to any of my participants.

I was aware of the potential biases in my study but there are several strategies available to the qualitative researcher to protect against these biases and to enhance the rigour of the findings (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this case, the use of triangulation and multiple methods of collecting data helped me to validate findings and minimise biased views. Thus, I found opportunities presented by the qualitative methodology more effective for this study with more advantages than disadvantages.

3.5 SUMMARY

From the above discussions, I noted that qualitative methodology is an umbrella term that refers to the collection, analysis and interpretation of data in order to understand and describe issues such as those that affect fathers' patterns of engagement with their sons' school. This methodology allowed me to 'sit in the middle' of all the activities concerning data collection as an insider. The choice of this approach has been influenced by the setting of the study site and the type of participants involved. My aim was to describe how fathers engage in the education of their sons which I hoped would increase the understanding of how fathers operate in the school. Interpretive philosophy gave me the opportunity to provide for participants' voice as core-researchers. This fitted in well with the inductive reasoning behind the study. With such an approach, I was able to examine fathers and their sons in real life situations rather than asking them to comment upon it. The feelings, history, culture, my personal experiences and views of the participants were central to the study. Even my own personal views played a part in both collecting and analysing data. It was a sensitive subject as some boys did not have a good relationship with their fathers and the qualitative methods allowed for an expression of such feelings. Although there were challenges with this approach, it was more suitable to what I wanted to achieve, compared to the quantitative or mixed methodology approach. In

the next chapter I shall discuss the case study participatory action research approach and data collection methods that I used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA COLLECTION: METHODS AND RESEARCH STRATEGIES USED.

4.   INTRODUCTION

This is a continuation of the previous chapter and it delineates my position as an active participant and demonstrates that it is possible for my values, feelings, culture and history to shape and define the research (Thomson and Walker, 2010). This is demonstrated through the use of the case study and participatory action research (PAR) as the two main strategies of data collection in this study. In addition to that, I explained how the PAR strategy was applied including a detailed outline of each cycle. Because I combined two strategies, I therefore refer to my research as a participatory action research case study. It is important to note that in this chapter I begin to use 'we' more instead of 'I' because of the inclusion of the participants in the research process. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, I conducted the study together with participants as core-researchers. I referred to them as core-researchers because they helped in both gathering and analysing data. The chapter also explores the data collection methods used in this study; Interviews, observations and secondary data sources such as the study of school policies and achievement reports (document analysis). Further discussion also focussed upon other sources of information such as the minutes of that I held with participants. A section on the pilot study explaining its importance and how it improved the data collection process is part of this chapter. There is also another section on how the researcher built a rapport with fathers during the pilot process after it was discovered that some fathers were sceptical about taking part in the study. The process of how participants were chosen (sampling) also forms part of this chapter with two types of sampling being used (convenience and purposive sampling). A section addressing the ethical concerns raised in this study completes the chapter.

Three of the four main issues described as characteristics of this study continue to be highlighted in this chapter (position of the researcher, the involvement of participants as core-researchers and my own past experiences). My position in the study is further explored with an analysis of my role in the participatory action research as a father, son, researcher and teacher explicitly detailed. This is also supported by my own past and present experiences that influenced the study. The inclusion of participants also came across as one of the main characteristics of both this study and the participatory action research as a strategy. The next section describes how I employed the case study strategy.

4.1 THE CASE STUDY STRATEGY

Burton and Bartlett (2005) defined a case study as an in-depth study of just one person, group or event. Although Burgess *et al.* (2007) see a case study as an approach, Burton and Bartlett (*op cit*) argue that the case study approach is not a methodology as such but a research strategy where the researcher aims to study one case in depth. On the other hand, Zainal (2007) sees a case study as a research method that enables the researcher to closely examine data within a specific context. Yin (1984) maintains that a case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. It is a strategy used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic (Yin, 2009). It follows the interpretive tradition of research (Cohen *et al.,* 2011).

In this study, I used a case study as a research strategy to collect data on a single school for three years in order to explain the unique contribution that fathers make in the education of their sons. This case study strategy is particularly useful for trying to test theoretical models by using them in real world situations (Yin, 2009). Such an approach has been especially used in social science, psychology, anthropology and ecology (Burton and Bartlett, *op cit)*. The research object in a case study is often a programme, an entity, a person, or a group of people (Burgess *et al.*, 2007). Such a study of individual cases has always been the major strategy in the advancement of knowledge about human beings (Robson, 2002). It allows for flexible methods of data collection and an in-depth analysis of human behaviour over a long period of time. Through such a strategy, I was able to capture unique features that may be missed in larger scale data (Cohen *et al.*, 2011)

It has been observed that case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research (Yin, 2009; Robson, *op cit*). It is well known that fathers are important in the education of their sons (Kenyatta, 1965; Biddulph, 2008; Clough and Garner, 2008) but I wanted to raise an awareness of their importance in the school. Understanding relations between fathers and their sons and changing attitudes among school staff required an in-depth study which could only be done through a case study. I therefore found the case study relevant to my study because such a strategy emphasises detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Bryman, 2001). Through a case study strategy, I was able to choose one school

and study it over a long time, gathering and testing data to come up with a suitable model to engage more fathers.

Social scientists have made wide use of case studies as a qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods (Burgess *et al.*, 2007). I was able to study unique examples of people in real situations. For example, a group of teachers engaging fathers in the education of their sons. This helped to offer insights into situations not easily accessible. Throughout the study, I had access to fathers and sons interacting in review meetings and other gatherings organised by the school. I was also able to observe boys in real situations at break times and during lesson times, typically driven by inductive reasoning and interpretative thinking as mentioned in chapter three.

It is recommended that the first step in case study research should consist of a firm research focus to which the researcher can refer to over the course of study of a complex phenomenon (Robson, 2002). Our research focus was to improve a situation; engaging more fathers in education of their sons in the school. I kept all participants focused on raising awareness of the importance of fathers in education in the school. We were focussed on how the school can improve the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons. This focus kept us on track to establishing a model for engaging fathers in the school. It helped all of us to understand the patterns of engagement that fathers adopt to get involved in the education of their sons.

In case studies, tools to collect data can include surveys, interviews, documentation reviews, observations, and even the collection of physical artefacts (Robson, 2002). Instead of collecting physical artefacts, I analysed school documents and the boys' reports. I also used interviews and observations as the main data collection instruments. (This shall be discussed further in the chapter 5). Such a way of working is consistent with the inductive and developmental nature of the study, in which my role as an 'insider' undoubtedly presented additional data-collection opportunities (Walsh, 2001). The use of the case study allowed me to observe events in the school, collect and analyse data and report the results over a long period of time. The next section further justifies my choice of the case study strategy.

4.1.1 Rationale for using the case strategy

Apart from providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, a case study provides better understanding into the detailed behaviours of the topics of interest (Robson, 2002). Through focusing on a group of fathers for three years, I was able to have deeper understanding of the issues affecting them such as patronisation and marginalisation. I spent time with them at the school and attended some of the most sensitive meetings where fathers were emotional about the education of their sons. I gathered sensitive details about some of the fathers and their sons and understood reasons why they behaved as they did.

This case study has the potential to develop a culture of research amongst my fellow teachers in the school (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). There is still a lot more to learn about the engagement of fathers in schools and this study can be developed further since there is very little literature on fathers and sons in education. Apart from improving the engagement of fathers in one school, I hope that if this study is successful, other schools will emulate our model. There is also a possibility of producing sufficient similarities to make the findings from one study useful when seeking to understand others (Burton and Bartlett, *ibid*). As noted by Elliott (2005), the most important thing in case studies is the relevance of the findings to professional practice and how applicable they are to others in similar situations.

Despite the popular misconception that case studies are limited to qualitative analysis they can use both qualitative and quantitative information (Gray, 2004). Although I used purely qualitative information, I was able to use a multi-methods approach to data collection. This allowed me to benefit from the advantages of each method that I used while trying to minimise the impact of their weaknesses (Walsh, 2001). At the simplest level, the case study gave me the opportunity to make descriptive accounts of certain episodes in the study. For example, I was able to give a brief narration of my own relationship with my father. Although such an approach can be seen as non-academic, I was able to apply an intellectually rigorous approach to achieve experimental isolation of one selected social factor within a real-life context (Robson, 2002).

Burgess *et al.* (2007) pointed out that it is valid to conduct case studies but they should be tied in with more general statistical processes. For example, a statistical survey might show how much time fathers spend talking to their sons or doing homework with them, but it is case studies of a narrow group that will determine why this is so. I was able to count the number of times the fathers were being contacted

and the number of activities they did with their sons. Such an approach together with unstructured interviews that brought out the participants' views on certain issues resulted in a rich vein of data.

One of the main reasons I used the case study strategy is that case studies are based on opinion and are very much designed to provoke reasoned debate (Bryman, 2004). I spent hours debating with my core-researchers on various issues concerning the engagement of fathers in the school. Even when I presented my study at conferences, there was always an issue raised about the opinions I expressed. As is typical of qualitative research, there really is no right or wrong answer in a case study (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). Such opportunities for debate help to develop new thinking and more research. For example, there are other researchers (Drexler, 2005) who do not agree that fathers are important in the education of their sons. The uncertainty in findings and the narrative nature of the study will continue to provoke further discussion which may result in further research. It was and still is my personal view that strong studies should provoke debate, discussion and where possible open up further opportunities for further research.

Robson (2002) also pointed out that the other main thing to remember during case studies is their flexibility. A case study might introduce new and unexpected results during its course, and lead to research taking new directions. This fits in very well with the cyclical nature of the participatory action research that drove this study. With such an approach, new knowledge was accommodated to develop the next cycle. Using both strategies in this study allowed me to make changes when necessary. For example, we had planned to do 'manly activities' such as football and snooker for fathers and sons but we discovered that some participants preferred what we had called 'female oriented activities' like baking and cooking. We ended up allowing each father and son to do what they wanted instead of prescribing them activities.

It is reported that when the researcher informs others of their results, case studies make more interesting topics than purely statistical surveys, something that has been realised by teachers and magazine editors for many years (Burgess *et al.*, 2007). It is also generally assumed that readers are more interested in descriptions and explanations of the situations they can relate to (Travers, 2001). In this case, other fathers will be interested in real problems that their peers are having and how they are tackling them. Such a qualitative case study that tells real stories can provide answers to certain questions that some fathers may have. Both the style of writing

adopted in this study and the stories I narrated are aimed at attracting a wider readership that includes the non-academic public.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) noted that a researcher can use an important case to demonstrate phenomena vividly to the readers of a report. This is reflected in the impact of some of the single cases that are not research at all but the subject of investigative journalism or judicial inquiries. For example the high profile 'Baby P' case (Macleod, Hart, Jeffes, and Wilkin, 2010) and the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 are two cases that provoked debate and changed policy and thinking in this country. Although these were not cases of research, they are good examples of the power and impact of a single case. As argued by Gillham (2000), a single case of a death of a vulnerable child may lead to major changes in legislation or the organisation of care systems. I am hoping that this school will have similar impact.

Case studies allow the researcher to examine data within the situation in which the activity takes place (Zainal, 2007). I did not need to go to other schools or travel to gather data. I witnessed the situation unfolding and recorded it as it happened. Focusing on one case (school) for such a long time allowed for an in-depth study of the way fathers interacted with their sons in and outside the school. As typical of case studies, the school presented data from real life situations. Such an approach improved the trustworthiness of the study. As a researcher using case studies not only did I have primary and secondary documentation as resources, but I also had direct observation and systematic interviewing on site (Robson, 2002). Such flexibility enriched both my study and my profession as a teacher. I was able to compare facts through the use of both documents and observations. Such use of documents provided another angle of looking at data as I investigated authors of the documents. For example I questioned who they wrote the documents for and for what purposes. This multiple use of data collection methods is best understood as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth and depth to the overall research design (Burgess *et al.,* 2007).

4.1.2   Challenges presented by using a case study in this study

I faced my own challenges as a result of using the case study. Questions were raised about reliability, representativeness and generalisation when using case studies. Again, as I said before, this study is aimed at improving practice and changing the way of thinking towards father engagement in our school. At the end of each cycle, participants are expected to gain new knowledge and improve practice. As noted by Tracy (2013) no research study is ever perfect or covers everything. Although there are many advantages in the use of case studies, like any other strategy, there are

challenges and limitations. If this case study was meant to have its findings generalised, this could have been a major flaw but the ultimate goal was to improve practice in my school. This study served its purpose; it was aimed at improving the engagement of fathers, raising awareness of the importance of fathers in the education of their sons and helping the school to develop policy on parent partnership. All the three objectives were met. A model for engaging fathers that might be appropriate for other similar settings was also developed.

Case study methods are not as well formulated as those related to other research strategies, especially the more quantitatively-founded ones like experimentation, for a perceived lack of rigour in method and execution (Thomas, 2009). Yin (1981) admits to some extent that there are shortcomings in the methodology of case study research, but contends that these shortcomings are not innate, and represent opportunities for development within the research strategy, or even more importantly, recognition of methodological constructs which are already known.

Case studies generated through participatory action research can provide the basis on which accounts of educational practice are constructed for discussion with others (Elliott, 2001). Since this study was completed, there has been a lot of interest in working with fathers in neighbouring schools and other related settings. Apart from that, researchers continue to use the case study research method with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations (Travers, 2001). The opportunities to use multi-methods approach to collecting data and embark on an in-depth study of the situation drew me to choosing the case study. Its flexible nature was suited to the participatory action research I adopted. The next section discusses the nature of the participatory action research and its relevance to the study

4.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory action research (PAR) is one of the two research strategies I chose as mentioned previously. It is also known as practitioner inquiry or practitioner research (Robson, 2002) and is characterised by the active participation of researchers and participants in the construction of knowledge (McIntyre, 2008). It involves coming up with a general idea on what needs to be changed in an organisation or institution (Elliot, 2001). As I mentioned in chapter one, according to Whitehead (2008), PAR is a big part of the Living Theory methodology. It reinforced my active engagement with participants and the influence of my values on learning. PAR is also known for enabling the construction of alliances between researchers and participants in the

planning, implementation and dissemination of research process (Silverman, 2011). My decision was also inspired by Stenhouse (1975) and Rose (2002) who saw teachers' work and teachers themselves as a basis for research. Robson (2002) also acknowledged a practitioner researcher as someone who holds down a job in some particular area and is at the same time involved in carrying out systematic enquiry which is of relevance to the job. This description suited both my professional and personal circumstances as I conducted this study on a school I worked for. As a practitioner, I saw it as important to research on my own practice and make efforts to improve it and those around me. Throughout this study, I shall be referring to participant action research simply as action research.

Action researchers are often interested in reflective practice, professional development and institutional change through democratic processes (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). It relies on the participation of stakeholders (participants) and it is a social and educational process that is part of the development of a professional community (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). By involving other professionals and teachers in the school, I was hoping that this study would help them reflect on their own attitudes towards fathers in the school and make an improvement. Findings of action research carry practical implications which can be applied and the effects of this will always be beneficial to both participants and researchers (Hammersly, 2002).

Action research is generally understood as research 'with' rather than 'on' participants (Rose 2002). I viewed such an approach as empowering to participants, making them feel part of the study. I found that by being part of the study, participants contributed more and did not feel like objects of study. Such a strategy has become increasingly popular in qualitative research because these methods are not just a convenient way to gather useful information, but they also introduce perspectives of participants into the fabric of inquiry (Whyte, 1989; Rose 2002). This view fits in well with the inductive reasoning and interpretive approach adopted for this study as the researcher explored feelings and opinions of the participants. Johnson (2006) successfully researched on her own students and colleagues in a school using a similar approach. The participants were familiar with her; they trusted her and were open and relaxed when talking to her. Parents had confidence in what she was doing with their children. They did not see her as an intruder (Johnson *ibid*). The same happened to me as I was trusted by the participants and they felt relaxed in my presence since we had known each other for a long time.

Atkinson, Regan and Williams (2006) took a similar study in a school with their colleagues and students. They reported that children took an active role in problem solving. It became an evolving study, providing both teachers and children with many learning opportunities. They also used each other as 'a sounding board for ideas.' I employed a similar strategy by working together with participants as members of a team, where we jointly identified a problem, assessed and diagnosed the empirical situation in which we sought to intervene with an action (which would simultaneously be a remedy or a problem solving measure and also a learning experience for both myself and the participants) (Pain and Francis 2003). We saw it as both a learning and teaching experience. The strategy provided opportunities for bouncing ideas off each other, debating and constructive criticism. We were all winners at the end of the study as we were working towards the same goal, to improve the engagement of fathers in the school.

Action Research starts with a problem arising out of professional concerns (Elliott, 2001). My professional concern was that, there were very few fathers engaging in the education of their sons in the school. Although there is research evidence to prove that fathers are important in the education of their sons (Goldman, 2005; Biddulph, 2008; Clough and Garner, 2008), the school seemed not to be doing enough to recognise this. The aim was to produce practical solutions and new knowledge as part of an integrated set of activities (Burgess *et al.*, 2007). I was not sure whether it was the school's fault, or it was the fathers who were unwilling to engage. I wanted to investigate if there were other factors causing this problem.

4.2.1   The relevance of PAR to this study

The PAR strategy accorded me an opportunity to involve participants as equal stakeholders while leaving room for rethinking and adjustment to meet new and emerging challenges (Zeni, 1998). Although I led the discussions and planned the agenda for the meetings, there was space for any other business where participants would raise any other issues they had. Ideas from all participants were accommodated, scrutinised and deliberated upon. This was done in a democratic way through the active participation of all stakeholders (fathers, teacher, boys), with a view to finding a real practical solution to the problem at hand. Participants did not only find this approach empowering, but it was exciting for them too. They had an opportunity to be listened to and make a positive contribution to the school and probably change the history of the school forever.

What distinguishes action research from other types of research is the cyclical nature of its processes (Robson 2002). Data collected generated further issues and actions which in turn were revised and acted upon (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). We had a total of six meetings in which we set actions for ourselves, observed them and reflect on what went right or wrong. We then used this acquired new knowledge to plan further actions. We made sure that we made improvements in the second cycle and corrected the mistakes we made in the first cycle. This strategy belongs to a growing family of approaches, methods and behaviours to enable participants to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor and evaluate (Chambers, 1999; Pain and Francis, 2003). It strongly encourages the inclusion and engagement of participants in decision-making about pertinent social problems (Whyte 1989; Atkinson et al., 2006). This democratic research method simultaneously allowed participants to choose their own level of involvement whilst promoting information sharing and education (Stenhouse 1975; Johnson 2006). Through this method, research is emergent and reflects people's own priorities and interests, meaning that collective solutions emerge organically (Pain and Francis 2003). For the first time in the school, through PAR, fathers and their sons were given an opportunity to decide their own strategies of learning.

PAR allowed me to treat participants as experts in problem definition and solutions and this helped break power barriers between myself and the participants (Rose 2003). With this model, I was able to describe and analyse the behaviour of the participants as it occurred without the observer's presence (Whyte, 1989; Rose 2003). Issues of mistrust by other members of staff and having a 'mole stigma' attached to the researcher cannot be denied but avoided (Arnold, 1994). By adhering to the high ethical standards which are explained in the ethics section, I was able to gain the participants trust and through the signing of the ethics forms, they felt respected. The participatory action research method allowed them to be partners in the study. Fig 2 illustrates how the research was conducted.

4.2.2 How I planned the PAR process

Figure 2: PAR Process
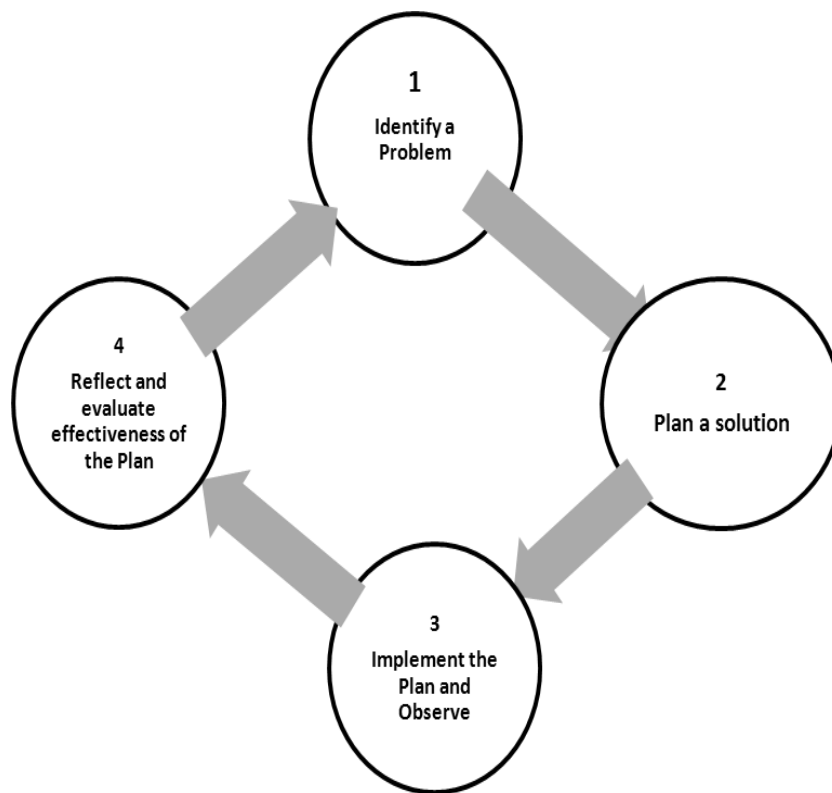
My general idea was that, for us to engage more fathers, we needed to change the way we worked with fathers in the school. I wanted the school to find ways of improving the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons. Again, the question 'how do I improve what I am doing (Whitehead, 2008) was key in this study.

In some cases the researcher may have misunderstood certain situations and wanted to change what should not be changed (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). I was therefore aware that I should not be over-ambitious and avoid issues I could not change (Robson, 2002). Involving all stakeholders (fathers, teachers and boys) cancelled out these misunderstandings. Thus, the planning stage involved 'reconnaissance' (Elliot 2001) that I conducted through asking myself some guiding questions as shown on Table 1. These questions guided me on what I wanted to achieve. I shared my thoughts with the participants and we came up with a plan on how to improve the engagement of fathers. The plan was conducted in two cycles as stated below.

Table 1: Guiding questions I used to plan PAR

Question	Answer
What is it that I want to change?	I want more fathers to be engaged in the education of their sons.
Which fathers are not engaged?	Non-resident, working, stepfathers.
What is being done already to engage these fathers?	Nothing
Why are these fathers not engaged?	Lack of awareness of their importance.
Who else can we engage in the absence of these fathers?	Other male role models in the boys' lives such as brothers or grandparents
How do I improve what I am doing? (Whitehead, 2008)	Involve all stakeholders

4.2.3 Participatory Action Research Process

Foreman-Peck and Murray, (2008) observed that most action researchers would acknowledge that the research is framed by a cycle of steps. The first cycle involved establishing relationships with all participants. The process of establishing these relationships involved interviews and meetings with all participants. The second cycle included the same activities except that I did not need to establish a relationship with the participants. Two meetings were held in each cycle, one to plan and implement ideas and another to reflect and evaluate the success of our ideas. This is summed up by Lacey (2010) who noted that in PAR, participants identify a problem, imagine a solution, devise a plan of action and evaluate how well the plan worked over and over again in cycles. The cyclical process is unlikely to stop when the research is written up (Somekh, 2006). Participants in this study agreed to meet up after the completion of the two cycles but this was not recorded as part of this study. The two cycles took six months to complete.

4.2.3.1 Activities that took place in the first cycle

The first cycle began by making introductions. I first met all participants to explain the aim of the study and its significance to the school. During this process, it was realised

that fathers would have a problem opening up and talking freely. I decided to hold a social event in which all ten identified fathers were invited to a barbeque event at a local pub. This was an informal meeting where I spoke to them about my life as a father, son and teacher. This made them aware that we had a lot in common as parents and in many ways we had the same problems. For example, due to work commitments, sometimes I fail to attend events at my sons' school. Some fathers had the same problems. On this event some fathers made friends and shared common ground. They were able to talk to each other informally over a drink. The event broke barriers of 'him (researcher) and us (fathers). This event was followed by a series of interviews.

The unstructured interviews were aimed at identifying ways of engaging more fathers in the school. The interviews sought the views of all participants. This helped to have a balanced view on all the important people who were going to work with the fathers. Fathers, boys, teachers and other professionals made suggestions and identified better ways of engaging fathers in the school. These interviews were followed by a series of meetings.

The meetings were arranged for each group of participants. Professionals did not participate in the meetings as they felt that they had already given their views in the interviews. It was decided that each group of participants should have their own meeting. That means there was one meeting for the boys, another for the fathers and one for the teachers. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, boys would not have opened up in the presence of the teachers, and secondly, it was revealed in the interviews that these three groups had different views that may cause a few arguments that could potentially jeopardise the success of the study. For example, some teachers were accusing fathers of not caring yet fathers had their own reasons for not engaging. Also fathers did not feel they were given the respect they deserved by the school.

The purpose of the meetings was to establish common ground amongst the three groups. I wanted them to have the same aim and work towards the same goal but in different groups. I reported all findings to the groups from the interviews. From these findings, all groups discovered they wanted to achieve the same goal. The following were identified as the common goals to work towards.

1. To involve more fathers in the activities run by the school.

2. To employ a parent-liaison officer.

3. For boys to gain qualifications and improve behaviour.

4. To improve communication between fathers and the school.

5. To design activities that are suitable for fathers and sons to do together.

Although there were a few differences particularly between the boys and their fathers, there was commonality in the five items above. The boys did not agree with the idea of the school informing fathers of their performance, absence or behaviour. Teachers agreed to what was common to everyone and the above plans were implemented immediately.

A period of three months was set aside to monitor the success of these plans. During these three months I carried on with my data analysis from the interviews whilst I conducted observations and document analysis. This is in line with the qualitative nature of the study where I have room to analyse data as the study progresses. This is further explained in the data analysis chapter.

4.2.3.2 Activities that took place in the second cycle

The second cycle began after three months of monitoring the first cycle. The first step on the cycle was to arrange meetings again with all thirty participants in their different groups (I did not include the five outside professionals because they had no time for regular meetings). The purpose of these meetings was to feedback on the findings of the first cycle, evaluate the success of the first cycle and suggest improvements. In these meetings, participants had the opportunity to identify mistakes made in the first cycle and make amendments. The following suggestions were made and implemented.

1. Other males who are not fathers but important in the lives of the boys in the school were identified and invited to take part in activities going on in the school. This was despite the presence of the fathers. These males could be related or unrelated to the boys but well known to their parents, for example, neighbours. These males were identified as 'father figures.'

2. The school was advised to ask volunteer fathers to help in campaigning for more fathers to attend.

3. Staff training on behaviour management and working with fathers was organised as fathers felt that teachers needed to improve on managing some of the boys' behaviours instead of reporting to them all the time.

4. Fathers and teachers agreed to attend the same meetings in the next cycle as they now shared common goals and understood each other better.

5. Fathers started parent classes led by themselves in which they shared ideas and teachers were invited to these classes.

6. The importance of involving the whole family was recognised but still emphasising the value of the father in the education of his son.

The six plans were implemented immediately together with the other continuing five from the first cycle. Again like in the first cycle, this cycle took another three months to monitor. Observations and document analysis continued during the three months of monitoring the second cycle. Two meetings were held at the end of the second cycle, one for the boys and another for the adults (teachers and fathers). The joint meeting for fathers and teachers went well and it was agreed that in the next cycle we would invite the boys. Although the boys were sceptical about the idea they agreed to try. It was also agreed that 'father figures' should help mend relations between some of the boys and their biological fathers. The campaign to recruit more fathers continued in the third cycle and it was also agreed that a consultant from the Fatherhood Institute would be invited to the school to help with advice and guidance. As they had agreed, participants were to continue with the cycles until they were all happy with what was in place. I decided to stop at the end of the second cycle and let the school carry on with the rest of the study.

As mentioned before, action research is conducted by a collaborative partnership of participants and researchers (Somekh, 2006; McIntyre, 2008). They share the same goal and want the same from the study. In this study, we all wanted to improve father engagement in the school. Elliot (2001) cautions that the researcher should not proceed to evaluate the effects of an action until one has monitored the extent to which it has been implemented. For example, when we implemented our ideas for action, we waited for three months, monitoring and assessing their effects. The plan was implemented to the satisfaction of all involved and to withstand the rigour of the criticism it may face in the future. As advised by Robson (2002), I negotiated with others on the proposed course of action. All participants were consulted and informed of any changes taking place as the study progressed. We debated and deliberated on the changes and settled on what fathers and their sons were most comfortable with. Such an approach had its own challenges. The next section explores the challenges I faced in using participatory action research.

4.3 CHALLENGES IN USING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN THIS STUDY

McIntyre (2008) suggests that the challenging elements in PAR be viewed not as impediments to the research process but as opportunities for constructing new knowledge. Though such a suggestion is not easy to follow, I saw all challenges as opportunities for debate and development. For example, the differences between teachers and fathers resulted in them joining together to attend one meeting. However, the major challenges came from my position as an insider and employee of the school on which I was conducting the research. In this section I shall therefore explain and describe my journey in this study as an action researcher, adopting different roles to fit in with my participants. I embarked on this study unaware of the influence I would have on the participants in my position as a researcher, father, son and teacher. However, it is important that I stress that my position in this study was that of a researcher even though I allowed the participants to see me differently. Appendix 25 (Who the researchers are.) shows that I introduced myself to all participants as a researcher.

The main challenge I had while working with fathers was to keep an emotional distance from what was happening in the study. As a son, I found myself constantly comparing what was happening to these sons and their fathers with the relationship I have/had with my father. I would constantly say to myself 'I wouldn't speak to my father like that even at this age.' This made me feel that I was being judgemental towards the situations I was observing. These positions I adopted affected the way I structured the reports of my findings. Sometimes I became emotional in my reports as I immersed myself in the study. This resulted in my adoption of some of Clough's (2002) narrative styles where he adopted different characters to bring out a story.

As an observer, interviewer and researcher, I was able to manoeuvre myself into positions that made it easier to gather data at different times and with different participants. For example, in my meetings with fathers, it was easy for them to identify with me as another father. This was the same for teachers. Although Punch (2009) warned that as an insider, I may have a vested interest in the results, my teaching colleagues and other participants helped to keep the study objective by 'acting as a cross-check for possible subjectivity' (Robson, 2002). All stakeholders involved in the research played a part in the direction it took and had an interest in the findings as they affected their lives in school. It was therefore only fair to be objective and avoid being partisan. Although I was an insider, I kept a professional distance and stuck to the University's ethical demands to ensure the overall

trustworthiness, dependability and objectivity of the study. I was able to create a balance and navigate the emotional and ethical challenges. It was important to maintain a balanced psychological and physical distance from the research topic and setting whilst being an insider.

Elliot (2001) pointed out dilemmas for insider researchers that can arise from a clash of professional values between those which underpin the traditional craft culture and those which underpin an emergent culture of reflective practice. Effecting change from within was not an easy task particularly as I was just an ordinary teacher in the school. There was a bit of resistance from other members of staff who believed in the status quo. There was a lot of debate surrounding sexism (why fathers and not mothers) and the need to spend time on something that may not even work. Some staff felt that if fathers really wanted to engage and were interested in their sons' education, they would make an effort to enquire.

Hammersly (2002) also pointed out that sometimes it is difficult to carry out action research because teachers do not find research useful. This is not always the case as most of the approaches we use in teaching are based on research. I therefore decided to actively involve teachers in my research and see how seriously they would take it. It was also a learning curve for them. It has been observed that if teachers are part of the research and if in a way they own it, they will find it useful and they will use it (Stenhouse, 1975). They will find it of no use if they do not understand its relevance which was not the case in this study.

Elliot (2001) noted that teachers may not find time to undertake the research as they are usually more preoccupied with achieving their targets and moving the school up the league table. The question has always been 'what is in it for them?' Unless they understood the benefits of the research, they were not going to spare their time to participate just for me to achieve my PhD. I explained the aim and purpose of the study to all participants especially to the school authorities before it commenced (see appendix 25 under 'Aim and Purpose'). Everyone involved understood what we wanted to do and supported the idea.

Another challenge in using PAR was the use of a cyclical diagram shown earlier on in this section (Fig 2) which may imply that the process was rigid (Elliot, 2001). The diagram seemed to indicate that there was no other way of doing it except following the illustrations on it (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). However, we made sure that the diagram was only used as a guideline. We used the diagram only as a starting point

and for planning purposes. We were not controlled by it. We made changes when we felt it was necessary. For example, we combined the observation and reflection stages. As we observed/monitored, we were reflecting and assessing the impact the changes were making.

McIntyre (2008) encouraged researchers using PAR to address participants' multiple perspectives in their representations of research projects. There is a danger in the process of doing this because involving participants in the decision making process can lead to researchers losing control of their study. (Robson 2002). I was well aware that some of the participants were very strong characters who wanted their opinions heard and acted upon. To be in control of this study, I established a code of conduct from the start in which I clearly stated that as much as I valued their input I was responsible and in charge of the study and I reported to my supervisory team at the University of Northampton (see appendix 25 under the topic 'Who are the researchers?'). We had clear rules of operation which were respected by all although we had our differences. These differences made the study more real and valid.

Another dilemma as noted by Elliot (2001) is the use of observations, document analysis and interviews which may be seen as involving personalised situations in which colleagues and pupils may find it difficult to divorce an individual's role of a researcher from his or her other positions in the school. There were possibilities that other teachers would challenge my conclusions based on my methods of data collection. My position as a member of staff, father and son brought in many advantages to the study but there were challenges as well. Some of these challenges are further addressed in the ethics section.

4.3.1   My dilemma as an insider researcher

As much as I was known to the participants, I aimed to maintain a neutral position but I found out that there is no such thing as a 'position free study' Punch (2009). Looking back, it is interesting to note how I navigated from one position to another on this journey discovering that as much as I tried to be objective as a researcher, any position I adopted had positive and negative effects on the study. The ultimate aim of this study, as has been mentioned before, was not to generalise my findings but to disseminate good practice,   raise standards and change the existing situation (engaging more fathers in the school), (Foreman-Peck and Murray, 2008).

In such cases as mine, the insider may bring greater understanding but less objectivity to the study (Punch, 2009). On the other hand, the outsider may bring less

understanding but greater objectivity (Punch, *ibid*). My role was to facilitate meetings, collect data and report on progress being made. As an insider, I had a heightened understanding of the culture of the school, the politics at play, and existing social networks (Robson, 2002). Such insider knowledge and understanding of the research situation, including its social, cultural and micro-political aspects enriched and deepened the research (Punch, 2009). With this understanding, I adopted the position of an insider despite questions raised about the objectivity of such an approach. There were many advantages to this position which included being able to have easy access to the research site, participants and institutional documents without going through bureaucratic or organisational pathways that a complete outsider would encounter (Robson, 2002). Although I enjoyed all these advantages, I had my own challenges with my position as a teacher in the school.

As an employee in the school I had challenges in maintaining a balanced psychological and physical distance from the research topic and setting (Punch, 2009). I also had to navigate the emotional and ethical challenges that came with being a practitioner researcher. I could not supress these emotions because denying the emotions of the researcher, is almost the same as denying the emotional nature of learning (Thomson and Walker, 2010). I enjoyed the advantage of having pre-existing knowledge and experience about the situation and people involved (Robson, 2002) which made it easier to build a rapport with most participants. However, Punch, (2009) warned researchers not to use their own positions and background knowledge to exploit participants especially children. It was difficult with my position to justify that the boys who participated in the study, did so out of their own will. To avoid any criticism, I followed all the ethical requirements of signing consent forms (Appendix, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14) and making sure that all the boys understood what the research was about. This is further explained in the ethics section.

Punch (2009) observed that sometimes it is difficult to maintain a dispassionate, objective and arm's length approach to the situation. In this study, I was wholly independent of practical values. Although I made an effort not to take sides, I had emotional links with what was happening to fathers. The way fathers were perceived in the school (as hard to reach), made me feel that they were unfairly judged. The people who were making these judgements did not even have enough background knowledge of what was happening at home. Sometimes fathers get a 'raw deal' from schools, social services, and the government in general through this lack of

understanding of their situation (O'Connor, 2010). Despite all these challenges, I still found PAR to be the most appropriate strategy for collecting data in this study.

4.4 RELEVANCE OF PAR TO WORKING WITH TEACHERS, FATHERS AND THEIR SONS

Rose (2003) saw it as an erroneous concern that teachers who are in daily contact with students are likely to exhibit bias and would have considerable problems with maintaining objectivity in action research. This was a study for the teachers and it was going to improve their knowledge of working with fathers therefore, they were not going to be biased and neither would I due to the grounded theory that I used to analyse data. I was not entirely in charge of the study in a dictatorial way. Although, I chose the data collection methods, there was room for anyone to say what they wanted in the meetings. Most fathers and sons saw this involving approach as tolerant and sensitive to their concerns.

Stenhouse (1975) believed in the professional desire of teachers to improve their own practice through PAR. The strength of this strategy was that professionals were able to reflect upon their practice and make improvements. There was a high likelihood that management and other teachers would accept the recommendations from the study as they were coming from their colleagues. Compared to other more common, quick fix professional development activities, encouraging teachers to participate in action research and supporting them through the research process was a viable approach to facilitating change in teaching consistent with current calls for reform (Briscoe and Wells, 2002). Teachers were able to share ideas and became more aware of their practice through reflection (Robson, 2002).

My involvement as a participant-researcher and insider to the school gave me access to the kind of knowledge and understanding that is not accessible to traditional researchers coming from outside (Somekh, 2006). Through this approach, I was able to see issues through the fathers' eyes and empathise with their situation. They saw me as one of them and were able to open up to discuss issues they had not raised before with the school and supporting professionals.

The cyclic nature of the study allowed me to correct my mistakes when I conducted the second phase. I was able to reflect on what went wrong in the first phase and act upon it. Besides having the opportunity to develop my research skills, I was able to personally examine my own beliefs regarding father-son relationships in education (Briscoe and Wells, 2002). I visited my own father in Africa (Zimbabwe) in an effort to understand myself and reflect on my understanding of the role of fathers in different

settings and cultures. Somekh (2006) recommended such an approach by noting that '*the new relationships and practices involved in carrying out the action can lead to reflection on the researcher's role and activities resulting in personal and professional learning.*' Such a promotion of self and critical awareness can lead to social change (McIntyre, 2008).

This strategy was very effective in driving the qualitative case study approach I adopted. It gave me the flexibility to make changes in the middle of data collection. I was also able to go back and forth in search of clarification of some points and seeking further permission to use data in different ways. It was real and practical as typical of inductive studies based on the interpretative philosophy. I am still convinced that a combination of the case study approach and action research was the most suitable approach for this study. Having been satisfied by my research strategies, I prepared for data collection.

4.5 PREPARATION FOR DATA COLLECTION

Collecting data requires a lot of preparation (Bryman, 2004). I did not just go straight into collecting data soon after deciding on my methods. I first chose a sample and carried out a pilot study to test the feasibility of the study. I shall therefore describe this process first.

4.5.1 Sampling

For this study, I selected a specific sample to implement changes in the school and not for generalisation. This is common in case studies based on participation action research (Foreman-Peck and Murray, 2004). In qualitative research, the type of sampling is determined by the methodology selected and the topic under investigation, not by the need to create generalisable findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Thus, I chose a sample that would facilitate the change in the school and I made sure that it was 'representative of the population being studied' (Daniel, 2011).

The size of the sample depends on what one wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry and what can be done with the available time and resources (Daniel, *ibid*). In addition to that, the researcher can choose to study one specific phenomenon in depth with a smaller sample size or a bigger sample size when seeking breadth (Punch, 2009). I decided on depth rather than breadth because the findings of the study were to be used for one school only and they had to be convincing to management.

As a real-life case study designed to improve services for fathers in the school, I carefully chose who participated in this study. To ensure the specific needs of the study were met, I purposefully selected particular elements of the population in the school using both 'purposeful' and 'convenience' sampling.

4.5.2 Purposive sampling

This is when a researcher chooses a certain group of participants for a specific purpose (Daniel, 2011). Purposive sampling is acceptable where there is no need to make a statistical generalisation to any population beyond the sample surveyed and it relies on the researcher's judgement to achieve a particular purpose (Robson 2002). In this study, my intention was to inform the school management of the need to improve the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons. I therefore purposefully chose fathers who had sons in year 8 or 9 so that I could work with them over a long period of time.

4.5.3 Convenience sampling

This is when the researcher uses the nearest and most convenient people to act as participants (Robson 2002). It was convenient for me to choose participants who were easily available and willing to participate. As mentioned before, I chose my own students, teachers who work in the school and fathers who have sons in the school. There were no better people to inform this study on matters regarding father engagement in the school than this sample, hence the choice I made. Such a sample was convenient in terms of its accessibility, cost, the time needed to collect data, and management. I was able to see the teachers and the boys in the school five days per week which fitted in well with the in-depth type of study I intended to carry out.

There were many fathers, boys and teachers available to participate in this study. Some were chosen to participate in the pilot study which I described to participants as equally important as the main study. However, I had specific criteria for the participants of the main study. I chose the participants that I could work with and who had indicated a willingness to make a change in the school. The specific criteria was based on the following:

1. Ten fathers and their sons who are attending the school.

I needed fathers who had sons in the school or any male father figures who were looking after the boys in the school. The boys had to be in their first or second year in the school (year 8 or 9). This helped me to follow them for at least 2 years. The

fathers had to commit themselves to attending a minimum of four meetings for the study.

2. Ten teachers currently employed full-time at the school.

I wanted teachers who were committed to set aside their spare time to participate in meetings and interviews. Some teachers were involved in part time study and other personal commitments which prevented them from participating. All teachers were involved indirectly as they had to help implement the changes in the school. However, only ten were full members of the study.

3. Five supporting agencies (social workers, psychologists, mentors) supporting various sampled boys at the school.

These were outside professionals who supported the school with managing behaviour and they also worked with the families of the boys in the study. There were seven of them and five agreed to be interviewed. The others excused themselves due to work commitments.

The above participants were selected with a purpose to complete the study and to make a change in the school. They agreed to commit their time to this study for at least three years. As a qualitative researcher, I was interested in selecting population elements that were most useful in providing rich information about the topic of the study (Daniel, 2011). This sample fitted well into the inductive reasoning and qualitative study which I wanted to undertake. I wanted to conduct an in-depth enquiry and try to understand participants' perspectives, behaviour and feelings. After the sampling process, I carried out a pilot study as mentioned before.

4.5.4 Pilot Study

It is important for me to stress that the sample used for the pilot study was not allowed to take part in the main study because they had already been exposed to some of the questions. The term pilot study refers to mini versions of a full-scale study, also called 'feasibility' studies (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). There are several reasons for conducting a pilot study. In this study, I wanted to test both data collection methods and resources that I was going to use in the main study. I wanted to familiarise myself with the instruments and the type of study I was going to be involved in. This helped me to design and redesign my study.

4.5.4.1 Reasons for carrying out a pilot study in my inquiry

The pilot study gave me advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments were inappropriate or too complicated (Baker 1994). Through piloting, I was able to assess my data analysis techniques and also develop my research plan. I took the whole process as a training session as I had very little experience, particularly in participatory action research.

However, conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase the likelihood (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). It provided me with a clear view of the focus of the study which in turn helped to narrow down the issues for discussion (Robson, 2002). For example, I was not sure whether I should focus on biological fathers or any kind of a father. This drew me to discuss father figures and role models which widened the study to unmanageable levels. I had to go back to the drawing board and focus on fathers and father figures only.

The pilot also ensured that the research instrument as a whole would function well, (Bryman, 2004). As shall be explained later in this section, through the pilot study, I was able to address some data collection problems before time and to expand resources on the actual study. I used fellow colleagues and volunteer students for this study. As advised by Bryman (2004) it was best to find a sample of participants comparable to the real sample. The sample comprising volunteer students and fellow teachers who were not part of the study was a suitable comparison.

Through the pilot study, I was able to reduce the number of unanticipated problems as I had an opportunity to redesign parts of my study. As noted by Cohen and Mannion (2006), a pilot study helps the researcher to firm up research questions and methodology. I was able to focus on the core of the study after redesigning my research question. Apart from that I also became aware that I had to book my meetings with participants well in advance and be ready for cancellations. The pilot study also enabled me to make a decision to go ahead with the main study. In many ways, I was able to see things before they happened. Fig 3 illustrates how the pilot study was conducted.

Figure 3: The piloting process

4.5.5 Impact of the pilot study on my research

4.5.5.1 Building interviewing skills and confidence

As noted by Bryman (2004), a pilot gives the interviewer experience and confidence. As a result of the pilot study, I was confident enough to make a few changes to my study. These changes helped me to improve both the structure and process of conducting my study. Apart from ensuring that I was using the right equipment (tape recorder), I was also able to address some logistical problems such as booking interviews in advance. I was able to move forward confidently knowing that I had tried and tested my research strategy, (Burgess *et al.,* 2007).

4.5.5.2 Language

As a result of the pilot study, I managed to correct questions that seemed to be misunderstood or poorly worded instructions before the actual research, (Bryman, 2004). Since some of my participants had special educational needs, I decided to simplify my language in my questioning to suit the communication needs of the participants. For example, sometimes I used the word 'involving' instead of

'engaging' in my topic. This made the participants understand the study better as they found the word engaging difficult to understand particularly the boys and some fathers.

4.5.5.3 Questioning

As observed by Bryman (2004) pilot studies can help identify areas that can make participants uncomfortable. I changed the style of questioning to involve more probing and subtle ways of getting more information from interviewees. I was able to add supporting questions to the main questions. I also improved my questions to be friendlier and less interrogative. This involved attending training on interviewing where I learnt how to position myself and to use body language to make participants more comfortable. As a member of staff, in the school, it was important to break the teacher-pupil barriers with the boys.

4.5.5.4 Relevance

Through the pilot study, I discovered that some of my questions were not relevant to what I was looking for. I therefore had to change my questions to reflect more on how fathers adopt different patterns of engagement. The pilot helped me to redirect my focus on making a change in the school by involving more fathers in the education of their sons.

Having completed my pilot study and discovered the difficulties I had with communicating with fathers, I decided to organise a social event to build confidence and rapport.

4.5.5.5 Building rapport with fathers

From the pilot study, I learnt that there was potential for a few challenges from some fathers who were not willing to open up more about engaging in their sons' education. I then decided to hold a small social event for fathers only where we met up and discussed general issues. The event was meant to break social barriers and it was also an opportunity for me to bring myself to their level. On this event I decided to be a father rather than a teacher. By being a father, I was able to relate to them and have a lot more in common. We were able to share our joys and sorrows of being a modern day father. We found commonality, shared ideas and discussed our aspirations. This helped fathers to relax more in my presence especially when I was talking about my own experiences as a father.

The main reason for the social event was to build confidence and rapport with fathers. I found out that it was bit challenging for some fathers to open up about other issues we were discussing in the interviews. This left me with the impression that they felt examined and judged on their ability to be parents. During the pilot study, some fathers revealed that they felt that teachers saw them as non-caring and unwilling to co-operate. Through the social event, I was hoping to gain their confidence and trust in both myself and the study. I wanted them to feel that the study was for their children's benefit and we were there to help.

Apart from gaining the fathers' trust, the social event was also meant to bond fathers and develop a good working relationship. I wanted to establish a working relationship based on trust and a commitment to improving results in the school. We had something in common; we were all fathers with sons in education though we had different needs in our circumstances. For example, my sons were younger than theirs but I could relate to fathers who were having difficulties to find time off work to attend assemblies and some school activities. Some fathers did not have this problem but they had difficulties with Literacy and could not help their sons with homework.

Through the social event, most fathers gained confidence after hearing stories of other fathers. They discovered that they were not alone in their struggles. Having heard other fathers' stories, some fathers gained the courage to open up more during the event. Some fathers made new friends and others made business contacts. For example one father who is self- employed as a mechanic, had three other fathers enquiring about MOTs. It was a very successful gathering considering the outcome of the short questionnaire they filled-in (see appendix 1). All fathers answered 'YES' to question 1 and only one two out of twenty three returned surveys were negative.

The social event was also meant for me to prove to fathers how serious this study was. I had to prove my worth by explaining the intended outcomes of the study and how significant it would be for the school if it was done properly. I therefore had to break all possible barriers by telling them my life story and about my boys one of whom has special educational needs. My challenges as a working father, a student and a father with a son with SEN touched all of them. I had to give something back in order to get something. Most of the fathers were willing to share their stories soon after that. During the event I moved from one group to another talking generally about football and Africa where I come from. On a few occasions, I would throw in the subject of our sons and they responded very well. At the end of the event we set a date to meet and discuss how the school can engage fathers more.

After conducting the pilot study I was able to convince the school management and fellow teachers that the main study was feasible and worth conducting on site. I had been equipped with skills to come up with a strategy of investigation. I drew up a plan of how I was going to collect and use the data. The next section discusses the four main data collection methods I used in this study.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

4.6.1 Interviews

Interviews are a common method of collecting data and possibly we use them knowingly or unknowingly in our daily lives (Robson, 2002). However, there are no hard and fast rules for how many people you need to interview when carrying out a case study (Travers, 2001). This number can depend on the time available to collect, transcribe and analyse your data (Daniel, 2011). In this study, thirty five participants were interviewed. I found interviews helpful in encouraging participants to express their views at length (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2005). I used semi-structured interviews in this study because they are a cross between structured and unstructured interviews offering me an opportunity to conduct them in the form of a conversation which helped to put the participants more at ease.

Semi-structured interviews gave me the opportunity to allow participants to have options to take different paths and explore different thoughts and feelings (Robson, 2002). I was able to bring the participants back to the subject under discussion by means of prompt questions. Such an approach was effective in allowing fathers and sons to express their emotions without being restricted. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to let participants express themselves freely in line with the democratic approach I used in the participatory action research. I also was able to clarify my questions and probe for some more information from the interviewees, thus gaining as much information as possible. As an inductive study, semi-structured interviews gave me the opportunity to explore participants' feelings, actions and thoughts.

Semi-structured interviews are a good way of finding out what a situation looks like from others' points of view (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Teachers and professionals liked the freedom of explaining what they wanted whilst expressing their viewpoints (Elliot, 2001). Most participants were able to open up and talk about their private lives without feeling coerced into doing so (Robson, 2002). I made sure that I did not give

hints to certain answers or be aligned to any group of participants or lead them into saying things they did not want to say.

Semi-structured interviews gave the boys a voice to their own experiences and understanding of the world (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). I wanted the boys to feel comfortable talking to me and this method helped to reduce their suspicions and anxieties. The only way they could express themselves freely was through semi-structured interviews and group meetings as shall be explained later. With semi-structured interviews, the boys felt more like they were having an everyday conversation with me. Such an approach is now well recognised after Piaget's interviews with children shaped our current views on children's thought processes (Kvale and Brinkmann, *op cit*)

Apart from the above, semi-structured interviews are more effective when the researcher is looking for participants' own personal accounts (Robson, 2002). For me, the boys' and their fathers' personal accounts were key to this study. These personal accounts gave insight into their feelings, history and culture. I was able to compare their experiences, leading to a collection of rich data. This method put participants at ease as they were allowed to express themselves without being stopped or corrected. The boys liked the idea that there was no wrong or right answer as some of them initially saw it as an examination.

4.6.1.1 Rationale for using semi structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews fitted in well with the qualititative methodology, allowing me to continue with my personalised approach to the research. I was able to maintain my active engagement with participants as I adopted a less formal approach which allowed for new questions to be brought up during the interviews as a result of what the interviewee had said (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). By allowing participants to give a personal account of themselves, I had opportunities to ask further questions from what they revealed. With such an approach, I did not appear as if I was after their personal business. I was even able to go back to certain issues after a few questions as there was no set structure. I could connect events and incidents between father and child during these interviews.

Through semi-structured interviews, I was able to pick up on non-verbal cues that would not be done through questionnaires. I had the opportunity to relate the information from these interviews with other data I collected through observations.

Although, the positivists' view is against considering such behaviour in research, I found it useful as this was another way of communicating.

Burton and Bartlett (2005) warn that in semi-structured interviews, there is a possibility of affecting the responses by asking leading questions. To avoid this, I received some training on administering interviews. I was aware of this pitfall and checked my questioning techniques with colleagues to make sure my questions were not leading participants into certain responses. This training equipped me with skills on managing interviews and avoiding asking upsetting questions to the interviewees. I also carried out a pilot study (as explained previously) to test my interviewing skills.

As an insider, I was aware of my own impact on the data collection and the notion that respondents may give the answers that they thought I wanted to hear. I was also aware that interviews can take up a lot of time to organise and administer. These problems were solved by the fact that most of the participants were based at the study site and I could rearrange missed interviews without much difficulty. My sample size was very small (35) and manageable. A combination of semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations helped me to compare and contrast facts and responses (triangulation) yielding some valuable data. In the next section, I shall discuss how and why I conducted participant observations.

4.6.2 Participant observation

Punch (2009) defines participant observation as a method of collecting data in which the researcher aims to be both an observer and a participant in the situation being studied. In this type of study, the researcher aims to become immersed in or become part of the population being studied, so that they can develop a detailed understanding of the values and beliefs held by members of the population (Robson, 2002). In my case, I was already a part of the population I was studying (teachers and boys in the school). I understood their cultures and beliefs which made my job easier than under normal circumstances. I had an understanding of each participant in the study which helped to avoid sensitive issues.

The aim of this observation process was to verify facts by comparing findings from observations and those from interviews and documentary analysis. I also wanted to identify the boys' favourite activities and engage them better. I could only do this by being part of them. The opportunity to observe behaviour as it happened in the school enabled me to formulate meanings and give explanations as to why participants behave as they did. However, it should be noted that there was a

possibility of participants behaving in a different way because of my presence. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) call this researcher effect. For example, children and adolescents in school do not usually use bad language or fight when observed by adults (Pellegrin, 2011). The change in behavior was common in the boys I observed but as time went on, they relaxed and behaved as usual. I was not a stranger to them as they knew me already and hence they never saw me differently even though I explained that I was playing a different role to my usual duties at the school. They still treated me the same.

My presence in school virtually every working day ensured the trustworthiness and dependability of the study as I was able to observe the functioning of the school and its improvement as a result of the study. Although some of the times I missed some of the 'action' during the observation, I was able to follow it up quickly and listen to participants' reports. Even the school management appreciated the way the study was conducted when the head commented that outsiders may have had other priorities different to matters at the core of the issues affecting teachers, fathers and their sons. As an insider, I was able to pose relevant questions to seek clarification on issues affecting them. I knew the problem at hand; I was trusted by both the gatekeepers and participants and they knew I had no other hidden agenda.

I made a list of issues that I was specifically looking for beforehand. When convenient, I made notes about anything I was observing for analysis later. I called these notes memoirs. Burton and Bartlett (2005) see observation as an important means by which we come to understand our world. Keeping a diary of observations, feelings, reactions and interpretations was vital in the study (Elliot, 2001). I observed interaction amongst all participants in the school and recorded my observations on a weekly basis (appendix 23) I also recorded notes on my observations of meetings held in the school. In addition to that, I attended monthly review meetings with the fathers in which we discussed their sons' progress. My goal was to establish emerging themes from these different activities. Issues coming up most, for example, the communication between fathers and sons or that most fathers who engage are single fathers were noted and recorded. I also used observations to confirm suspicions. For example, I found out that fathers were being called into the school only when there was a problem to be solved. We changed policy in the school and decided to call them with some good news as well. Everything that participants said they were doing in the school was checked against observations and document analysis for triangulation.

Elliot (2001) suggested that the contents of the diary should be properly recorded and dated. Through dating and keeping proper records, I was able to establish patterns to some of the issues raised in the literature review. For example, most fathers could not attend the review meetings because they were at work. They had difficulties asking for time off on a weekly basis.

It is not always possible to understand a situation by observation alone (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Given that it is difficult to observe and record at the same time, there was a possibility that in trying to do both at the same time, I may have missed some valuable data. As mentioned before, I used observation as a supporting method to the interviews. It helped me to see things happening in 'real time.' I could see the participants' behaviour in 'natural' situations (Burton and Bartlett, 2005), for example fathers and their sons in a review meeting. I was also able to confirm if the observed participants acted as they said they do, allowing me to compare their actions and documents or interviews. Nevertheless, I still had a few challenges which I shall discuss next.

4.6.2.1 The challenges I faced in using participant observation

Robson (2002) noted that it is difficult to gain access to some situations for observation purposes. Observing the first meeting was a bit difficult as it was seen as too private by other parents. I could see some fathers feeling uncomfortable and using phrases such as 'you know what, I mean', avoiding to mention the issue in my presence. However, in the second and third observations, they were more relaxed as I continued to gain their trust. Their trust in me as a teacher at the school for six years helped me to gain easy access. Sometimes they looked at me and said 'you are not gonna write this, are you (sic)?'

Flynn (2013) who researched on her own students argued that as much as we may claim to know participants, we are never full members of the group. Teachers always viewed me as a researcher, fathers saw me as one of the teachers 'recording things' and the boys never saw me as one of them even though I easily related to them. Overall, I found that through observations, participants can express themselves better by their actions rather than by verbally explaining their knowledge (Walliman, 2011). This was mainly true of boys that I observed. Most of their actions and behaviours revealed more than what they expressed verbally.

Observing interaction between and among participants is very difficult to capture because there is usually a lot that goes on in many places (Pellegrin, 2011). I could

not be in many places at once. There were ten boys in the school I needed to follow every day and there were a lot of events I needed to observe. On the advice of Pellegrin (*ibid*), I developed a category system in which I identified events and issues relevant to the study that I wanted to observe. The observation had predesigned sections of what and who I wanted to observe. Whatever I missed in observations, I made sure it was picked up in the interviews or documents I analysed as described in the next section.

4.6.3 Document Analysis

All issues emerging from observations and interviews were verified in the documents. Documents can be audio, visual or written (Bryman, 2004). In this study I relied on written documents only although I listened to a video on the school's website. During the document analysis process I took note of what was recorded, the documents' purpose and the intention of the writer of the document (Robson, 2002). I was aware that the school may have only recorded data that they wanted the public to see. For example, I could see that only positive comments from parents were recorded yet I knew that there were a few in which we were criticised.

Travers (2001) noted that qualitative researchers have always known that one can learn a lot about the world by looking at documents. Prospectuses, Ofsted reports, development plans, policies and other statistics provided valuable data about all aspects of life in the school (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). These documents reflected the school's ethos and views on father engagement in an independent way. According to Prior (2003), such documents form a field for research in their own. However, Burton and Bartlett (2005) warned that practitioner researchers always need to bear in mind who has been involved in producing these documents and collecting this official information. It is therefore important to remain critical and to recognise the different ways in which information can be officially presented (Robson, 2002).

Analysis of these documents gave some indication of what was valued at least officially by the school (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). There was a clear indication that the engagement of fathers was not a priority as it was not mentioned in any of the documents I looked at. In this case, the documents gave a systematic picture of what happens in the school in an accurate manner (Denscombe, 2003). Fathers were mentioned as part of the parents and this was a good opportunity for research with the intention of raising awareness on the importance of fathers in the education of their sons.

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4.6.3.1 Advantages of using documents in this study

Document analysis was a very useful way of collecting data without interfering with the participants. There was no reactivity on the part of the writer, particularly because the documents were not written with the intention of being research data (Robson, 2002). Although I missed non-verbal clues such as body language that I observed during the interviews, I was able to study primary data without a risk of asking leading questions or making the participants feel uncomfortable.

The documents I analysed also helped me 'to access the inaccessible' (Cohen and Mannion, 2009). Some of the issues raised during the interviews, and observations could not be found in the documents. On the other hand, some of the issues that participants tried to avoid discussing were uncovered through the use of the documents. For example, I was interested in the statistics on the number of fathers who were engaging with the school. None of the teachers wanted to talk about this and I used the documents to find out.

The use of documents in this study also helped to save costs and time as they were stored in one place (Cohen and Mannion, 2009). I did not need to travel to the library or to seek more permission from anyone as this was agreed initially. In addition to that I did not need to disturb the flow of lessons or book an appointment with staff. It was less disruptive and convenient for me as I could read the documents on my own time at home.

Documents can reveal secrets of the organisation (Cohen and Mannion, *ibid*). There were things I discovered through the use of documentation that were considered secrets by management and we had an agreement that this study would not be damaging to the functioning of the school. I had to refrain from recording these secrets although they could have been useful to the study. Although this remained a dilemma in my study, I had an agreement with the school not to interfere with their private business and this was part of the ethics I had to adhere to as well.

Overall, I found document analysis to be an inexpensive method that can be used to learn more about policies and interests of the school. It brought out the school's values and ethos. Its combination with interviews and observations helped to reduce biases and enhanced the trustworthiness of the data through comparison and verification. In addition to the three main data collection methods I used, I also used the minutes of the meetings I had with all participants.

4.6.4   Minutes of the meetings

I found minutes of the meetings to be a very important tool for collecting data (see appendix 2-7). This was not in my initial plans but participants came up with a lot of ideas on engaging fathers in these meetings and I felt it was important to use the data. I discovered their importance during the data analysis process and I had to go back to the participants and ask for permission to use the contents of these minutes in reporting my findings.

Before and after each cycle (in PAR), we held a meeting. As mentioned before, the first meeting was for planning what to implement and the second meeting was for reviewing progress. The professionals who supported the school did not participate as they had expressed their views in the interviews and felt it was enough. It was decided that holding the meetings with all participants would probably not work as boys would feel intimidated while fathers and teachers had different views that would potentially cause a conflict. The meetings adopted the format of focus groups.

Although I decided the agenda of the meetings, participants had opportunities to raise other issues during the meeting. More suggestions on how to engage more fathers came out of the meetings. Some boys opened up more than they did in the interviews probably because they found comfort in numbers. Individually, in interviews, they did not give much and I got most of the answers through reading their body language for example, shrugging shoulders which I interpreted as a 'no' or nodding their heads which I interpreted as a 'yes'. During the meetings they were more vocal to the extent of showing off to the others. I found the meetings to be a relaxed way of collecting data.

The minutes of the meetings gave me the opportunity to listen to participants and observe their interaction as they discussed the improvements for the next cycle and debated on what went wrong in the first cycle. I had access to their opinions, viewpoints, attitudes and experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The meetings made the participants feel special as they were a chosen group particularly the boys who felt that they were chosen to make a change in the school. They were united as they shared the same view; to engage more fathers. The more successful we were the more united we became as a special group.

As we continued with the meetings and more suggestions came up, the school management felt threatened that we were almost becoming a 'pressure group.' We

had to be careful that any change we suggested had to be discussed and approved by the management to demonstrate our cooperation with them.

Also, there were times that the debating degenerated into arguments and this needed careful management. As the chairperson, I made sure that everyone had a chance to speak and all participants spoke through me, 'the chair.' I carefully changed the subject of discussion when I felt that the discussions were going off topic or becoming uncomfortable for some participants. This can be criticised as influencing the outcome of the study but without careful management of the group I could have lost valuable data or some participants could have walked out. Despite these few challenges, I found that through meetings, participants were able to share ideas, motivate each other and form friendships.

4.7 SUMMARY

The choice and planning of research strategies and methods were crucial to my collection and analysis of data. The involvement of participants as core-researchers and my own participation as an insider enriched the study in many ways. The use of the case study strategy provided an in-depth understanding of the issues affecting fathers in the school. The sample used in this study was effective as all participants were committed to making a change in the school. The piloting process helped me to foresee potential pitfalls of the study. The participatory case study nature of the research brought me closer to participants building a trusting relationship that enabled me to collect valuable data. It was by participating in critical dialogue and discussions where participants agreed and disagreed in real situations that I gained an in-depth understanding of the subtle father-son relationship that we could tap into to improve behaviour in our school. Being able to use unstructured interviews enabled me to have 'easy conversations' with participants. The observations and document analysis brought a different dimension to the collection of data which made them more valid. The use of multiple data collection methods gave me opportunities to verify and compare responses from participants. The next chapter discusses the data collection process and analysis.

5. INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings out the five major characteristics (redlines) of this thesis mentioned in chapter one that are prominent from the beginning to the end. My involvement as an active participant observer and insider researcher dominates the way I collected and analysed data. This approach also shows the qualitative nature of the study, exploring feelings and emotions of both the researcher and the participants as I immersed myself in the data collection and analysis process. The way I collected data and my position in the study, reflects in my writing style as an active participant. The involvement of participants as core-researchers is another theme outlined showing how the study gave a voice to the fathers and their sons, enabling them to have an influence in the running of the school. The changing role of fathers as a result of the socio-economic and political changes is confirmed as a theme in this chapter together with a few other major themes. The chapter consists of two main sections; the data collection section and the data analysis section. The two are combined in the same chapter to show the closeness between the process of collecting data and analysing them as I experienced in my 'research journey.' The data collection process section describes how I collected data from various groups of participants. During this process I was also carrying out 'informal data analysis' as I began to notice some patterns. The data analysis section explains and describes in detail how we came up with the 'Father Engagement model' we developed. It mainly focuses on the grounded theory that we used to develop themes for the study. I shall begin with an explanation of how I collected data.

5.1 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

This section discusses the data collection process that formed the basis for the analysis. As observed by Denzin and Lincoln, (1994), qualitative data analysis is not a discrete procedure carried out at the final stages of the research, rather it is a process that continues throughout the study. Thus, the data collection process was also part of the analysis because I could see some patterns emerging even before the coding started. This analysis began with literature review where some of the major themes emerged. As noted by Glaser (1992), literature can be used as 'data' and constantly compared with the emerging categories to be integrated in the theory. Thus, the data collected were also verified with the emerging themes from the

literature review. Using the grounded theory approach, I went into the study open-minded. All themes were developed as the study progressed.

The four 'redlines' (the position of the researcher, the inclusion of participants, the personal experiences and the ever changing role of a father) continue to be highlighted in this chapter as has been the case in the previous chapters. My position as a participant in the study is discussed in relation to how I collected the data and analysed them. This is closely related to the inclusion of participants as core-researchers and how they helped in the triangulation of data, making sure that all major issues were verified through different groups of participants. My personal experiences also helped to confirm or discard some of the issues identified as exceptionalities. The ever changing role of a father was identified as a major theme through a grounded theory analysis. Fig 4 illustrates how data were collected from each group of participants to build a model for engaging more fathers in the school.

Figure 4: The data collection process
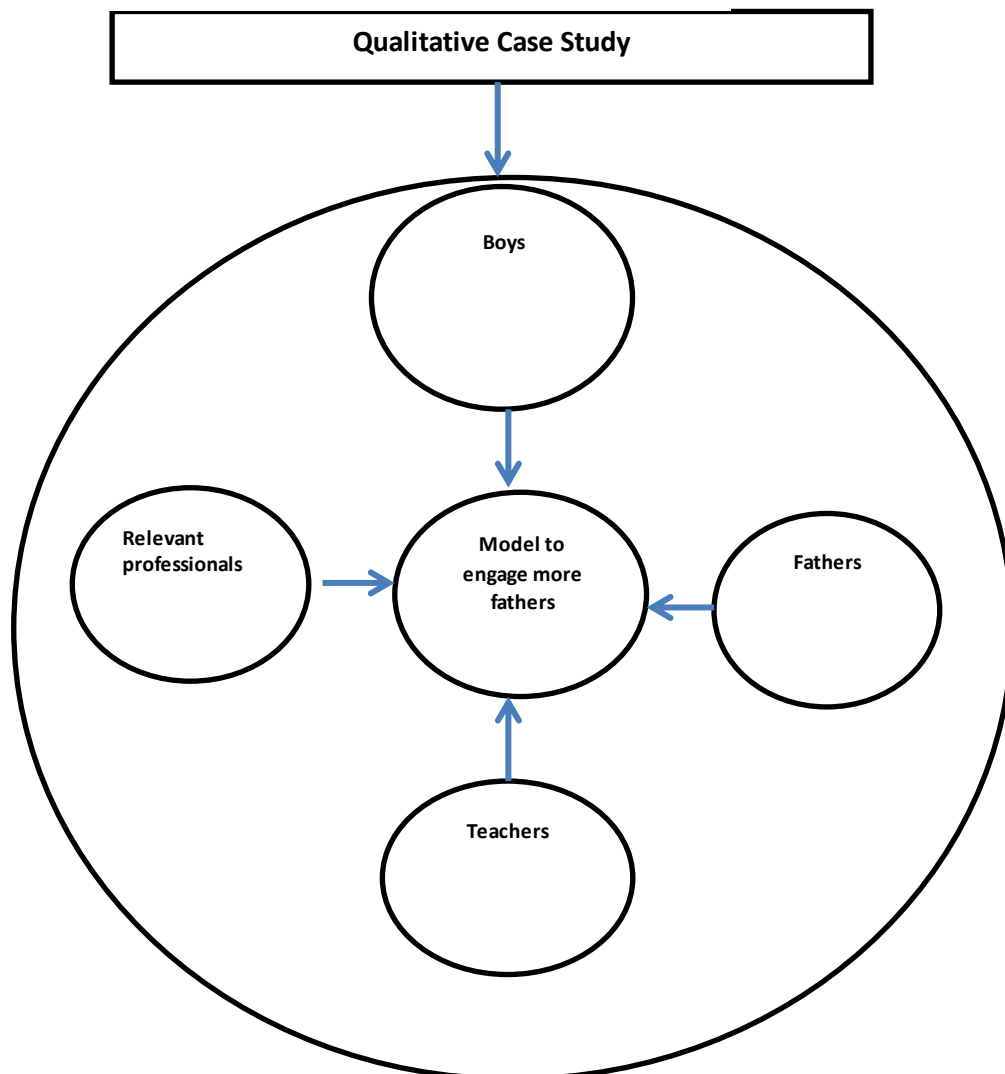
5.1.1 Data Collected from Boys

5.1.1.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were more effective in collecting data from the boys as I had the opportunity to be flexible with my questions when I sensed that they were feeling uncomfortable. The boys were given an opportunity to terminate the interview if they felt uncomfortable with it. Through semi-structured interviews, I was able to clarify myself and expand on my questioning. Depending on how the boys answered the questions I could change the order of questions as the interview progressed. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were stored electronically and shown or read back to participants who wished to do so. All boys wanted to see what was written about them as they were suspicious to some extent hence all ten transcripts were read to them.

5.1.1.2 Document analysis

The school progress report was the main document used to track the boys' behaviour and progress. I was interested in getting information about where this document was sent to and how it was used by fathers if at all they received it. The boys' interest and reaction to the progress report was also a point of interest. I wanted to know if the father and son discussed this report and if the school got any feedback from the father. I recorded both what was in the report and the boys' reactions to the reports. There were four reports for each boy throughout the year which I looked at.

5.1.1.3 Observations

These were mainly focussed on the boy's behaviour and how they interacted with their fathers and teachers in the school. The boys' behaviour was observed during lesson times, at break times and in review meetings (See Appendix 23). Although most boys initially changed their behaviour during these observations, they later on relaxed and went back to their usual ways. The middle and end parts of the observations were more useful as the boys were no longer concerned about my presence. These observations were based on my own judgement. I observed both behaviour and reactions to certain situations. For example I observed how boys responded to the targets such as improving punctuality or reducing swearing that they set in monthly review meetings.

5.1.2 Data Collected from Fathers

5.1.2.1 Interviews

Interviews with fathers were booked with two weeks' notice in advance. The semi-structured interviews were less interrogative and they allowed fathers to say more. I arranged to meet fathers at suitable times such as weekends and evenings. I also offered to reimburse their travelling expenses if at all they were to travel. The fathers also chose their preferred venues which were mostly pubs, the school or in the comfort of their homes. Again, these interviews were recorded and the transcripts were stored electronically.

5.1.2.2 Observations

Fathers were observed when they came into the school either for meetings or when picking up or dropping off their sons. I was mainly interested in their interactions with their sons and the teachers. Their contributions in the meetings were also observed and followed up to check if the school took them seriously. The issue of confidence was not raised in interviews but through observations, I noted that some fathers felt overwhelmed by the presence of the teachers which made them not to say much in the reviews.

5.1.3 Data collected from teachers

5.1.3.1 Interviews

Interviews with teachers were booked on the dates and times suitable to them. This was preferably at the times when they were not teaching such as lunch time and breaks or after work. Semi-structured interviews were also used to allow teachers to give as much information as possible. Amongst the sample that I had chosen, teachers were more aware of the study and hence they contributed more than any other group of participants. All interviews were held on the school's premises, recorded and stored electronically.

5.1.3.2 Document analysis

Most of the teachers' answers were guided by the three main documents (Ofsted report, progress reports and Review meetings). However, these documents were also used to check if what the teachers were saying was actually true. The document for review meetings was followed up to see if action plans were implemented. The Ofsted report reflected how teachers were working with parents. The progress

reports also revealed if teachers were sending them to fathers who were not living with their sons.

5.1.3.3 Observations

I observed how teachers interacted with the boys and fathers in the school. I also observed meetings between fathers and teachers and analysed relationships that existed in these meetings. The staff attitudes and responses to fathers when they visited the school were also observed. I could tell and see the change in the staff attitudes as the study progressed. For example, more staff were talking about the presence or absence of the fathers in meetings and the sighting of a father in the school became a talking point.

5.1.4   Data collected from other professionals

5.1.4.1 Interviews

I arranged to meet each professional separately and used semi-structured interviews to find out how they are engaging fathers in the education of their sons. I did not use observations or document analysis with them as all the data I wanted were covered through the interviews. I was more interested in the power they had to engage fathers and if at all they played a part in enhancing father-son relationships in education. The interviews were more of a learning curve for me to understand the exact roles they played to support the school. This was also beneficial to staff members.

5.1.5   Minutes of the meetings from all participants

These were used in retrospect after I had discovered the importance of the views expressed during these meetings. Outside agencies did not attend these meetings due to time constraints. Minutes were recorded with action points referred to in the next meeting. Both the researcher and the boys found them to be a more relaxed way of sharing information and debating on the subject of father engagement. Fathers and teachers were able to say more and debate as well as sharing ideas in these meetings.

After collecting data using the four main sources (interviews, observations, documents and minutes of the meetings), I set out to analyse them.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). As I mentioned in chapter 3, my thinking was influenced by the interpretivist philosophy which resulted in qualitative data collection and analysis. This data analysis method is an iterative and reflexive process that began as data were being collected rather than after data collection had ceased (Stake 1995). My intention in this section is to analyse data in relation to the research problem as advised by Walliman (2011). I wanted to identify ways of engaging more fathers in the education of their sons in the school. This involved the description of father-son relationships and interactions in the process of engagement. Since it has been noted that subjective human feelings and emotions are difficult to quantify (Walliman, *ibid*), this qualitative analysis sought to give descriptions and explanations to the phenomena. As an interpretive researcher, my focus was on making sense of the data from the participants' point of view, examining not only behaviours but intentions and emotions (Tracy, 2013).

In this section, I described how data were converted into patterns, themes and ideas that led to the development of the father engagement model in the school. The first section discusses the analysis of qualitative data and this is linked to the grounded theory as the preferred approach used to analyse data in this study. I also discussed the processes and steps followed in the data analysis process detailing how I came up with codes, patterns and final themes. Further discussion is focussed upon the important aspects of analysing qualitative data such as coding, verification and triangulation. These are explained and illustrated in diagrams showing how I combined the three to validate the final themes. I shall describe how I used the grounded theory to develop patterns and themes first.

5.2.1 Grounded Theory

Researchers using grounded theory do not develop or test hypotheses, the theory emerges from a close and careful analysis of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The findings are not influenced by preconceived ideas. Throughout the evaluation and analysis process, the researcher remains open to new opportunities and insights (Robson, 2002). Grounded theorists seek to explore participants' experiences in the context of the worlds in which they live. The key feature of grounded theory is its iterative study design which entails cycles of data collection and analysis where analysis informs the next cycle of data collection (Charmaz, 2006). Through meetings during PAR, I was able to use information from previous meetings to develop a better

approach in the next cycle as described in chapter 4. Although it was difficult to decide when to stop collecting data as the cycles continued, Strauss and Corbin (1998) advised of a 'point of saturation' (when the researcher can no longer generate new concepts from data.) Once we established a working model to engage fathers we stopped collecting more data although some participants decided on meeting outside of this study to discuss the effectiveness of the model.

This grounded analysis used a categorisation that emerged from the respondents themselves, rather than imposing existing categorisation upon the data (Charmaz, 2006). Using existing categories would not have allowed the authentic voices of the participants to be heard from within the data and would have restricted the process of data reduction, interrogation and analysis (Harris and Goodall, 2007). This approach fitted in well with the PAR strategy in which I had considered participants as core-researchers.

Charmaz (*op cit*) observed that grounded theory is an effective approach to build new theories and understand new phenomena. There is a strong relationship between data and theory because the theory emerges from data (Strauss and Glasser, 1967). Such an approach allowed me to be open minded and I was able to look at the data from different angles, producing strong evidence and findings. The grounded theory analysis looks at real-life situations through the use of an interpretivist approach, comparing and analysing data from many sources (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). As mentioned before, participants were involved in data analysis to reduce bias and misinterpretation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). To strengthen the dependability and trustworthiness of the data, grounded theorists constantly compare all the data collected in search of contradictory cases which might challenge the emerging theory (Glaser, 1992). Thus, I maintained a high degree of interaction with participants through participant observations and in-depth interviews.

Although it has been argued that grounded theory is time consuming as researchers spend a lot of time transcribing data (Bryman, 2004), I found the strategy more applicable to what I wanted to achieve. It offered me the opportunity to give explanations to patterns of father engagement for other members of staff to understand them better. I did not see time as an excuse to avoid validating my findings through the use of grounded theory.

Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that theories are generated by data, it is important to note that in any qualitative research, the researcher brings to the data

his or her own preconceptions, interests, biases and previous knowledge (Whitehead, 2008; Creswell, 1998). This is what I referred to as 'accumulated knowledge' in chapter 3. It is the researcher who sets the codes and categories both of which were based on what I wanted to achieve in the school. During the meetings, I set the agenda that drove the research and chose the methodology. All this had a direct or indirect impact on the direction of the study and the theories that were generated from the data. Peshkin (1993) points out that an individual's subjectivity is not something that can be removed, and it is therefore something researchers need to be aware of throughout the research process.

Bulmer (1979) cited in Bryman (2004) argues that it is highly unlikely that researchers can suspend their awareness of relevant theories and concepts until the later stages of data analysis. A constant check with participants on the development of data analysis process stops the researcher from imposing his or her theories on the study (Somekh, 2006). For example, in this study, the teachers and school management who were well aware of the development of the study and constantly asking for feedback, could not allow me to impose my own thinking about the father-engagement model we were constructing. Thus, my pre-existing theories did not negatively interfere with this study because Whitehead (2008) recommended that such theories can be used to construct new knowledge.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility, (commonality and exceptionality) and counting frequencies of occurrences as some of the 'tactics' for analysing data. Although counting frequencies is mostly associated with quantitative research, it was applicable to my study. For example, I was able to count the number of times participants mentioned the lack of flexibility in the school to accommodate working fathers. This led me to consider arranging flexible times to meet fathers such as evening and weekends. The more the issue was raised, the more I considered it as a theme. As part of establishing themes and patterns, I engaged in a process of coding my data as described next.

5.2.2   Coding

In grounded theory, coding is an integral part of the data analysis process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). It is known as a process of putting data into named groups (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It also involves subdividing the data as well as assigning categories to the data (Dey, 1993). Codes or categories are tags or labels for

allocating units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

As part of the coding process I was looking for what was going on. This involved what participants were doing, what the participants were saying or not saying and their actions. I also analysed how structure and context served to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements (Charmaz, 2006). Using an interpretive approach discussed in chapter 3, I was also looking for behaviours, events, activities, strategies, meanings, participation, relationships, conditions, consequences and settings that were relevant to the research question (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). All the coding had to be based on a storyline that I wanted to convey to the readers (Patton, 1990). My storyline was based on the patterns adopted by fathers in an effort to engage in the education of their sons. The end product of this thesis was to be able to produce a model that guides the school to engage more fathers and work better with them. The storyline was guided by the research questions. This helped to decide what concepts and themes I wanted to communicate in the study. It also helped in providing a guideline on how my data should be organised and coded (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). I used the same research questions to guide me during my literature review. Thus these codes were somehow related to the findings from the literature review.

5.2.2.1 The coding process

The process of creating codes can be both pre-set and open (Cohen *et al., ibid*). Some of the codes were preset and others were generated from data since it is recommended to use both models, in line with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). As mentioned before, it is almost impossible for researchers to set aside their own preconceptions whilst engaged in the process of open coding (Bryman, 2004). Category names can come from the pool of concepts that researchers already have from their disciplinary and professional reading (Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, in qualitative approaches to observation, like mine, researchers do not use predetermined categories and classifications but they make observations in a more natural and open-ended way (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). I decided to take this approach as I carried out my study without any pre-conceived ideas. Categories and concepts for describing and analysing the data emerged later in the study during the analysis. I did not want them to be brought to the research, or imposed on the data, from the start. While it is good to begin data collection and coding with pre-set codes, I found

out that another set of codes will emerge from reading and analyzing the data (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

It is recommended that coding should be performed with an open mind without preconceived ideas (Bryman, 2004). Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommended coding by analysing data line by line and looking for meaning found in words or groups of words, they called this ' microanalysis'. Because it is time consuming, Glaser (2001) recommended that if researchers are not sure of the grounded analysis, they should just analyse the data in front of them and write what they discover. I found this impractical as it offered no specific guideline on how to reach a pattern or theme.   I therefore followed a process of coding similar to a guideline recommended by Denzin and Lincoln, (2000). The guideline follows three steps; data reduction, data display and data verification.

5.2.2.2 Data reduction

Data reduction occurs before, during and after the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). During this process, I gave code names to emerging themes, key issues and concepts (open coding). I identified units of analysis by breaking down, and examining data. This involved examining the texts (interviews, observations and minutes of the meetings) for items of interest, with the ultimate aim of accumulating codes into categories (see appendix 27). I analysed the interview transcripts on a line-by-line basis and inserted initial codes into the margins of the text. Throughout this process, I was comparing, conceptualising and categorising data. This process is also known as open coding.

I collected chunks of texts and labels from my interviews, minutes of the meetings, observations and document analysis and stored them by code names as advised by Miles and Huberman (1994). I did all this manually. After transcribing the audio recording, I looked for themes arising from the interviews (Denscombe, 2003). I considered themes as those issues that participants mentioned most. For example time and work were mentioned more than any other word across all participants. This stage entails numerous judgments on meaning and significance of data. My judgement was based on; number of times the issue was mentioned, commonality and patterns as advised by Miles and Huberman (1994). By so doing, I was able to reduce the data to a manageable size.

(Bryman, 2004) advised researchers to start coding as they progress with the data collection to avoid being swamped by the data. I found this helpful as it narrowed

down the data to what I wanted to focus on. It should be noted that coding is not analysis itself but, it is part of it (Bryman, *ibid*). Strauss and Corbin (1998) empahsise that the researcher should not read the data in a general way but they must be analysed. During the process, I constantly compared the issues raised by the participants until no more new data emerged and after I had established commonality. All contradicting information was grouped on its own and followed up. This provided elements of surprise and at times nothing was found and the data were discarded.

5.2.2.3 Data Display

At this stage I was assembling information to allow for action taking and making conclusions also known as axial coding. This can be in the form of diagrams and charts (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is mainly a process of arranging the collected data. It is a higher level of coding in which I assembled the data in new ways after open coding. It helped to identify a central phenomenon through building relationships between categories and exploring causal conditions. After identifying the codes I connected them and examined their relationships to build a pattern as recommended by Creswell (1998). Glaser (1992) advocates axial coding using a coding paradigm of causal conditions or properties that lead to another category. I therefore identified relationships between categories and I came up with a core category around which other concepts revolved. These higher level categories helped me form the basis for the construction of a model for engaging fathers. Codes that did not make a pattern were discarded or considered as exceptionality. This depended on who said it and in what circumstances they said it. My literature review and my experiences as a father, son and teacher also played a role in deciding exceptionalities.

5.2.2.4 Data verification

At this stage, I was drawing meanings from the displayed data, noting patterns, following up surprises and checking conclusions with participants (selective coding). Qualitative data are distinguished by their meaningfulness hence interpretation is a key aspect of this stage (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This was the last stage where I elicited meaning and presented data. This involved matching responses given in interviews to observed behaviour (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Recording frequency of occurrences to establish patterns and comparing newly acquired data with existing data categories formed part of this process.

I examined raw data using many interpretations in order to find links between the research object and the outcomes with reference to the original research questions (Robson, 2002). Throughout the process, I counterchecked the data I found useful with other sources of data. For example when fathers said they contributed actively in the meetings, I checked in the minutes of the review meetings that they were expected to attend and contribute. Thus, verifying data from interviews with data from documents (Data triangulation). I also played back the audio tapes to the interviewees to clarify any misinterpretation and correct misunderstandings.

I began to build a storyline that narrated the categories and their relationships (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I identified the main category, and related it to other categories, making up relationships, and building a storyline (verification and conclusion). I also identified core codes and related them to other codes forming themes and patterns. Codes that formed a pattern often built a story that connected the categories (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

It is important at this stage to note that the three types of coding were not necessarily sequential; they overlapped. This process continued until a strong theoretical understanding of engaging fathers emerged. This is called constant comparative method (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

5.2.3   Challenges I encountered in coding

As much as this coding process was an effective way of establishing themes, I had a few challenges. By dividing data into small chunks, I was risking losing the context of what was being said. In addition to that, there was also a possibility of the fragmentation of data resulting in disturbing the narrative flow of what participants were saying. In order not to lose the context of what was being said by participants, I kept on checking with them in the meetings we had. They had several opportunities to question my findings. I had opportunities to check my claims with participants all the time as I had easy access to the school (study site).

5.2.4   The importance of the research question in this data analysis process

Cohen *et al.* (2007) outline five methods of organising data one of which is by using research questions. I used research questions to draw together all the relevant data for the exact issue of concern (engaging more fathers) (Creswell, 1998). This helped me to focus on the issues to do with fathers only. I also used research questions to present my findings in chapter six and as a guide to my discussions in chapter seven. There were times that participants wanted us to involve mothers and all parents and

guardians in general but the research questions drew us back to what we had originally planned. Therefore, issues that had nothing to do with father engagement were discarded.

Strauss & Corbin (1998) argue that having a research question allows the researcher to stay focused in the midst of masses of data. This helped me to preserve the coherence of the material as I was able to return to the driving concerns of the study and come up with a storyline. The research questions also provided a guideline to the storyline and in this case I was able to narrate the patterns of engagement adopted by fathers in the education of their sons. The model developed at the end of the study was the end product of the research questions.

Although the study was influenced by my own perceptions, once I had established the research question, I could not deviate from it. All research questions were agreed by most participants and this helped to reduce my own influence on the study as participants were also able to remind me to stick to them.

In the following sections, I shall explain how I developed themes through data analysis from interviews, observations and documents. I shall also demonstrate how I validated these themes through verification and comparison. The process of verification was carried out through comparing each interviewee against the other interviews carried out before. I did the same process with observations and documents. The themes that came out of the interviews were compared to those in the observations and documents. In the next sections, I shall demonstrate how I analysed data from each method I used.

5.2.5 Analysing data in interviews

As noted by Bryman (2004), coding in itself is not data analysis, it is part of the data analysis process. Therefore all interviews were recorded through a voice tracker and coded as explained earlier. As part of the analysis process, I read each interview line by line establishing codes. The codes were identified as the most common texts, issues, words and phrases said by the participants. For example words and phrases like 'work', 'time',' don't care',' discipline', 'good', 'don't know', were popular amongst the boys I interviewed. I then had to find out what they meant by 'I don't care'. In some cases it meant that they are not concerned about their education, fathers or behaviour. In other cases it actually meant the opposite that they cared but their pride would not allow them to say that. Therefore meaning was taken in context and was determined by other various situations in which   the participants were involved. In

other cases when I went back to verify meaning with participants, they would clarify that actually they were just angry but they 'care'. In line with interpretive philosophy that drove this study, I was able to take meaning from both actions and situations I observed.

As explained, earlier, all codes were grouped together to form patterns that eventually resulted into themes (using the bottom-up approach discussed in chapter 3). Thus, the process of analysis in interviews involved, reading, coding, pattern formation, interpretation, verification and conclusion, as shown by Fig 6.

Figure 5: How I analysed interviews to establish a theme
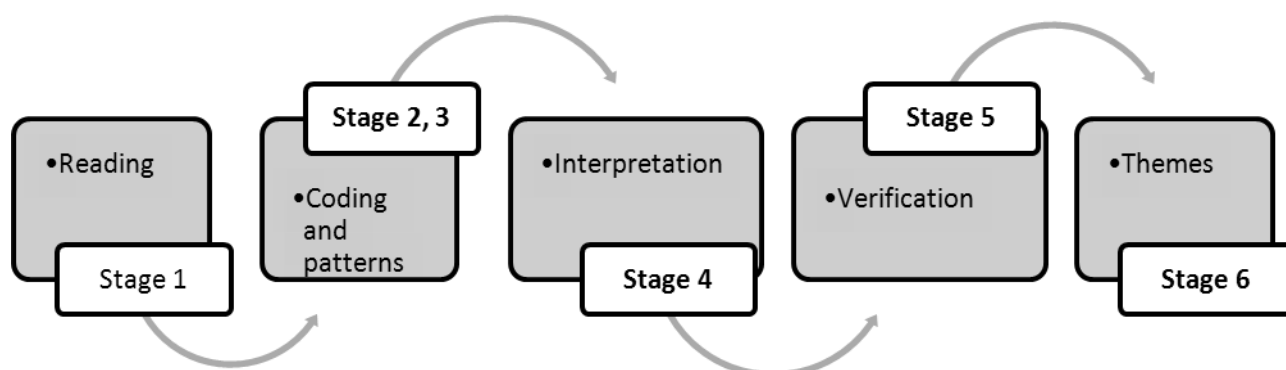
5.2.6   Data analysis in Observations

Observations brought out their own patterns and themes. I used observations to confirm my findings from the interviews as well as seeking answers to some of my research questions. I used the same guideline as in the interviews to analyse data from the observations. I read through all the forms and noted the most important issues that were coming out. These were both issues raised by participants and issues I observed myself. For example, I observed that most fathers were not attending the review meetings.

Each theme from the observations was compared to what was raised in the interviews and literature review. I set aside the themes that did not correspond with

the interviews and literature review and considered them later as surprises or discarding them as unfounded.

5.2.7   Data analysis in Documents

Like in observations, I used documents to cross-check and confirm what the participants said in the interviews. New data were also generated from the documents which could not be found through observations and interviews. However, as warned by Silverman (2002) these documents were treated with caution as they were written for other purposes that are not research. Some of the documents did not reflect some of the claims made by participants. For example, there was no accurate record of communicating with fathers, yet some teachers said it was there. Four relevant documents were analysed with the intention of verifying findings from the PAR and interviews. I considered three categories of valuing data in documents as advised by Cohen *et al.,* (2009).

1. Authenticity (I looked at the originality and genuineness of the document).

2. Credibility (Having worked for the organisation for seven years and helped write some of the documents, I was therefore aware of their strengths and weaknesses).

3. Representativeness (I looked at the meaning of the document and if the document meant what it was supposed to mean)

I read these documents line by line looking for commonality and exceptionality amongst them and comparing them with my findings from the observations and interviews. I was looking for the themes raised in the literature review as well.

Although these documents were not written for research purposes, they provided vital information about the fathers' participation in their sons' education. I was able to count the number of times fathers were actually in the school rather than the number I was given by the school. These documents also revealed the school's attitude towards working with fathers. I considered the following documents in the school to be the most relevant to the study.

5.2.7.1 School reports

School reports were evidence of communication between teachers and fathers regarding progress of the boys (see appendix 16). These reports were sent four times per year. However, there were no opportunities for fathers to respond to what was said in the reports. The reports were sent to parents and other relevant and

concerned professionals such as social workers and family support workers. A copy of the report was kept in boys' confidential folder. The reports confirmed that fathers were kept up to date on the progress of their sons even though some of the fathers claimed not to have been informed. However, the theme of communication remained consistent in all three data collection methods. It raised questions on how, why and when the communication was made as well as its monitoring.

5.2.7.2 Review meetings

These were held on a monthly basis to assess progress and set new targets. They showed progress made and how much fathers participated in them (see appendix 23). Some fathers came in person and others discussed issues over the phone. This also gave me the opportunity to find out reasons why fathers found it difficult to attend. Through this document, I was able to see how progress of the boys was monitored on a monthly basis and how much fathers were involved.

Fathers had opportunities to participate and help in setting targets for their sons. The targets were both social and academic. For example, setting targets on punctuality or reducing swearing. This document also confirmed some of the issues raised in interviews and observations such as work, time, communication and confidence. Very little contribution was made by some fathers and their physical attendance was below 50%. It gave me an opportunity to find out why and if they were facing any barriers.

5.2.7.3 Inclusion policy

This document spelt out the school's policy on Inclusion and equality and diversity (see appendix 17). The document states that the school strives to treat everyone equally and it recognizes that some people have to be treated differently due to their circumstances. The document heavily refers to staff and students with no mention of visitors that includes parents and fathers in particular. The policy also emphasizes the inclusion of people with special needs and disabilities and equality and diversity of people of different colours and genders. There is no mention of fathers as a group that needs special attention. During the interview, the school head acknowledged that they were doing well to engage fathers but they could do better.

This document revealed that the school does not recognize fathers as a special group that requires attention. This is despite all teachers agreeing that fathers needed help to engage in the education of their sons. The lack of mention of fathers

in this document showed that there was no commonality between interviews and this document.

5.2.7.4 Ofsted inspection report

The latest Ofsted inspection which was in March 2012 graded the school as 'good' (see appendix 15).The inspectors spoke to parents and were satisfied that the school was up to the required standards of education in the UK. Ofsted inspection is independent and therefore regarded as valid. Although the inspectors were interested in the school's views on inclusion and equality and diversity, they were not interested in how fathers were engaged. However, the questions below asked by the inspectors require the school to think about engaging fathers more;

1. How do you address the achievement gap between boys and girls?

2. How do you address behaviour problems in the school?

3. Equality and diversity is not only about the colour of the people or gender, it is also about helping other people access what you are doing here. How are you doing that?

All these questions can partly be addressed by coming up with a programme to engage fathers in the education of their sons. In my view, a father engagement model helps in addressing the achievement gap between boys and girls and also helps to address behaviour problems. Identifying fathers as a 'hard to reach group' and helping them to access the school facilities by engaging more in the education of their sons partly addresses question number 3 above.

This inspection document shows that all current government thinking is focused on strengthening partnerships between parents and schools; there is no emphasis on fathers. It is assumed that if one parent attends then the problem is solved. Despite all the evidence that fathers are important in the education of their sons mentioned in chapter 3, there is no push for more fathers to be engaged. There is no knowledge of the fathers' importance in the education of their sons in the school and nothing is being done about it to remove barriers to engaging more fathers.

5.2.7.5 Stakeholders' meetings and literature review

The meetings I had with each group in the first and second cycle gave me a clue of what to expect in my findings (appendix 2, 4 and 6). I recorded minutes in these meetings and went back to highlight the issues that I found common with what was raised in the interviews. These meetings helped me to come up with suggestions on

how we can understand fathers and engage them better. Although there were some contradictions between some groups, for the first time in the school, fathers were empowered to voice their opinions and contribute meaningfully to the education of their sons.

From these meetings, I realised that fathers could engage if we held our meetings in the evenings or at two different times such as mornings and evenings. This gave them opportunities to attend before or after work. Flexibility was a theme raised in the meetings and in literature review. I followed the same process of coding the meeting minutes, establishing patterns and comparing the emerging themes with what I found in other areas.

5.2.8   My own experiences

It is important to mention that although I collected data with an open mind while looking for patterns and themes, I was also influenced by my own experiences as a father, son and teacher. As a son, I had experienced how my own father engaged with my school and how he was involved. Although this was in a different context, popular issues such as time and work emerged across the board. My father never visited my school because he was always at work and never had the time. As a teacher, I found it difficult to engage fathers as I did not know the reasons why they were not engaging, it was a sensitive subject for me.

As a father myself, due to my work commitments, I sometimes find it difficult to attend to my sons' activities at school as they are done at the same time that I am needed at work as well. So I carried these assumptions into my data analysis and discovered that my personal experiences were not very different from the issues raised in this study. My own experiences helped me to accept some exceptionalities as true and valid. For example, it was a family arrangement that my father goes to work whilst my mother looked after us and this issue came as an exceptionality in this study. Some fathers felt that it was their own arrangement as a family that it was the mother's responsibility to attend to school matters whilst the father went to work. They would share information though and in such a scenario, the father could not be said to be non-engaging.

5.2.9   Memoing

Memos serve as reminders about meanings and provide building blocks for reflection (Bryman, 2004). Miles and Huberman (1994) see memoing as theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they occur to the analyst while coding.

Glasser (1978) in Punch (2009) advised researchers to stop the coding when an idea occurs and record it. It is more effective to record the ideas as they happen as memoirs. Throughout the whole process of data generation, I had a separate note book where I recorded surprises, commonalities and ideas that I thought were outstanding. I kept these thoughts and ideas for comparison with the outcomes from the data analysis. This helped develop the model for father engagement in the school.

Memos also helped me to keep track of the development of ideas from the data. The links and other related information coming from the data were recorded and relationships of these ideas established. For example, during a conversation with colleagues at lunch time or on the bus home, I would record in my note book an idea they may raise which was connected to another previously recorded theme. Sometimes they mentioned something unrelated to the study but would trigger a breakthrough on something I had been working on for days. All this helped develop themes and ideas on engaging more fathers in the school. However, I had to find ways of validating my data.

5.3 How I validated emerging themes in this study

There are several ways a researcher can demonstrate trustworthiness of data (Silverman (2011). In this study I used triangulation and comparison. Triangulation helped to cross-check responses from participants and I used comparison to see how far away I was from the truth. This section explains how I carried out both triangulation and comparison.

5.3.1 Triangulation

The tactics used in this data analysis helped me to move beyond initial impressions to improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable findings (Robson, 2002). Cohen and Manion (2000) define triangulation as a way of mapping out, or explaining more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint. It involves using more than one method to check if the same results are produced. Triangulation involves collecting data from a variety of angles and then comparing and contrasting them (Elliott, 2001). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) see triangulation as a way of justifying the researcher's findings. In this study, If more than one person or method point to the same result, confidence in the results increased. For example, if fathers, professionals, teachers and the boys all say that fathers find it difficult to attend meetings, then there was every reason to take that as

a valid point. In this study, triangulation helped me to reduce intrinsic bias, increase trustworthiness and cross-check claims made by participants. In some cases, as I mentioned before, I discarded claims made by some participants because they failed the triangulation test. For example, six out of ten boys complained about 'too much homework' but because their fathers and teachers did not raise the same issue, I did not take this as a theme. The claim may have been true though but that is one weakness of the method.

Through triangulation, I ensured that research findings accurately reflected the issues being faced by the fathers in the school. Data triangulation and methodological triangulation identified by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) as part of establishing the rigour of the study were used in this study.

5.3.1.1 Methodological triangulation

This was an on-going process throughout the data analysis process. To ensure that my themes were valid, I compared what I found from each method with other methods. If findings from all the methods drew similar conclusions, then trustworthiness was established (Patton, 2002). Only the themes that were common across all methods were recognised. Exceptional themes were verified by literature review and recognition of the researchers' experiences as a father, son and teacher (embodied knowledge). I also visited another school and interviewed the head teacher to verify some of the common and exceptional issues that were being raised in my study. Fig 7 illustrates how the triangulation was carried out.

Figure 6: Methodological Triangulation

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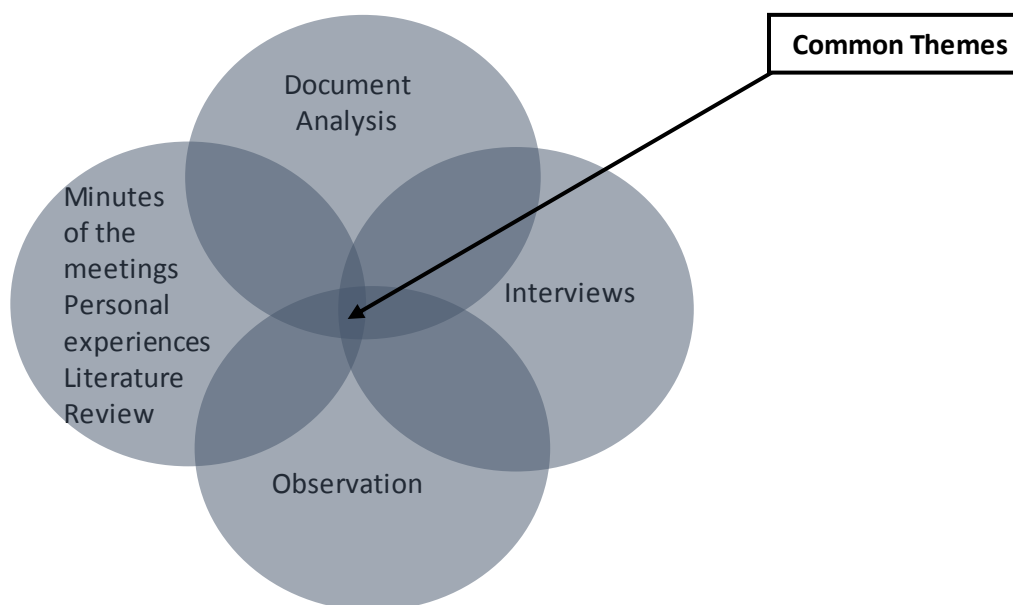
5.3.1.2 Data Triangulation

Data triangulation involved using different sources of information as shown on Fig 7 below to establish the dependability and trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 2002). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I used meetings and interviews to compare data from each group of participants. I also compared participants' views in each group. Almost the same questions were asked to different participants. Table 2 shows some of the questions asked to different groups of participants to check if they would produce similar answers. The questions were the same but asked in different ways to suit each group of participants.

Figure 7: Data triangulation
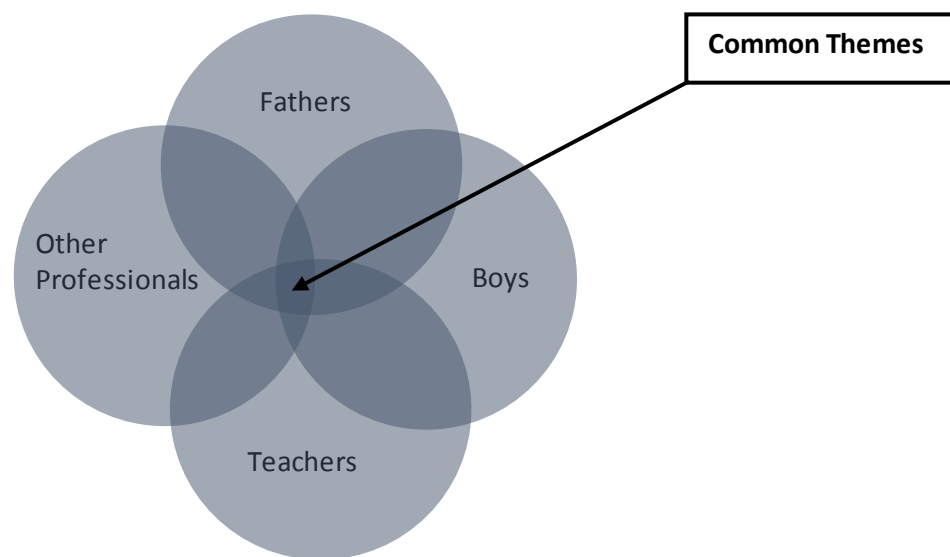
Having established common themes, I compared them with what came out of my literature review, minutes of the meetings and my own experiences (also known as embodied knowledge, Whitehead, 2008). For example, themes such as work commitments and time were raised by all participants. These themes were then verified with other themes from the other methods and literature review. However, the verification was an on-going process throughout the data analysis process.

Table 2: My questioning techniques used to validate data

Fathers	Boys	Teachers	Other professionals
Why did you send your son to this school?	Why did you come to this school?	What are your main aims in teaching these boys?	Why did you recommend this school for this particular boy?
How important do you think you are in the education of your son?	How important do you think your father is in your education?	How important do you think fathers are in the education of their sons?	How important do you think fathers are in the education of their sons?
What activities do you do with your son outside school?	What activities do you do with your father outside school?	What activities do you do to encourage fathers and sons to be involved in outside school activities?	What activities do you do to encourage fathers and sons to do outside school?
How do you want to be involved in your son's education?	How do you want your father to be involved in your education?	How do you want fathers to be involved in the education of their sons?	How do you want fathers to be involved in the education of their sons?
What do you see as barriers to your involvement in the education of your son?	What do you see as barriers to your father's involvement in your education?	What do you see as barriers to fathers' involvement in the education of their sons?	What do you see as barriers to fathers' involvement in the education of their sons?

Table 2 shows that I asked the same question to various participants but in a different way. I was trying to establish a pattern, looking for common themes and exceptional issues. The same question could either yield the same answer across all

participants (commonality) or an unexpected answer (exceptionality). The two were further followed up using literature review or my own personal experiences. Commonality was when most or all participants said the same issue over and over again. This same issue would also be found in the literature review and possibly in document analysis and observations. For example, all participants spoke about fathers' work patterns and lack of time to engage with the school. Although this was said in many different ways, it was a popular and common issue affecting fathers. The same issue was also raised in most of the literature that I read. On the other hand, exceptionality was when something unexpected came out and it made sense. For example, some fathers said they enjoyed cooking and shopping with their sons. Most literature and professionals interviewed had suggested 'father friendly' activities such as football and other physical activities.

5.3.2 Comparison

The themes that I recorded were grounded in theory but verified through other methods (see appendix 27). As I mentioned before, I used literature review, feedback from participants, my own experiences and triangulation to check for dependability and trustworthiness of my data. As part of verifying my data I visited a school with almost similar settings to ours as well as attending a few events about men and fathers around the UK. I wanted to see how far away my data were from what is considered 'the common trend' on father engagement. I did not see much of a difference. Most of the themes were common across all areas. Issues such as work commitments, divorce and legal rights were common.

5.4 COMMON THEMES

From the above results, there were common issues that were more outstanding than others. These were derived from the patterns that developed from the coding system explained earlier in this chapter. In this section, I shall identify and explain these common themes with reference to how they helped us to understand fathers better and developed the model shown in chapter 7, Fig 8.

5.4.1 The changing role of fathers

All participants recognised that the role of the father is not static. It changes over time. During the Second World War, for example, most fathers went to war and mothers were left to look after the family. Traditionally, the father was responsible for providing for the family by working and paying for the bills. This is not the case anymore. With the Equality and Diversity laws, most fathers are now engaged in

roles that were traditionally for mothers only. This includes shopping, babysitting and all the other house chores. As the government pushes towards the big society agenda, fathers are now expected to do more. For example, engaging fathers in the education of their sons is an idea that emerged recently through research. Fathers are now encouraged to engage with schools because research has established that they are particularly important in the education of their sons. It is emphasised that fathers are more likely to motivate and encourage their sons to engage with education. From this study the school has established that although there are barriers, it is possible to engage fathers in the education of their sons.

5.4.2 Father figures

The study identified that boys were willing to work with males who are not necessarily their biological fathers. They want males they are comfortable talking to. These males were identified as father figures. All boys agreed that they looked up to other males who are not their biological fathers. They also agreed that they wanted to learn from other male figures but maintained that their mothers play an equally important role in their education.

5.4.3 Communication

Communication amongst all participants was raised as an issue to be discussed. Most boys complained that due to their fathers' commitments, they were not able to talk to them as much as they liked. Non-resident fathers were also identified as having communication barriers with both the school and their sons. Fathers reported that the boys were not keen on telling them what has been happening at school. They mostly said it was 'fine.' Teachers said they were sending letters to all parents and were satisfied with the way they were communicating but some fathers were not. Non-resident fathers wanted letters to be sent directly to them. Professionals agreed that there was need to improve communication amongst all the groups.

Success at engaging fathers in the education of their sons hinges on the school improving its communication procedures with both the fathers and the boys.

5.4.4 Culture

This study revealed that the engagement or non-engagement of a father can be a cultural issue. Some cultures from ethnic minorities in the school believed that mothers were supposed to engage whilst fathers are at work. Engaging with the school was not seen as a father's role. Although most fathers spoken to understood the effect this would have on their sons, they admitted it may take another generation

to change things. We agreed to start with their generation and for them to lead by example.

This was typical in my situation where my father worked and my mother looked after us and managed everything regarding our education. Culturally, in our community, a man has to provide for his family by working.

5.4.5 Qualifications and behaviour

Qualifications and behaviour were the two issues mostly raised by all participants as targets for the boys at school. Most boys also knew about these targets. They were aware that improving qualifications and behaviour can lead to better achievement later in life. Although fathers and teachers differed on priorities, they both agreed that the two were paramount for the boys. Fathers emphasised on behaviour because it was the main reason the boys were removed from mainstream education whilst the teachers wanted to improve qualifications for their own targets and to meet the required national standards.

5.4.6 Work commitments

Most boys mentioned that their fathers were busy at work and therefore they would find it difficult to engage. By their own admission, most fathers cited work commitments as a barrier to their engagement. This raised two other big issues that all participants mentioned throughout the study; time and flexibility. The study identified that fathers did not have time to attend to their sons' education due to work commitments, the school is still looking at how it can improve its flexibility to accommodate more working fathers.

It is important to note that both data collection and analysis are processes that require every researcher to observe the ethics of research. This study was no exception. Involving participants as core-researchers and working with children required me to adhere to a strict ethical code of conduct. The next section describes how I addressed this issue.

5.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

The case study is often privy to confidential information which may raise ethical issues (Cohen *et al.,* 2011). Due to my position as both a teacher, an insider and a researcher, I paid close attention to ethical considerations in the conduct of this study as advised by Stenhouse (1975). All research has ethical dimensions and researching at your own place of work can be problematic, especially, where

research is conducted amongst friends and work colleagues (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). This study involved working with vulnerable children which raised issues of power, manipulation and bias. The most important aspect of this study was to make sure that participants agreed to take part without physical or psychological coercion. This agreement was based on full and open information. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2004) argue that research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time. This is despite who they are, children, friends, work colleagues or strangers. Thus, even though I was researching on my own students and work colleagues, they had a right to know and refuse to take part. Although it has been argued that there is a level of deception accepted if the data collected are benefiting society or saving lives (Bryman, 2004). My study did not fall in this category and hence there was no need to deceive the participants. I felt that it was possible to collect valid and real data without deceiving participants.

Fabrications, fraudulent materials and omissions are unethical (BERA, 2004). There was a danger of rendering the study invalid if it was based on fabrications. This interpretative qualitative research is based on real life issues. There was no way I could fabricate any part of the study because most participants, particularly teachers asked for feedback at every stage of the study. Also, all participants had opportunities to read the drafts and attend meetings where they disputed some of my claims and corrected misinterpretations and misunderstandings. This also protected me from the criticism I received for following Whitehead's 'Living Theory' where I had opportunities to use my own 'personal knowledge'. If other participants felt that my 'personal knowledge was not required, they challenged revealing the democratic nature of PAR.   In the event that I decided to use the information for other purposes, consent was sought. For example I asked for the participants' consent to use the minutes of the meetings in reporting the findings (see appendix 2 – 7).

It is also advised that the researcher should give respect where participants adjust their priorities and routines to accommodate the requirements of the research (Somekh, 2006). My participants, particularly the boys, were putting their reputation at risk as they were in danger of being taunted about trying to be 'good boys' and co-operating with the school which was seen as a weakness by other boys. They were revealing private issues about their families which they could have chosen not to do. Teachers, professionals and fathers were taking their time out to attend interviews and meetings. I had to show respect for all this by not cancelling appointments and

being at the meeting venue on time as well as thanking them for their contributions. The highest respect I could give all participants was an accurate report about them and as much feedback as possible.

To show that all participants took part voluntarily, they signed consent forms and were given as much information as possible about the study spelling out all the risks and benefits (see appendix 12). The benefits outweighed the risks as it was a study 'of them by them for them'. They held the destiny of the study as full and active participants who were creators and end users of the study (Bryman, 2004). I identified three key ethical issues to ensure that all participants were safe. Firstly I ensured that all participants were safe from harm that may come as a result of the study. Secondly, I had meetings with all groups of participants and made sure they had enough information about the study and their identity would not be disclosed. Lastly, I ensured that all the data collected were by mutual consent and not by deception. Apart from all this, there were seven areas I addressed as part of my adherence to research ethics. These are discussed next.

5.5.1   Harm to participants

Harm to participants can come as a result of a failure to keep the data collected confidential. This type of harm can be in form of embarrassment or ridicule by the public or by peers. I ensured that the data collected were used for research purposes only. If I needed it for any other purposes such as publication, we agreed that I would have to seek further consent. All data used were destroyed or kept in a locked cabinet no further than the required time of the study. In cases where participants felt that they had been harmed or there was potential cause for harm, they were free to withdraw without giving any reason.

5.5.2   Lack of Informed Consent

All prospective participants received a letter of invitation to participate in the study and an information sheet, explaining what the study was about (see appendix 9, 11 12 and 25). Cohen *et al.* (2007) encouraged researchers to consult and seek permission from those responsible for the prospective subject. This was a very important issue in this study as I had some participants who were under the age of eighteen. As mentioned before, by law these participants needed further consent to be sought from parents or guardians and the school authorities. I made sure that the study did not proceed without the consent of parents or guardians (see appendix 10). Apart from that, some of my participants had literacy difficulties. Giving them an

information sheet to read was not enough as they could neither read nor understand it. I read the information sheet to them and explained what the study was all about, particularly mentioning the potential danger of participating as well as the potential benefits. Burgess *et al.* (2007) advised that in all cases, as a researcher one should offer participants the right to refuse to participate without giving any reasons should they wish to do so. Again as in the case above, adult participants had the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

5.5.3   Invasion of privacy

In this study, there was a potential invasion of privacy in particular when I interviewed fathers about their relationships with their sons. Some discussions on this matter were very private. It was upon me as the researcher to keep these discussions confidential and protect the dignity of the participants (Somekh, 2006).   Analysing personal documents of the boys and the school's policies were both an invasion of privacy. Collecting and losing such confidential data would have been catastrophic. I therefore kept the data collected in a secure locked cabinet at the research site (the school).

5.5.4   Deception

Robson (2002) indicated that giving adequate information to participants cancels out any suspicions of deception, coercion and manipulation. . Cohen *et al.* (2007) added that children must be given a real and legitimate opportunity to say that they do not want to participate. I considered all participants vulnerable to deception. For most of them, this was their first time participating in a study of this magnitude. There was a danger that they did not understand what this study was all about despite my explanations, in particular the young boys. The fact that their teachers, the school head and their parents were aware of their participation cancelled out any suspicions of deception. Also, participants who had literacy difficulties were vulnerable to deception. I again read the information sheet to them and involved other neutral people to witness the signing

5.5.5   Position of the Researcher

Who we are, our past experiences and interests determine our position in the research (Punch, 2009). My position in the school as a member of staff was vulnerable to criticism. I was in a position to have easy access to information and in the eyes of the critics, I would not be able to criticise the organisation I work for. However, it should be noted that this study was not a critical review of the school. It

was aimed at improving the functioning of the school by engaging more fathers and making staff aware of the unique contribution that fathers bring to the education of their sons. By identifying the weakness of the school's policy on father engagement, I was actually constructively criticising it. I did not use my position to influence any decisions in the study. This was a participatory action research in which all participants had a say in the study. They were part of the study therefore I was their colleague and there were no power or manipulation issues.

5.5.6   My responsibilities as a researcher

Having looked at the five issues discussed above, it is clear that I had a responsibility to respect participants' ownership of data and preserve their dignity and privacy (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). The 1994 BERA guidelines state that researchers should not conduct their research in ways that will damage the future enquiries of other researchers. The research site I chose was a future potential centre for research in education. Teachers, parents and students in the school are willing to do anything that can improve teaching and learning as well as behaviour. If I did not adhere to strict ethical guidelines as stated by the University of Northampton, future researchers would not be welcome in this school.

I was also responsible for managing the study by enforcing these ethical requirements. I made sure that all participants were adhering to ethical requirements by signing forms preventing them from discussing other participants with members of the public. Participants were also encouraged to respect each other's views and to be polite to each other. We agreed that I would take the responsibility to ask a participant to leave the group if it was felt that their contribution was negative to the study. Although this was a democratic approach in which we were all equal as participants, I was responsible for making sure that we stuck to the subject of discussion and that the study was completed.

5.5.7   Researching with children and child Safeguarding

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (2008) defines a child or a young person as anyone under the age of eighteen years. All the boys who participated in this study were under eighteen years of age and by definition, considered as children. Gaining consent for a child or young person to participate in a study has its own challenges. There were some procedures that I needed to follow that were slightly different from gaining consent from adult participants. The legislation in this country states that those under the age of eighteen are not legally competent to provide

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consent (National Children's Bureau, 2003). Their decisions are often influenced by parents and other adult gatekeepers, such as teachers and social workers (Greig, Taylor and MacKay, 2007). Although I recognised the need to view these children as independent individuals, capable of making their own decisions, I was required by law to seek consent from their guardians and the school.

Consent to involve the boys in the study was sought from their parents, the head teacher and the boys themselves. This was a long and complicated process particularly in cases where parents were living separately, I had to seek consent from both of them. There was one incident in which the head teacher and the parents gave consent but the boy declined and his decision was respected.

It is common to first seek consent from the organisation where participants will be recruited (such as the school) before gaining consent from the parents or guardians (Alderson and Morrow, 2011) (see appendix 13). However, even if the head teacher gave consent, it did not guarantee consent from the child or their parents. In line with the BERA (2004) guidelines, the best interests and rights of the child were at the core of conducting research with children and young people. Even if parents agreed on behalf of the child, I made sure that the child had the final say and had the right to withdraw at any time. The boys were also constantly reminded of their rights throughout the study to make sure that they made the right choices at every stage.

Researchers are encouraged to ensure that the information on the project is clear and written in a language appropriate for the sample (Greig *et al.*, 2007). I made sure that all participants were provided with a written explanation of the research, in an age-appropriate format. Verbal discussion of the research project alongside the written material was also given. I found verbal discussion of the study before signing the consent forms more effective. This was done with the whole group of boys as they were more confident as a group than individually. They asked more questions as a group. I read the forms to the boys and changed the wording to suit their level of understanding. For example the question; 'what is your ambition by coming to this school' was changed to 'what would you like to achieve by coming to this school?'

When working with children and young people, researchers have a duty to ensure the research methods are appropriate and will not cause participants any physical or psychological harm (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). The use of semi-structured interviews ensured that the boys felt at ease as the process would at times take the form of a general conversation. Such conversations were relaxing as the boys felt

less interrogated. The observations were less stressful as the boys were used to my presence and the document analysis was not intrusive. As a group, the boys showed more confidence and relaxation in the meetings where they expressed themselves more.

Two areas of concern were identified as having the potential to cause harm to the boys. Firstly, there was a danger that the boys would misunderstand the study. This could happen at any stage, either at the beginning, during data collection or at the presentation of the findings. I made sure that the boys fully understood what we were discussing by repeating what they had said and telling them what it meant. This was challenging as they did not want to be seen as shallow minded so I had to be careful in my clarification to avoid upsetting them.

There was potential for the 'peer police' mentioned in chapter three to target the participating boys and taunt them for being 'chosen because they had problems.' Having a father coming to the school was not seen as 'cool' by other students. As a school, we agreed that the boys who were to participate should not be on the list of the vulnerable children who were prone to bullying. We also made sure that they were protected from such taunts by having a zero tolerance on bullying in the school. I actually turned it round and called the whole process 'student empowerment' which became a prestigious group that most pupils wanted to be in.

I was well aware of the safeguarding policy in the school but I read it again for the purposes of the study. I wanted to make sure that I was confident of the safeguarding procedures in the school and how to report safeguarding issues. I made my CRB available to parents of the boys and the boys themselves to build their confidence in the study. Risk assessments were also put in place to avoid any potential harm and safeguard the children.

5.5.8   Risk assessment

As part of my efforts to prevent harm and gain the confidence of the participants in my study, I carried out a risk assessment (see appendix 26). This was a document to demonstrate that I was aware of the risks posed by the study and I had a plan in place to minimise the risks. The risks assessment helped to assure the participants that though there was no guarantee of an accident happening, I was prepared to help and protect them from potential risks.

5.6 SUMMARY

My confidence in the findings and conclusions is rooted in the fact that the model I developed emerged from the data I collected (theory emerged from data, (Strauss and Cobin, 1998). Although I had my own preconceptions and feeling about the engagement of fathers, these did not interfere with my conclusions. Participants had access to these conclusions which they agreed to. The process of coding broke down masses of data into manageable chunks developing into patterns and themes. This data was verified through triangulation and comparison and I am therefore confident that these findings are as near to what participants wanted to achieve as is possible. Although I could not guarantee unforeseen accidents I managed to address most of the ethical issues concerning this study to the satisfaction of all participants. All participants were confident of the risk assessments and procedures taken to avoid any harm that could come as a result of participating in this study.

CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.   INTRODUCTION

Data analysis can be conducted for various purposes such as to describe, interpret, portray or summarise a situation or event (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). The aim of this data analysis was to produce data that would raise awareness of the importance of fathers in the education of their sons in our school. Therefore this study produced descriptive and explanatory findings in an effort to improve the understanding of fathers in our school. It is important at this point to note that in line with the Living Theory which this study is based on, I relied mainly on narrative reporting with limited use of direct quotes. This has been influenced by the triangulation method where I collected various view points from different sources and summarised them. As mentioned before, there were times that all participants said the same thing but in different ways and I had to amalgamate their views through summaries in my own words. I also sought to use simple, flowing and narrative style of writing to cater for some of my participants who wanted to read this thesis. As core-researchers, I wanted them to read, understand and identify with their work as recommend by Whitehead (2008).

These findings are derived from the analysis of data collected over a period of three years. This chapter relies heavily on the exact words mentioned by various participants who took part in this study. Although this chapter is about the views of the participants, my position as an insider researcher also brings out my own views as part of a large group. As advocated by Whitehead (2008), my values, views and 'embodied knowledge also feature as part of the results. This is also the chapter that reveals how fathers are struggling to cope with their changing roles and new expectations that come with being a modern father. The chapter consists of five major sections. The first section is a brief overview of the two cycles I conducted as part of the PAR. The second section is a response to the six major research questions identified in chapter 1. This is followed by another section on other issues of interest that were raised outside the research questions. There is also an additional section on the results of the interview with my father. The last section is on the major issues raised across all participants which I decided to call common themes. As mentioned before, the results of this study cannot be generalised to the UK population. These results are intended to improve the engagement of fathers in our school and raise awareness of the unique contribution made by fathers in the education of their sons. They are meant to inform the school about various issues

concerning the engagement of fathers. The school may use these results to formulate policy, make changes or improvements on how they can work with fathers. These results directly contributed to the development of a father engagement model suggested by participants over the entire period of the study in the school. However, before answering the research questions, I shall report what happened in each cycle first.

6.1 First cycle

Through interviews and minutes of the meetings most participants indicated that they wanted to engage more fathers in the education of their sons. All adults (teachers, professionals and fathers) agreed that the engagement of fathers would help to improve discipline amongst the boys. Most boys did not agree with this. They did not want their fathers to be informed of their behaviour in the school and they felt it was not going to change anything because their fathers knew about their bad behaviour from previous schools already. This made sense though and we settled on not reporting bad behaviour but asking fathers to help with a behaviour contract we were going to have with all the boys.

All participants agreed that these boys were in the school mainly to gain qualifications and improve behaviour. However, there were differences in priorities with most fathers prioritising behaviour so that their sons would not be excluded whilst teachers and professionals saw qualifications as more important to improve chances of employment and reduce the rates of crime in the community.

Fathers pointed out that they wanted to see an improvement in the way the school was communicating with them. They recommended texting as more convenient. They said it was quicker and safer. Most non-resident complained that because they did not share the same address as their sons, they were not receiving any communication from the school.

It was also raised that the school should be more flexible when organising meeting times. Two sets of times were suggested (morning and evening) to cater for fathers who work. Fathers recommended that these meetings should be useful and not used as a platform to tell them off. They also said they wanted teachers to be strict with their sons and be able to manage some of the 'trivial issues' that were reported in the school. Swearing was used as an example that although it was unacceptable but the

media and almost everyone uses swear words and teachers should find ways of dealing with this within the school.

Most boys agreed (9/10) to participate in some activities with their fathers but they wanted the school to plan these activities. Some boys suggested their friends joining in the activities or other males who they felt more comfortable with. The boys were also happy with the school to report good news to their fathers.

The teachers wanted fathers to take an active role in their sons' education by helping with homework or just monitoring that it was being done. They also agreed to arrange flexible times to invite fathers to the school. Two new things were suggested; that fathers could be invited to help out in areas of interest like bricklaying and painting and decorating or any other subject. Management also agreed to train staff on how to work with fathers.

Other professionals recommended that we should work together and share vital information about the boys' progress particularly the youth offending service. Information on behaviour and attendance was identified as vital. I found these results almost similar to what I had read in the literature review. We therefore implemented the recommendations and observed them in the second cycle.

6.2 SECOND CYCLE
After monitoring the progress of the first cycle which took about three months, participants settled on the following as improvements:

a. A parent liaison officer was employed by the school. Her main duties were to monitor communication between the school and parents with particular focus on the fathers. She was also responsible for arranging all meetings and listening to the fathers' concerns.

b. Flexible times for meetings were arranged but still some fathers failed to attend. The group decided to redefine the meaning of attendance based on feedback from the fathers. It was decided that fathers could be contacted by phone on some issues and their presence in the school was not always necessary.

c. Behaviour and qualifications were made a priority by the school and this worked very well for all participants. The boys liked the idea of being consulted and being part of the decision making process in regards to their affairs. This is something we did not foresee.

d. The school decided to be sensitive in the way they approached the father subject to accommodate young people whose fathers were absent. This was done through careful analysis and information sharing (as recommended in the first cycle) with other professionals to find out the availability of the father. The school acknowledged that not all students had fathers hence other male role models were sought.

e. We noted that some fathers could help out with Literacy and Numeracy rather than Bricklaying and Carpentry that were suggested in the first cycle. The school discovered the need for training to avoid patronising fathers and having biased views on the needs of male parents. The suggestion of teaching Bricklaying and Carpentry was seen as patronising and bias by some fathers for which the school apologised.

f. Non-resident fathers were sent letters about the progress of their sons and communication was improved by emailing and texting all parents when making announcements. Letters were retained as an official way of communication. We decided to implement a third cycle based on the recommendations made in the second one.

6.3 THIRD CYCLE

This cycle was not reviewed for the purposes of this thesis but four things were suggested as an improvement from the second cycle. We suggested that the school should invite other males who are not fathers of the boys to help. This was at the request of the boys who felt that they could work better with 'males they respected.' This suggestion also helped other boys who had no access to their fathers.

We also encouraged other fathers to help in campaigning for more fathers to attend. It was suggested by both teachers and other professionals that if other fathers spread the word about working in partnership with the school, more fathers would join in. In addition to this, there was also a suggestion on parent classes led by the fathers themselves. The school organised staff training on behaviour management and working with fathers. This training was for all staff not teachers only. All participants agreed to continue into a fourth cycle in which I did not take part. They felt that if they continued with the meetings, the school would benefit with more people making more suggestions.

6.4 RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The organisation and presentation of this thesis is based on research questions as mentioned in the previous chapter. Such an approach draws together all the relevant data for the exact issue of concern and preserves the coherence of the study. In the next section, I shall report and describe how various participants responded to the main research questions. This is followed by another section on other important relevant issues that were raised outside of the research questions.

6.4.1 What is the father's role in his son's education?

Most teachers and all professionals saw fathers as important in helping to manage the behaviour of the boys. Words such as 'discipline, behaviour, control, fear, scare,' were used to describe fathers as managers of behaviour. All participants except for four boys agreed that if fathers were engaged in their sons' education there will be an improvement in completion of work, attendance and punctuality which all lead to an improvement in achievement.

Some boys preferred to do activities with their friends or other male adults who were not their fathers. This was because of the poor relations that existed between them and their fathers. If the father did not have a good relationship with his son, it always followed that the son would not want him involved. Some boys expressed hatred for their absent fathers with one boy saying 'Mr H is not my real dad you know, I have not seen my dad since I was six, he is a d*****.'

However, the majority of the boys agreed that their fathers were important in their education although they did not want the school to keep them informed about what was happening. The boys revealed a sense of pride in showing their fathers how good they were at their education. They all agreed that they would share good news with their fathers but not the bad news.

All professionals saw fathers as vital in guiding boys in the right direction as far as education is concerned. Teachers saw this as role modelling but were quick to point out that not all fathers were positive role models. Three boys did not mention fathers as their role models or as people they look up to for guidance. However the general majority of the participants agreed that fathers could help by offering advice and guidance on education matters to their sons. This was expressed through words and phrases like 'role modelling, leading, inspiring, talking to'.

All fathers said they were proud of their sons and would like to know how they are doing in school. If they are successful they feel proud about it and if they are not, they are embarrassed by it. One father was quoted saying that, 'Sometimes as a parent, you are judged by your child's behaviour and some of us have not been so lucky.'

Fathers were seen as an inspiration and source of motivation even for those boys who expressed hatred towards their fathers. It was observed and agreed by both teachers and professionals that those boys who denied seeing their fathers as a source of motivation were doing so because of pride and frustration at not seeing the interest from their fathers in their work. Some teachers argued that some fathers were anti-education and could not been seen as an inspiration to their sons. Fathers themselves unanimously agreed that they were an inspiration to their sons though upon further questions, some of them did not understand what inspiration meant. One father admitted that sometimes fathers face challenges in raising their sons. He said

> Raising children is one of the hardest things in life but there is no training for it. I had to read on the internet when I had my first child. Sometimes you have to think hard and try to remember what your parents used to say to you and try to copy that. I think it's important to plan and be sure that you will have enough resources and time for your children before having them. Some of these boys are good boys, all they need is love and security.

This statement shows that some fathers see themselves as providers of security and love for their families. This is in line with some findings from the literature review on the traditional role of a father. Most fathers want to be seen as sources of both physical and financial security. We all agreed that the lack of love and security amongst some of the boys leads to expressing hatred towards their fathers. One boy said;

> I live with my mum and my stepdad, 'No, Mr J is not my real father, my father is
>
> Asian but I don't know him. Can't you see I am half-Asian. If I see him I will batter him. I just hate him

Fathers have also been found to be more involved in issues of enforcing rules of time, curfews, friends to associate with, dress and appearance. Although at times this has been proved to be the source of conflict with their teenage sons, their actions are driven by the desire to provide love and security.

6.4.2   What are the experiences of the fathers in working with school?

It was my observation that most staff in the school did not understand the positive effects a father can have on his son's education. Some staff, both teaching and non-teaching were not concerned about the presence or absence of a father before this study. One professional had labelled fathers as 'non-caring' and 'hard to reach'. This fitted in well with the fathers' complaints that they felt disrespected (not by all teachers).

In their own words the fathers said their experiences with the school varied from 'being ignored, disrespected and misunderstood to being welcomed and celebrated'. Some fathers had issues with lack of communication in the school which they saw as being 'ignored and disrespected' and others felt they were' welcomed and valued'. Generally the experiences were not very good hence this study was conducted.

Some negative perceptions of fathers were expressed by one professional who noted that;

> I decided to have a certain number of kids based on whether I was going to be able to look after them or not. Some fathers are so irresponsible that they have children anywhere anytime expecting the government to look after them. Tell me, how can you have a child when you know you are not going to be there for them?

The above view is in stark contrast to the previous quotation from a father who said it's important for any father to plan and be sure that they have enough resources and time for their children before having them. Thus, some fathers are aware that this planning also involves engaging with the school.

We found out that some fathers may have had bad experiences with school in general such as poor behaviour, low achievement and bullying. They may not have good stories to tell about education. In my view, if fathers had a bad experience in school, there is a high possibility that they may have negative attitudes that may be reflected in their sons' behaviour. One father revealed that what his son was currently experiencing was exactly the same experience he went through. He did not know how to deal with it except to see the whole education system as unfair and not good. The school head added that:

> Teachers have to be careful what they say to fathers because one negative comment can affect many generations. I am talking about a father who constantly had negative comments from teachers, he never liked school and he passed this on to his son, who I am sure is going to do the same to his own son.

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In the documents that I analysed, particularly in the review document used by the school, there were no spaces for parent comments (Appendix 33). This gave me the impression that even though parents made comments about the progress of their children, this was not recorded by the school. Although the school takes parental involvement seriously, there is no evidence of a record of the comments made by parents during reviews. However, the school carries out parental surveys every term where all parent views are collected, analysed and reported back to staff. When I checked on the surveys, only 22 out of the 98 returned surveys were filled in by fathers.

There was also a sense of inferiority by some fathers who felt that teachers were middle class people who 'think that they are more educated and can tell them what to do.' One father commented that 'I don't think some of the teachers understand our world.' When asked to explain he said his background and that of the teachers were so different and sometimes he felt he was not understood.

All fathers saw the school as a source of information on the academic performance of their children with one father saying;

> In a perfect world where fathers and the school are working together without any problems, we will always rely on the teachers to tell us how our sons are doing as they spend-more time with them than us.

In general, the fathers' experiences of working with our school were mixed with positives and negatives. As a whole the fathers were happy with the current efforts but they had problems with certain individuals.

6.4.3 What strategies do fathers adopt to enable their own engagement?

Most fathers did not see the need to talk about this. They felt that there was no need for them to come up with a way (strategy) to enable their own engagement. In their own words ' it was the school's responsibility to design strategies to engage them' (not all fathers said this though).

Some fathers had their own family arrangements where the mother, brother, sister or aunt was responsible for attending school functions and fed back to everyone in the family. This depended on family set ups. In other cases, the fathers only responded when called upon to act by the school. This group of fathers said they did not know what to do without the school's guidance. They saw themselves as being used to help with discipline and nothing else. They wanted opportunities to contribute more than just discipline.

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Generally there was an agreement amongst fathers that they should make efforts to engage with the school but it was evident that they did not know what to do unless they were told.

6.4.4   What are the barriers to the engagement of fathers in the school?

Results of this study confirm that most fathers are facing barriers to engaging in the education of their sons in our school. The barriers include attitudes by school staff, lack of time to attend meetings due to work commitments, separation from their sons and the fact that sometimes the school called for meetings at short notice. All fathers agreed that they wanted to engage but at times they did not know how to. For example, one father argued that "how can a normal father not be interested in the education of his son?"

Labels such as 'hard to reach', 'not concerned', 'uncaring' were associated with fathers and this angered them. They felt that they were being treated unfairly by 'the system.' One father remarked that "it is not as bad as it is said in the papers, we are making our own efforts to engage but no one notices." We found that such negative views and comments prevented fathers from participating more in the education of their sons.

As mentioned above, staff attitudes were a major barrier to father engagement in the school. The same words 'ignored', 'disrespected', 'bad attitude', 'not listened to' were used to describe negative staff attitudes against fathers. Although teachers denied this, my observation and document analysis revealed that the issue of father engagement was not taken seriously by the school before this study. Two policies were looked at; Equal opportunities and Inclusion (see appendix 17 and 30). These policies did not reflect involvement of fathers. The two policies dwelt more on racism and disability. However, the Equality and Diversity policy stated that 'the school values contributions by parents from any background, colour, creed and gender' but there was no specific mention of fathers. The study recommended a specific policy catering for father engagement which highlighted their value to the school whilst acknowledging the contribution made by mothers.

My personal observation was that it was more of lack of knowledge than staff attitudes. If staff knew how important fathers were in education and with their (staff) dedication to their work, they would not have displayed any negative attitudes towards fathers. The document analysis revealed that there was a gap in knowledge about the unique contribution fathers can make towards the education of their sons.

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The misunderstanding that existed between the school and the fathers due to lack of communication also contributed to some fathers not engaging. As mentioned before, fathers and teachers had separate meetings because of the tension that existed before the first cycle of the study. This tension was caused by misunderstandings that resulted in suspicions. Both sides felt uncomfortable with each other and I found myself at times playing the role of a peace-maker.

Not all fathers were capable of helping their sons at the secondary level. Some fathers had difficulties with reading and writing and could not help much with the home work. Even if they were asked to supervise the homework, they could not identify what was done or not done. One teacher pointed out that 'the difficulty is in the father admitting that they can't read or write, the best way out for him is not to engage.'

The lack of confidence to contact the school and express a desire to engage in their sons' education was another barrier we identified. Fathers said they did not know where to start and stop and they did not have the confidence to take the lead on the issue. I noticed this in a few meetings that I observed. Some fathers did not say much about their sons' education. They did not understand what some of the words used by the teachers meant. For example the use of some of the abbreviations was confusing to fathers. They felt that if they asked what the abbreviations meant, they would look stupid. Abbreviations like LAC (Looked after child) CIN (Child in need) PEP (personal education plan) were confusing for most fathers.

One family support worker observed that;

> For us to be successful in working with fathers we have to build up rapport and an understanding of each other. Rapport takes a very long time to build. When it comes to emotional issues, fathers are not willing to open up easily. Emotions play a big part when there is no good relationship between father and son.

A psychologist added that:

> In such cases, you have to find an emotional hook to get them (fathers). In my experience of working with fathers, they are not willing to commit and emotionally invest. With this I mean when the son messes up, the father is embarrassed. It's usually difficult for him to go through the anger and humiliation of watching his own flesh and blood being described as a problem. The easiest thing to do in such a case will be to chicken out.

More than half of the boys in the school mainly live with their mothers only. They do not want to talk about their fathers; hence the subject is very sensitive. We were able to establish that the main reason for most fathers' absence was divorce or

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separation. In most cases, if the father was not living with his son, we found it difficult to engage him. One teacher mentioned that

> I have 8 students in my class and only 2 have both parents together. Having both parents together is good. It helps us here at school if the young person knows that they have two people watching their back. Usually mums are on the front line, on their own...dads are nowhere to be seen.

Most fathers were unhappy with the current Family laws. They felt that these laws are in favour of mothers. In some cases fathers are barred from seeing their children and they have to go through a lot of barriers just to see their children. One father commented that 'fatherhood has been diminished by the law and the changing of policies by government makes it difficult to engage in the education of my son.'

Contributing to how men deal with problems, the social worker observed that;

> Generally most men I work with bottle things up and when they pop out it's always not the best of news.' B's father has adopted this manly attitude that he is not struggling. We have to sift through the information to find out what the issues are. He has recently said he is struggling but we have been working with him for six years now and all along he had been in denial that things are not well. Mothers are easy to talk to; they are quick to seek help.

6.4.5   What are the fathers' aspirations for their sons in the school?

Most fathers spoke about behaviour as the main issue and target for their sons to achieve in the school. This was interesting considering that most participants had indicated that fathers could be effectively used to manage behaviour in the school. In my observations, I found that most of the boys had been excluded from school because of behavioural problems. This was a major concern for fathers as they felt that if their sons do not behave in the current school, they would lose their placement again.

Apart from behaviour, qualifications were mentioned as another target. Most fathers saw qualifications as a source of getting their sons out of trouble. All fathers agreed that qualifications would get their sons into college, jobs or apprenticeships and help them stop offending.

The maintenance of the placement was linked to behaviour but some fathers felt that if their sons were not excluded, they would keep the social services and other services away. They felt that non-attendance from school brought unnecessary scrutiny from 'unwanted professionals.'

Some fathers felt that their sons were missing opportunities that they themselves never had. Most of the boys received one to one tuition; they came to school in taxis funded by the government or they were given bus passes. Such 'luxuries' were the envy of their fathers who did not understand why they could not make use of such opportunities.

One of the teachers said;

> Some fathers want their sons to be like them; for example to excel in education, sports or simply to be a good citizen. They are embarrassed by their sons' poor behaviour and they do not want people to think that it is a reflection of their ability as a parent. In most cases a father's ambition may not be the same as his son.

A social worker added that;

> In particular these days where young people are driven by quick money and quick success, most of our boys are into football and music and yet their fathers were raised in an era where education and working hard was the key to success. Their aspirations are worlds apart.

In my view, these two observations reveal that at times the fathers are frustrated by the differences in ambitions with their sons. Some fathers had very high expectations of their sons and they felt embarrassed and let down by the way they were behaving.

6.4.6   How has the role of fathers changed over time?

The changing role of the father came out as the most outstanding issue in the study. A combination of research and changes in socio-political and economical views led to changes in the role of the modern father. Unlike in the past fifty years, the father is no longer the only breadwinner. The fathers expressed this with some difficulty. Being the breadwinner gave them power and control over their families but now, (in their own words) 'their sons can go to social services and get someone to look after them.' Two fathers in the study described themselves as 'house husbands'. Some fathers saw these changes as 'loss of respect' for the role of the modern father. In my observation, the fathers I worked with were not psychologically ready for the role of the modern day father who can do the washing, cooking, babysitting and shopping.

Unlike in the past, fathers were a source of information for their sons, this is not the case anymore. The boys revealed that they use 'Google' most of the time to search for information. In their own words, the boys said 'Google can tell you all that you want to know.' The advent of social networking sites like Facebook have made most of the fathers 'redundant' as far as information provision is concerned. Unlike in the

past where the father was a master and the son was an apprentice, learning their fathers' trades and being taught all about being a man by their fathers, technology has taken over.

Same sex marriages that were unheard of fifty years ago made the word father easily replaceable. In circumstances where the school is not sure about the parental status of the pupils, letters are addressed as 'To the parent/guardian of ……' In the past it was 'Mr and Mrs'.

A modern day father does not dictate things to his sons. He supposedly seeks audience and is more willing to listen. He offers options and is less aggressive. This study found out that not all fathers are able to do this. Some fathers see negotiating matters with their sons as a sign of weakness. As put by one teacher: 'some fathers feel that it's their son, who lives under their roof and therefore should live by their rules.' Cases of fights and physical abuse are now common between fathers and their sons as observed by the social worker who took part in this study. Although there were two confirmed cases in our school, this was not a common occurrence.

Both the literature review and observations from this study concluded that some fathers we referred to as absent were not absent from the home but it was their positive input and influence that was absent. One teacher observed that for various reasons, the present crop of boys in England has been labelled as 'the most under-fathered generation'.

6.5 OTHER ISSUES THAT AROSE OUTSIDE THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the experience of conducting unstructured interviews I found that through further questioning, I got some important data that contributed to our understanding of working with fathers. This section is about some issues that arose outside the research questions but were relevant to what we wanted to achieve. Some of the issues came as surprises, eye openers and exceptionalities. I considered these issues as important because they helped our understanding of working better with fathers. We also used some of the ideas raised outside the research questions to build the model for engaging more fathers.

6.5.1 History

One professional reported that;

> In the 50s and 60s black females came from the Caribbean Islands to study nursing and the males came to do manual work in factories, construction sites and mines. Males did not need to go to school to find a job. This has led to a general thinking that education is for females

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only, particularly amongst young black boys. To this date, you see more black females than their male counterparts doing white- collar jobs. They work mainly as nurses and social workers. Black men were encouraged to reject and fight the system. Through the Rastafarian music and movement, it was generally felt that the system was there to undermine black people. Education was seen as part of the system to colonise the black people. It was basically seen as a white man's way of brainwashing black people in the 50s and 60s. The result was a lot of black men ended up jobless and in prison.

One teacher reflected that:

Up to now, and I can only speak about my own experience, I am seen as a traitor by my own black friends who did not make it in school. They feel that i have let them down by being part of the system they see as unfair. I always wonder if such fathers can engage with schools or if at all they encourage their sons to learn anything from school. They have nothing good to say about education. That is where the problem is.

The head of the school explained that fatherhood is about the confidence, learning, identity, security, history and belonging. For example, in one case in the school where this study was conducted, one boy was having behavioural difficulties and the school traced his history to a travelling family that was into horses. He went for horse riding lessons with his father and secured an apprenticeship working with horses. That dramatically changed his behaviour. The school claimed that history had an effect on the way he behaved and the love of horses ran in the family naturally. I found this to be very useful in understanding the thinking behind various cultures that is driven by history.

6.5.2 The relationship between a biological father and his son

This study found that it is difficult to bond a teenage boy and his biological father if he has not been available for a long period of time. The damage done throughout the years of separation may never be repaired. Most boys who were not seeing their biological fathers had replaced them with uncles, stepfathers or other bigger boys they looked up to. However, it was evident in all boys that they had a male figure that they looked up to as a role model. We observed some kind of frustration in not having what they called 'my real father.' The absence of a biological father was expressed with anger, hatred and frustration. In other cases the absent biological fathers were called some unprintable names as an expression of hatred.

6.5.3 Diet

We found out that diet was a major issue in the behaviour of some of the boys. In some cases, it was not the failure to manage behaviour by the school or fathers. Some of the foods that the boys ate caused them to be hyperactive. We observed

that some of the boys' behaviour changed after lunch after drinking certain drinks and eating certain foods. We therefore decided that it was important as a school to ask fathers to help their sons eat healthy foods and exercise. One professional mentioned that 'personally I feel that food plays a big role in determining the behaviour of our boys.'

6.5.4   Service provision outside school

This study also found out that some youth services are not fully meeting the needs of some of the boys. The routine for most the boys was that they went to bed at four o'clock in the morning and woke up at 1pm. By the time they find something to eat and have a shower, it was almost 3pm. Their day was upside down. Most of these youth services operate between 9am and 5pm when the boys are either in school or sleeping. These boys ended up missing appointments and they did not get the help they needed because when they needed the help or when they were in trouble, the offices were closed. They were more active at night not during the day that these offices operated. During the study, a list of issues revealing the ignorance that fathers had about their sons was made.

6.6 POOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FATHERS AND THEIR SONS

6.6.1   Fathers did not know what was on their sons' phones

This was an issue of debate, whether fathers should check their sons' phones or not. All teachers and most fathers agreed that it was right for the fathers to know the activities on their sons' phones. Teachers based this on safeguarding. The school had experienced cases of cyber bullying using mobile phones. Also most of the boys who had been involved in criminal activities particularly selling drugs were contacted on the phone by the drug dealers.

Although all the boys were against this, it was unanimously agreed that until they were eighteen, the fathers should monitor what was on their sons' phones as a form of keeping them safe. The boys felt that their freedom was being 'violated' but they could not justify why their fathers could not monitor their mobile phones. We even extended this to Facebook and other social network sites. This move helped with managing behaviour and preventing the boys from indulging in criminal activities.

6.6.2   Fathers did not know what was in their son's bedroom

The same as above, most fathers felt that it was not proper to check their sons' bedroom. We invited one of the professionals from the Youth Offending Services

(YOS) to give a talk on the 'dangers of not being intrusive' in the modern day parenting world. The boys saw this as an invasion of privacy again and some of their fathers agreed.

The debate was on what privacy would a fifteen year old boy want that a parent should not know. The YOS professionals gave examples of the police who searched houses of some young people and found incriminating evidence that the parents were not aware of. Examples of cases of criminal activities and suicide by young people were given and that they could have been prevented if their parents were not 'strangers' to their bedrooms.

6.6.3 Some fathers did not know who their sons' friends were

As teachers, we found it concerning that some fathers did not know who their sons were associating with. All fathers agreed that this was a sign of negligence as they were exposing their sons to dangerous elements. A combination of not knowing what was in their sons' bedroom or phones and not knowing their friends was described by one professional as 'a common case of a father who does not care what his son is up to.'

Although we debated on whether parents are supposed to choose friends for their children, we generally agreed that they could advise on what a good friend was like. Knowing their sons' friends was suggested as helpful in case something happens, the father would check with friends first. Even the police felt that it was a good idea when they gave examples of missing young people who are usually found at friends' houses. The police went further to say at times, 'some fathers have no clue where their sons are when they go out in the evening.'

6.6.4 Some fathers had no clue of sources some of their sons' possessions

All fathers admitted that this was embarrassing that some of them could not tell where their sons got the latest new mobile phone or a pair of new jeans. Teachers advised that in cases where boys discover that their fathers are not keen on where they are getting things, they may start to venture into acquiring things illegally. The police supported this by giving examples of boys found in possession of stolen goods or boys who sell drugs for other people and in turn are rewarded with expensive phones or clothes.

We agreed that it is good practice for fathers and teachers to share information on suspicious movements of their sons in the school. Teachers agreed to look out for boys who are picked up by suspicious cars at the school gates, boys who change

mobile phones all the time or are in possession of large amounts of cash. We understood that there may be some genuine cases but we decided not to take any chances.

There were two more examples of fathers who did not know what was happening in the lives of their sons. One father did not know that his son smoked. Questions were raised of where he got the money to buy cigarettes especially considering how expensive they are. The fact that the son had an addiction to nicotine at fifteen, meant that he had smoked for a considerable time while the father was unaware of it. To most professionals, it came across as a case of a father who did not know much about his son. One teacher asked that 'If at all they ever spend time together, why is it that the father does not notice a thing?' Another case was about a father who did not know that his son had a baby. The baby was three months old. We all agreed that this could have been possible but if the father had a close relationship with his son, knowing who his friends are and talking to their parents and probably checking his mobile, he could have known.

6.7 AREAS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN AND AMONGST GROUPS OF PARTICIPANTS

This section focuses on the various views expressed by each group of participants on various issues but mainly father engagement, boys' behaviour and education. It was interesting to note how different the views were yet all participants aimed for the same goal. Although most participants wanted more fathers to be involved in the education of their sons, they differed on certain major issues.

Fathers

All fathers felt that it was important for them to be involved in the education of their sons. Just as noted earlier, they saw behaviour management as more important than qualifications (see appendix 20.77) yet teachers were after qualifications more than behaviour.

Boys

Most boys expressed that they wanted to gain qualifications at the school (see appendix 21.152). They did not see anything wrong with their behaviour. In fact they saw themselves as 'victims of the system'. This was interestingly different from the fathers' views that they wanted an improvement in behaviour more than

qualifications. However, they all agreed that behaviour and qualifications were important.

Most boys initially felt that we (fathers, professionals and teachers) were ganging up on them but later accepted that they needed help. All their lives in school, they had problems with authority and they have always seen every adult as a threat. When asked who they would like to seek help from with their school work, most boys cited their siblings such as sister or brother. The idea of doing homework with their fathers was frowned at. However, most fathers and teachers liked the idea. The boys felt that getting help from parents (fathers) was for primary school kids. They said they can search on the internet if their siblings cannot help them.

Teachers and professionals

Teachers and professionals prioritised qualifications over behaviour though behaviour was one of the most important issues listed (see appendix 19.8 and 22.212). Teachers felt if fathers were involved, there would be an improvement in discipline. They thought this discipline would impact on academic performance which was true based on current research (*Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

However, some teachers and professionals felt that fathers were not co-operative. One social worker said that 'fathers generally do not care, they are not on the scene, not contactable, most of the times.' One teacher added that 'fathers are difficult to get in touch with.' This was based on their own experiences in their daily jobs but it was not true of all fathers. The majority of fathers said they wanted to engage and were willing to co-operate but did not know how to.

Whilst teachers claimed that they sent letters of invitation to all parents, fathers said they did not always receive the correspondence. This was mainly by fathers who did not live with their sons. There was a possibility that letters were being sent to one address where their sons lived. Document analysis revealed that letters were usually sent to the registered guardian only.

Although the fathers accused teachers of lack of communication, teachers felt that communication was a two way system, if fathers were not happy about certain issues, they were free to make the first move to communicate. Teachers felt that fathers were just giving excuses. 'If any parent is really worried about their child, do they have to wait for the school to contact them or they will do what they are supposed to do as parent?' one teacher asked.

Professionals advocated for teachers and fathers to work closely together but teachers felt uneasy about enquiring about the father's availability as this was sensitive in circumstances where fathers were not available. However, I had a different experience with my father which I found to be almost similar to what the boys in the school were going through.

6.8 INTERVIEW WITH MY FATHER

This interview was part of a desire to understand my past and reinforce my thinking on fathers. Since this study involves my own values, preconceptions and influences, I wanted to be certain of the 'personal knowledge' I was going to use to generate new knowledge as recommended by Whitehead (2008). I also wanted to build on the knowledge I had on fathers from the interviews I had held in the UK. During an unstructured recorded interview with my father, a number of issues were explored that brought a few themes relevant to this study (see appendix 24.8,24,26). There was so much pride in the way my father spoke about his children (particularly sons as is typical in our culture). My father said he had a lot of pride in all his sons for their achievements in education. He thinks they took after him though he acknowledged our mother's contribution to our education. He expressed that he saw us (his children) as a source of happiness and stability. Our achievements in education give him peace of mind and he said he does not regret selling most of his cows to pay for our school fees. However, he also emphasised that he would rather have his children around him than them sending presents from various countries. He stressed the value of being a close family and passing on vital information about our culture to our sons. The visits we make once a year to Zimbabwe and the togetherness of the family were what he said he would value more than presents that we send him.

My father's acknowledgement of my mother's immense contribution to our education also reinforced arguments raised in the literature review that mothers have a lot to contribute to the general education of a boy child. My father revealed that he still speaks to other parents about his sons' education and what they are doing hence he wants us to keep him updated about our promotions at work and other courses we are doing. He now gives advice to other parents in the village who are keen on making their children successful. My father thinks our success in education brought respect not only to him but the whole clan.

My father said that he sees himself in all of us. He said all of us have one or two of his characteristics. He said he never gave up in life and none of his children give up

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on their dreams. Culturally, he believes that his children are his own flesh and blood and his first son is an extension of himself and therefore he shall never truly die as his son's son will be his own extension and it goes on and on like that. He told me that he is at peace now, knowing all of us are in secure employment. He sold all the cows he had to send his first son to school. It was his own investment. It was a family tradition that our father would educate his eldest son, our brother would educate us and in turn we would look after him when he retires.

The interview with my father confirmed some of the major themes that emerged in this study. These themes included, work commitments and the pride a father has in the success of his son. Fathers see themselves in their sons and if they are successful, they feel proud about it (see appendix 20.73). If the sons are not achieving in education, there is an element of feeling embarrassed about it. From the conversation with my father and this study, I found that fatherhood encompasses protection, provision, assurance, inspiration, discipline, guidance, role modelling and history. I began to understand why the fathers in our school felt embarrassed by their sons' behaviour which eventually resulted in their lack of engagement.

6.9 SUMMARY

The results of this study confirmed most of the issues about fathers identified in the literature review. Other issues raised outside of the research questions showed that the engagement of fathers in the education of their sons is not the be all and end all. There are other factors affecting the boys' education as indicated in the last section of the literature review. The interview with my father helped me to understand the impact he had on me when I was young. I shared this personal experience with my core-researchers and we used it as a comparison to our main findings. The use of research questions as a guide to the study helped me to keep my focus. The methods of data analysis together with the depth and breadth of the study and not the size of the sample validate these findings as true outcomes. These results are opinions expressed by participants and agreed by school management. There are other points of view raised by participants and debated in meetings and some of these are explored in the next chapter.

7. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results of the study, comparing them to other views expressed in the literature review. I shall seek to confirm my findings through a comparison of the literature review, my own experiences and my research findings. Again, my position as an insider researcher dominates this chapter as I express my 'accumulated knowledge' against 'my professional knowledge' as I mentioned in chapter 3. I have also used this chapter as a place for reflecting on my PhD journey, looking back at what we achieved and if our views as participants can have an impact in the school. I also challenged my own personal knowledge on fathers and to some extent, effectiveness of Whitehead's Living Theory as I have tried to apply it. The first six sections are drawn from the research questions. The recommendations section forms the main part of this chapter with a father engagement model built from the study. The model specifies ideal procedures to engage and maintain contact with fathers. This was the main focus of the study. The chapter also includes a section on how trustworthy and dependable my data are. In this section, I sought to justify that the findings are genuine and can be relied upon. There is also a section explaining the limitations of the study where I reflected on what could have been done better in the study and acknowledged the criticism the study may face. The section on benefits of the study explains what the reader, the researcher and participants can potentially learn or have learnt from the study. The section on dissemination strategy spells out the plans that I have on publishing the study and sharing the findings. I also included another section on potential areas for further studies. These are issues raised by this study but due to limitations in time and other resources, I could not follow them up. The summary section wraps up the study looking back on lessons learnt and the impact of the study. I shall discuss the role of fathers' in our school as we understood it from the findings.

7.1.1 The role of fathers in the education of their sons

Not all fathers are good role models for education to their sons. Although some fathers can be a hindrance to the education of their sons, every parent has a right to know about the education of their son. This study recommended the school to work with all fathers without judging who was a good father or a bad one. Although this is debatable, as researchers, we were in no position to judge the parenting abilities of the fathers we worked with.

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The school is currently in the process of learning how fathers can help in the education of their sons. As the results show, fathers can be inspirational and appropriate role models for the boys to achieve more. This doctoral research has been able to establish that there is a certain level of understanding, bonding, love and emotion between a son and his father. This is despite the father being resident or not. There was a certain meaning expressed by boys when they said 'he is not my real father.' For us 'not my real father' meant not the one they would have chosen if they had a choice. Although King (2006) established that step fathers can be effective in helping to manage behaviour, most of the boys in this study expressed that they wanted to have the 'real fathers involved.' However most researchers have found out that fathers are important in the education of their sons, in and outside the school (Kenyatta, 1965; Bidulph, 2008; Goldman, 2005).

For the school to be able to work with fathers effectively, we have to understand a few things regarding the father-son relationship. All staff have to understand the different cultures we have in the school, for example, how Asian fathers relate to their sons in comparison with the English or African fathers. There is need by staff to be trained to understand the politics of divorce or separation, the patterns of engagement adopted by different types of fathers as well as the psychology of the boys in relation to their fathers. Understanding the thinking of the boys and their fathers and how they relate to each other will help all staff at the school to understand the role of fathers in the education of their sons.

Some of the difficult behaviour exhibited by the boys in the study was due to father absence or lack of a relationship with a father. Some boys had a difficult upbringing and found it difficult to work with male teachers due to their past experiences with men and their fathers. For example, boys who grew up seeing their mothers being abused by their fathers and other men who came in and out of their mothers' lives viewed males with suspicion, anger and mistrust. They were defensive, aggressive and not willing to work with male teachers but they could not articulate or explain why they were doing so. The end result was underachievement or exclusion from school.

Fatherhood can be a sensitive issue particularly if there is not a good relationship between the father and his son as I mentioned in chapter 6. Most of the boys I spoke to wanted to have a good relationship with their fathers (see appendix 21, 182). Even though some fathers did not have a good relationship with their sons, both father and son wished for a better relationship and acknowledged that this would benefit both as well. Most of the boys in this study acknowledged that they wanted to share their

successes with their fathers and they expressed respect and admiration for them. In my forties I still have an eagerness to share success stories about my education with my father. This shows that the influence fathers have throughout the life of a boy child is immense. Though Biddulph (2008) concluded that fathers are most important at ages six to thirteen, I found this to be different in both my personal experience and with the boys I worked with in my study. At fourteen and fifteen, they still wished and wanted to be close to their fathers. However, we also had a few worrying cases of some fathers being physically attacked by their sons at the school. One participant reported that one of the boys was getting bigger and physically stronger than his father. This boy used his size to dominate everyone in the family and physically abused his parents. For legal reasons, his father could not retaliate. In such situations, the father's influence and role was limited. For fear of physical abuse, the father did not do much.

A father can play many other roles such as being a mentor, disciplinarian, provider and role model (Biddulph, *ibid*). Connection with a child depends on how much the father is involved during pregnancy and in the earlier life of the child, (*The National Healthy Association, 2010).*   The relationship with the child's mum also plays a big part in how much the son respects his father (O'Connor, 2007). Thus fatherhood is enhanced by other external factors. During my interviews, I had some of the boys referring to their fathers as 'my old man, the big man, the chief, the head, and the boss.' In my view all these terms are a show of respect and leadership. When a boy refers to his father as 'my old man', to me it means my adult who I look up to. Some participants I interviewed spoke about a 'father figure'. For example, 'My coach is like a father figure to me.' or 'My boss is a father figure.' This shows that anyone like a neighbour or work colleague can be a father figure. The two (coach and boss) play an advisory and mentoring role which all fathers play. They motivate, inspire and probably discipline. All this can be done by a father. Sometimes such relationships develop with or without the two knowing.

We have clarified that fathers do not necessarily have to be physically in the school to engage in the education of their sons, this is despite the word 'education' being associated with school. Education can happen anywhere. With the advent of technology, fathers can communicate effectively with teachers. There is so much they can do outside the school with their sons. Education can take place both inside and outside of school. Education outside school has been seen as any activity that fathers engage in with their sons. We therefore established the role of fathers in our

school as that of a disciplinarian, counsellor, motivator and educator in and outside the school amongst a host of other responsibilities they have.

7.1.2   The experiences of the fathers in working with our school

This study found that fathers who had a history of bad experiences with other services found it more difficult to work with the school. They were suspicious of our intentions and had difficulty trusting members of staff.   They blamed almost everybody around them except themselves for the problems their sons were having with the 'education system.' We understood this because their sons had been excluded from a few schools where relations with professionals may have been damaged. Our first job was to repair these relations and build trust and confidence in both the boys and their fathers.

In most of the literature that I came across, it was mentioned that some fathers felt 'intimidated' or uncomfortable by the female environment in schools (Francis and Skelton, 2005; Clough and Garner, 2008). Some of the fathers felt that they were not properly represented in the school. By this they referred to the number of female staff in the school compared to males. They wanted more males who they felt they could relate to better and who probably could help their sons better. They did not want female staff to know about this as they felt they could be targeted. However, the study established that in terms of behaviour and achievement, there was no difference between the boys who had male staff and those working with female staff. We acknowledged though that some fathers preferred to work with male staff and in some cases professionals recommended that the boys should work with male staff to learn what they called 'appropriate male behaviour.' This was mainly in cases where the boy was having problems relating to females.

Most fathers said they felt welcome in the school despite the barriers discussed in chapter 2. Even the ones that complained about certain staff's attitude said they felt the school was making an effort to make them feel welcome. We were, to some extent doubtful of this response because if they felt welcome, then they should not have complained about the 'supposed negative' attitudes from staff. The school management viewed themselves as welcoming but they acknowledged that they had not given fathers more attention to utilise their unique contribution to the boys' education. Our conclusion on this matter was that the school needed to do more to show a positive attitude towards fathers. Management agreed with this and Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006) have recommended professionals to do more to reach fathers.

7.1.3   Strategies that fathers adopted to enable their own engagement

Although both literature and this study acknowledge that there are barriers to engaging fathers, some families have their own arrangements that have nothing to do with the father not wanting to engage. Some fathers argued that they had what they called 'family arrangements' that suit their situations. It is difficult for a school to change such an arrangement, especially if the arrangements are rooted within a particular cultural landscape. There was a danger that trying to change such arrangements could be seen as challenging the father's authority in the family and questioning the way he runs his family. There was also a possibility that changes to these arrangements could have a negative economic impact on the family if the father was a breadwinner. In such cases, we were only able to make the family aware of the importance of the father in the education of his children, particularly the boys.

There seems to have been a lack of enthusiasm by fathers when it came to identifying strategies that they can adopt to engage in their sons' education. We needed to define what we meant by engaging first. Most fathers, as noted in chapter 6, did not see it as their job to make an effort to engage with the school. In contrast, teachers, felt that any parent who is interested in their child's education would make an effort to engage. It brought us to question of what we meant by engaging. We debated on whether it meant coming into the school and talking to teachers every now and again or showing interest in your son's education at home or is it both?

As mentioned in both the literature review and results chapters, fathers do not necessarily have to be physically in the school. However, it is important for fathers to know what happens in their sons' school. Things such as knowing the school rules and the curriculum can be known through reading the prospectus but to know about the schools' teachers and the physical structure, fathers have to physically visit the school. It is almost impossible to know everything about the school without visiting it and talking to the teachers and other members of staff. We therefore, agreed that, apart from showing their interest from home and discussing school work, it was important for fathers to be physically in the school in some cases. We all agreed that if a father visited the school, it showed the importance of education to his son. I felt the same when my father visited my school and other participants said the same.

We established that it is important for both fathers and teachers to identify and develop strategies for working together. The fact that fathers had little or no knowledge about how to engage in the education of their sons showed that the

school has to do more work by making the first move. Writing letters, phoning, emailing or even visiting the fathers were recommended as some of the first steps the school could take. This has also been recommended by the *Fatherhood Institute* (2011).

There are a lot of activities fathers can do with their sons in or outside of the school. During the study we had some of the fathers coming into the school to practice carpentry or Bricklaying alongside their sons. This has been very successful in building the boys' confidence though some boys saw it as 'not cool to bring your old man into school.' Some unique activities that fathers got involved with their sons included raising money for charity, enrolling on a stop smoking programme and offering their sons work placement at their workplace. The most common activities were fishing, football and various other sporting activities.

On this issue, we agreed that it was important for both the school and the fathers to make an effort to communicate and engage with each other. We encouraged fathers to visit the school whenever they can to familiarise themselves with what was happening. We recommended that fathers should come up with their own strategies to engage with the school whenever possible. We also encouraged the school to create a 'father friendly' environment.

7.1.4   Barriers to the engagement of fathers in the school

There is evidence that some of the fathers were not engaging in their sons' education due to complicated legal matters. Complaints by O'Connor (2007) were echoed by most of the fathers who feel that the family law courts are in favour of women and this affects contact between the father and his son in cases of non-resident fathers. In one of the meetings we had, both parents attended and the mother explained that 'F's father had no parental rights as he was not even registered on his son's birth certificate. She felt that she was actually 'doing him a favour by allowing him to see his son.' In such cases a father has little to do since he can only see his child if he has permission from the child's mother. I found that fathers saw this as humiliating, disrespectful, frustrating and embarrassing. This made me understand that if a father has no control over what he wants to do with his son or has limited access to his son, he will either do the little he can or decide not to be involved. Most fathers, in my view and as found out through literature review, will not stand for that. They will just give up and stop seeing their children.

However, in contrast to the above, one mother gave up her son to his dad because she could not manage his behavior. The father used to drop his son at school in the morning and pick him up in the afternoon which is typical of what is done in primary schools. The boy was not happy with this as his peers had freedom to go wherever they wanted after school. This scenario confirmed our observations that some mothers were struggling to manage the behaviour of their sons and given an opportunity, some of the fathers can do better. It also showed that not all engagement can make the son happy and achieve. In this case, the boy rebelled against being picked up and constantly left the school before the father arrived.

One father pointed out that he had nine children in total and his son said he liked it when it was just the two of them. He knows his father has all his attention and if he asks for anything, he will get it because the father will have a budget for just one person. This supports an argument raised by one participant that if fathers are to be more effective, they should have the number of children they can support. Although this is not always the case, it was evident that the father in question was struggling because of the number of children he had.

The issue of confidence and insecurities amongst fathers has been raised before in the literature review (Sarre, 1996; Shulman and Seiffge-Krenke, 1997). For every meeting we planned with fathers, we had to carefully consider their needs. For example, we had to choose a meeting place that was comfortable for them. Two professionals advised that 'if the meeting place was not conducive, I was not going to get anything out of them.' Fathers wanted to feel in control of the situation. Although this did not apply to all the ten fathers, if most of them did not feel in control they would express it in a number of ways such as cancelling the meeting or coming with a friend who was not part of the study. One father said he did not attend review meetings because teachers did not give him enough opportunities to express himself. He described the situation as 'you are called into the school, told what to do and sent away like a child.' He felt that he was belittled and taken as if he had nothing to contribute. This raised the most common issue throughout this study; that teachers need training on how to work with fathers.

Although there was no father with additional needs in the study, we recognised that fathers who had problems with articulation or learning disabilities were facing barriers in engaging with the school. We were not aware that at times we sent letters and prospectuses to some fathers who could not read. We were reminded that we had one father who was partially sighted who needed the letters to be in bold writing. The

same was said for fathers who spoke English as second language, there were a lot of misunderstandings if communication was not clear. Similarly, we realised that at times we were calling fathers to come into the school on the days (Wednesdays) they were supposed to sign for their benefits at the Jobcentre and on Fridays, some fathers had prayers (Juma) at the mosque in the afternoons. Thus, there were personal, cultural, religious and economic factors that we had to consider amongst other things in our efforts to remove the barriers to engaging fathers.

7.1.5   The aspirations of the fathers for their sons

One participant made an interesting observation that she had seen many businesses labelled as 'A & Sons.' She said she had never come across one that is labeled 'A & daughters.' We saw this as evidence of how fathers value their sons and as referred to in the literature review (Kenyatta, 1965), historically, fathers always saw their sons as their heirs and hence they felt they needed to keep them in their 'trade' for a smooth take over. In this study, most fathers aspired for their sons to have a crime free life. They revealed their fears for their sons to be potentially unemployable due to their criminal behaviour. Thus, behaviour instead of qualifications was more valued by fathers in the school. They aspired for their sons to improve on behaviour for three reasons; firstly, to avoid more exclusions, secondly to avoid getting deeper into what they called 'the criminal world' and thirdly to prove that they have changed from their old ways.

The fathers also revealed that they wanted to have better a relationship with the school. They aspired to be more valued and consulted on matters of how the school can be developed. However, they were not sure about how they can be of more use in the school. It was good news for the school that the fathers wanted to work with rather than against the teachers. There was potential for a strong positive relationship but both sides had not realised this before the study.

There was one case of a father in the school who was very successful in his profession and he wanted his son to join him in his profession. The son was not interested in that profession. He wanted something totally different. We found out that most of the son's so called 'behaviour issues' were due to rebelling against what his father wanted him to be. This scenario showed us that at times fathers had high expectations for their sons and if these expectations were either not fulfilled or rebelled against, there was bound to be a problem between the two. Usually in such cases, the son's education suffered.

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In a few cases, we had some fathers who did not have any aspirations for their sons. They did not see the value of being in a school. Such fathers just engaged because they had no other option. They feared that they would get in trouble with other services, particularly, the social services. There were reports of fathers who were engaging just to satisfy the requirements of the social services that have statutory powers to enforce the engagement. This is said to be a common pattern in certain 'classes of the society' in this country (Stainworth, 1983; Francis and Skelton, 2005)

During one of the meetings we had with fathers, we found that if the school maintains high expectations of fathers' involvement and reflects this clearly in the information sent out to parents, fathers will respond positively. If fathers feel that nothing is expected of them from the school, there is no motivation for them to engage. The school can do this by implementing the recommendations made by fathers in meetings and giving them feedback. When we sent letters addressed to fathers only, more fathers attended compared to when we sent letters addressed to parents (appendix 18 shows the development of letters we designed in search of the most effective way of encouraging fathers to attend). This also supported the view expressed by Clough and Garner (2008) that the word 'parent' is commonly associated with mothers.

7.1.6   The mothers' influence on the boys

During the study, there were some stories of mothers running families single handedly, without any support from fathers. The mothers instilled discipline and provided for the family. We found that the absence of fathers can be given as an excuse rather than a reason for failure and bad behaviour. It was evident as argued by Drexler (2005) that it is possible for mothers to raise successful boys although she acknowledges that the mother can always seek help from other men like uncles and grandfathers. We felt this was not a necessary debate as both mothers and fathers have their own unique contribution to the raising of children. Studies have proved that that a child who grows up without either of the parents will miss something (Parke, 1996; *Fatherhood Institute*, 2011).

The school's head teacher who had over thirty five years of experience of working with excluded boys noted that in some families where there were no fathers, boys tended to want to take over their father's place and act like their fathers. They did this by trying to set rules in the house and attempting to control their mothers. In the process of such attempts, there were conflicts with mothers and these conflicts extended to the school. I had numerous meetings myself in the school with mothers

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who were seeking help with how to work with their teenage boys who they claimed 'had suddenly changed.'

In this study, there was evidence from the boys that as much as their fathers were not involved in their education, they still looked up to them or other males for other things (see appendix 21, 182). One professional noted that 'in some cases, fathers can do what mothers cannot do with these boys. This study established that there is a certain age, around 13, 14 or even earlier these days, when boys just want to be boys, the type of clothes, language and areas they visit' make things difficult for mothers. Simple things such as listening to rap music, buying trainers or looking for a suitable kickboxing club, may require male advice. This pattern has also been noted and well documented by Biddulph (2008).

This study revealed that most participants including fathers themselves, were not aware of the unique contribution of fathers to the education of their sons, both in and outside the school. Though this is debatable, of late, researchers have been able to pinpoint the uniqueness of fathers in the education of their sons (Burgess, 2009; Clough and Garner, 2008; Goldman, 2005). The way they communicate, the discipline they instil in their sons and their natural influence, sometimes without knowing, all have a huge impact in the education of their sons.

However, most of the participants mentioned that mothers struggle but they did not say they fail; there is a big difference between struggling and failing to raise a child. This will always be debated but according to our findings, both parents play a pivotal role and it is the father's role in education that this study aimed to highlight.

7.1.7   How the role of the fathers has changed in relation to education

It is commonly assumed that fatherhood comes naturally and anyone who becomes a father knows what to with their children (*The Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). This is far from the truth, considering my own experiences and the findings of this study. The role of a father in England has evolved from generation to generation (Maddley, 2008). England is multi-cultural and the role of fathers varies from one culture to another but schools expect all fathers to engage in the education of their children almost in the same way. Through this study, our school in particular expects all fathers, wherever possible, to engage in the education of their sons. However, fathers need to be supported and empowered to provide healthy and nurturing environments for their children to thrive and learn.

Usually, fathers learn from their fathers. There is no course for fathers in the sense that some people can be qualified fathers and others not. It is a natural thing. Although currently, there are a few courses on parenting, there is no proper structure. Mostly parents who are 'deemed' to be inadequate are sent to these 'so called parenting courses' where no one asks the qualifications of the tutors. I have always asked whether one has to be a parent themselves to be a qualified tutor on the parenting course. However, the fact remains that there is no course for fathers. There are many ways to raise children and in particular boys. No one way is the best. What makes us individuals is partly because of the way we were raised.

Mott (1997) sees three factors as important to being a father; engagement, accessibility and responsibility. All these three phrases draw us back to nurturing, a fact agreed by the *National Health Association* (2010). If a father is able to engage with his children and all the other services that work with families, he becomes accessible and responsible. In my view, if a father is not able to have frequent physical contact with his children but can provide a warm, stimulating and positive environment when possible, he can still be regarded as a 'dad'.

The role of the father in education is not static, it changes over time. Fifty years ago, there was no talk of fathers being involved in the education of their sons. There were common cases of sons learning their fathers' trades such as fishing, driving or hunting in the case of Africa. Apart from learning these trades, boys learnt to become a man from their fathers. This was common across many cultures including the English culture. As shown by this study, that has not gone away, boys still want to learn from their fathers and fathers still want to teach their sons. It is still common to have a father and son working together and the father handing over the business to his son when he retires.

This teaching and learning that goes on between the father and his son is natural and sometimes it happens without the two knowing. Thus, it is important for the school to tap into this natural relationship between the father and his son to enhance learning and discipline. However, we acknowledged that this is not the case in all father-son relationships. As far as the role of the father as a teacher to his son, things have not changed, what has changed is what the father has to teach. Although most of the boys said they learn things from their siblings, friends or the internet, they still looked up to their fathers as role models and hence learnt from them. We concluded that it was true that boys were learning certain things elsewhere but issues to do with

respect, going to work, family and being a father were learnt mostly from observing adult males such as fathers.

Most teachers in the school listed what they saw as man-activities such as football and other physical sports. However, we were all surprised by the number of fathers interested in other activities that we had not listed down such as cleaning, shopping, cooking and baking cakes (see appendix 28). This was another evidence of the changing roles of fathers compared to fifty years ago. We thought fathers would like 'manly activities' but they argued that it is now a thing of the past and they were embracing the equality and diversity between the two genders. This helped us to widen the planning of activities in the school.

In the past, men went to work and women stayed at home looking after children. Socio-economic and political changes have changed the role of the father in the family. Recent research on gender and the role of men in education has also contributed to these changes. More women are in employment now compared to the period before the Second World War. This has led to the sharing of duties in the house and such duties include homework and attending to school functions. The government has called for more men to be involved in the lives of their children and this includes education. The socio-economic and political terrain will continue to have an impact on the role of men as fathers and it is yet to be seen if they are ready for these changes. The role of fathers has been extended to education more than before. This has been strengthened by recent research that has shown that fathers can motivate boys to learn. Based on this study, we made some recommendations to the school.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made in this section are unique to one school but can be adopted by other similar settings with some adjustments. These recommendations are not a panacea to the problems being faced by the fathers but they are the main solutions to engaging more fathers for this school only as suggested by the participants. These recommendations are a product of the long meetings and debates I had with the participants. The school management has already begun to implement most the recommendations from the study. The following is what we agreed should done to improve the engagement of fathers in the school in order to raise the achievement of boys;

7.2.1   Plan staff training

There is need for staff training because very few staff (mostly those who participated in the study) understand the importance of a father in the education of his son. We hope that training will improve relations between staff and fathers. By training staff to understand the unique contribution of fathers to the education of boys, we are creating a school that is ready for boys rather than boys who are ready for school.

7.2.2   Design father inclusive letters

There is growing evidence that if the school wants to engage with fathers, they should target communications more directly at them (*Fatherhood Institute*, 2011). The letter below was developed by participants in an effort to engage more fathers.

Dear Mum & Dad,

Following the recent study on engaging fathers in the education of their sons which involved some of you, results show that children whose mothers and fathers get involved with their education do better. You can get involved by keeping in touch with what's happening at school and supporting your child's learning at home.

So it's important for us to keep in touch with you both, whether you live in the same house or separately. We're happy to send out letters/emails/texts to more than one place if that works best for you. To pass on details of a parent living in another household and/or to let us know if you or your child's other parent has changed address, email or phone number, please phone the school office on xxxxxxxx, email us at info@xxxxxx.xxxxxxx.xx, or write to us at the above address.

(Adopted from the *Fatherhood Institute* DVD (2011)

7.2.3   Be sensitive about fatherhood

As has been pointed out before, it is not easy to discuss a boy's father in the school if he is not involved in his life. We are therefore recommending that teachers and staff take precautions with this subject. Some fathers had court orders not to contact their families. Raising the father subject in such circumstances was like opening old wounds. It brought back memories of the problems that the family had gone through. In other cases some boys had never met or known their fathers. It was embarrassing for them to talk about the men they did not know. We also had situations where some fathers were in prison and the boys did not want this known to anyone and unfortunately some fathers were deceased and it was almost impossible to talk to their sons about them.

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We are also recommending that before engaging fathers, the school should research on the family background first. This will help staff to understand situations better and avoid putting the boys through traumatic experiences.

7.2.4 Do not label and patronise fathers

Fathers feel that at times they are patronised and stereotyped by schools. For example, one professional labelled them as a 'hard to reach group'. Not all fathers are hard to reach. Some fathers are very co-operative and want to engage with the school. One of the teachers recommended that saying to fathers 'we can learn from each other on these issues' will sound better than saying 'we want to help you' as if they are the ones with a problem. We therefore recommend that fathers should be made to feel that we all have to learn from each other. We should not take fathers as if they are at fault and we want to teach them how to run their families.

We are also advising teachers to avoid stereotyping fathers by planning and encouraging physical activities only. This study has revealed that not all fathers like to do physical activities. Some fathers said they enjoy cooking and shopping with their sons. Thus, activities should come from fathers themselves, teachers should only encourage and prompt fathers to engage in activities with their sons.

7.2.5 Be flexible with meeting times

The school should be flexible when arranging to meet fathers. Some fathers have work patterns that do not fit into the 9am to 3pm time that the school operates. It is important for the school to either open early or close late to accommodate the fathers who cannot make it at scheduled times. Some colleges are now opening during weekends to allow for parents and young people to attend their Open Days. Our school can also do the same.

Again as mentioned before, teachers can make their own research in an effort to know and understand each father in the school. Knowing and understanding fathers in that way helps teachers to plan meetings and talk to them at their level.

7.2.6 Plan non-educational activities

It has been noted that some fathers have not done well in their education. They find it hard to inspire their sons in the areas they have not excelled. They need help to do this. Fathers can be advised to get involved in other non-educational activities with their sons. Teachers should make sure that the fathers are comfortable in the chosen activities. All fathers are superheroes to their sons (O'Connor, 2007). Their sons

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have something to learn from them despite their academic limitations. This study recommends other outside innovative ways of engaging fathers in education and activities for their sons.

7.2.7   Change the curriculum

Being an independent school, we are allowed to follow an alternative curriculum that suits the needs of our students. The study therefore recommends that fatherhood be taught in the school to prepare young boys to be effective future fathers (Francis and Skelton, 2005). Babies do not come with a manual and with the disintegration of families, teachers are left with responsibility to teach our boys to become better future fathers. This helps in preventing young boys from having children before they are ready both emotionally and financially. This may be a long term plan for the school as it needs careful planning and extensive consultation but it is worth it.

7.2.8   Use a holistic approach

The school is advised to work with the whole family emphasising the influence of the father in the education of his son. This should be done in a way that should not demean the role of the mother. It should be noted that every family member is important in the education of our students. From this study six out of the ten boys interviewed said they get help with their homework from their siblings. Schools should recognise this and encourage it. Fathers can actually be asked to encourage it.

7.2.9   Use other professionals

The school should acknowledge that engaging fathers in the education of their sons is a process and it cannot be achieved overnight. It needs careful planning and the involvement of other professionals. A multi-agency approach helps to share information and helps fathers to see the important issues. Other professionals like social workers can use statutory powers to force fathers to engage and they can bring new ideas to the table.

7.2.10   Design a 'Father engagement Model'

We recommended that the school should have some form of framework/model on how to engage more fathers. The key to this engagement is maintaining a long relationship with the fathers. We therefore came up with a model we felt was suitable for engaging fathers in the school. As mentioned before, this model can be transferred to other settings of a similar nature. It follows six stages of enquiry but the model itself has four steps as shall be illustrated by Fig. 8.

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Stage 1. Family background

Upon enrolment, the school makes background checks about the student. These checks include enquiries about the availability of the father. It has been established that it is easier for both the teacher and the student to talk about the father on first contact rather than later on. Talking about the availability of the father during the interview can be regarded as part of the initial assessment. Other background information can be collected from family members, the previous school or other professionals. Teachers are advised to ask indirect questions to avoid upsetting students who may see the father subject as sensitive. The following questions have been suggested as a guideline:

1.   Who else is involved in your education?

2.   Who would you like to receive help from at home?

3.   Who do you want to share the good news with?

4.   Where shall we send the letters to?

5.   Who do you look up to in your family?

In all these questions, it is most likely that if the boy does not mention his father it may mean that there is an issue. The assessor will have to rely on information from other professionals as it will be clear that the father is not involved.

Stage 2. Find reasons for non-engagement

Having established that the father is not available, it is important to establish reasons why. If they are legal reasons, there is not much the school can do. The school will again have to rely on the other professionals for information on why the father is not engaging. If the father is available but not engaging, it is important for the school to take the first step and introduce themselves, invite the father for an informal chat and inform him of the school's desire to work with all fathers. Fliers, prospectuses or other fathers can be used to make the first contact with the father. It is important at this stage to collect all the contact details and start making contact.

Stage 3: Approach the fathers with information on how important they are.

The first contact is likely to either make or break the relationship between the school and the father. As recommended, the school should refrain from patronising fathers. Starting on a positive note with new fathers is very important. They should be brought in as partners; they should not be made to feel as if they have a problem. The school

can start by telling the 'new' father how important he is to the education of his son. This will help to give him the confidence to engage and feel wanted.

Stage 4: Invite the fathers

The 'new father' can be given an opportunity to offer his skills to the school. He should be made to feel welcome by being invited to the school to participate in his son's education. Again, at this stage other fathers and the school's parent-liaison officer can be active in engaging the father.

Stage 5: Keep communication going

The parent-liaison officer will keep the communication going by updating the father on the events going on at school. Letters specifically for the father can be sent, inviting him to the school. This should be done regardless of whether he is resident or non-resident. An example of such letters is given in the recommendations section.

Stage 6: Maintain a relationship

It is important to maintain this communication and the newly built relationship. The school can send surveys and make a call once a month to the father with some good news. The father should be informed that this relationship should be on-going until the student finishes school. For those who are willing, they can keep in touch on a voluntary basis. Fig. 8 shows a simple model the school is now using to engage more fathers.

Stage 1
- Research on the student's background information
- Who is the father figure?
- How influential is he?
- Discuss father figure at interview and the role he is going to play?

Stage 2
- Make contact with father figure
- Explain the importance of his role
- Invite him to the school

Stage 3
- Allocate role to father figure
- Discuss his role and if he is comfortable with it
- Involve father figure in school activities

Stage 4
- Establish a relationship/partnership
- Maintain contact with father figure
- Use him to recruit other fathers
- See the future together

(NB. Where there is no father figure, find one in the school)

7.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND DEPENDABILITY OF THE STUDY

Honesty, depth and richness are powerful concepts to be considered in regards to trustworthiness and dependability (Burgess *et al.,* 2007). Apart from all the other steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness and dependability of this study, I made sure that the collection of the data and the whole study was based on honesty. I could not fabricate data about my students, parents and work colleagues who knew exactly what was happening in the school. They had opportunities to challenge every claim I made about them and the school. The fact that the school accepted the recommendations of the study and implemented some of them means that it is a true representation of the participants' views on father engagement.

To ensure that my findings were trustworthy and dependable, I incorporated a variety of validity procedures. I used multiple sources of data and methods to confirm findings (method and data triangulation). I made sure that for any issue raised to be

considered as a theme, it went through a rigorous process of triangulation by data and method. Only those themes that came out of the methods and data were considered. This was also cross-checked with literature review and my own experiences. Although I was aware that triangulation may yield convergent findings, I also considered the fact that the findings were not unquestionable (Bryman, 2004). I therefore had other validity procedures to complement triangulation.

I spent three years on the research site. This helped me to go back to the participants to give constant feedback, check misinterpretations and clarify misunderstandings. Participants were able to add to or discard my findings. Thus, the use of 'I' in this thesis is not a reflection of me as a person but 'it is interrelated to the eyes of the others' (Whitehead, 2008).Creswell and Miller (2000) refer to this as a prolonged engagement in the field. It relaxed the participants and they saw me as one of them which I was already. I had the advantage of seeing and recording things as they happened. Apart from spending a long time at the research site, I incorporated researcher reflexivity by constantly questioning my assumptions about what I thought was happening (Creswell, 1998).

The issues of objectivity, reliability and validity are as relevant to qualitative research as to any other approach (Denscombe, 2003). Robson (2002) refers to reliability as a situation whereby the same process is repeated to the same participants and producing the same results on different occasions. This is possible in most scientific research. As an interpretivist and carrying out a qualitative research where feelings, body language and judgments on participants' actions are all taken into consideration, discussing reliability may be irrelevant. Thus, for the purposes of this study only, I preferred to use the terms 'trustworthiness and dependability' instead of reliability and validity.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are always challenges and limitations to any study and mine was not an exception. There are a lot of positives that came out of this study as it helped the school to make improvements. The changes made as a result of this study were acknowledged and appreciated by most parents and students. As a qualitative case study, this research suffered from the common criticism that it was not possible for me to generalise the findings as they were specific to one school. However, the nature of the study required that I carry out a case study and as mentioned before, generalising the findings from this study was not necessary. The aim was to raise

awareness of the importance of fathers in the education of their sons and increase the achievement of boys in the school.

Another limitation was that as a paid member of staff my loyalty to my employer meant that there were boundaries I could not cross as an outside researcher could have done. I had to balance between reporting objectively and avoiding damaging the name of the school I work for. However, I was duty-bound to adhere to research ethics as a researcher and at the same time maintaining my professional conduct as a member of staff.

The participation, of my students and other members of staff in the study can raise ethical issues and questions on the trustworthiness of the data. Critics may argue that as a member of the school, these participants were bound to be positive and cooperate with the researcher. Stenhouse (1967) and Robson (2002) recommend such type of research particularly amongst teachers as it helps to reflect upon their practice. Studies that involve colleagues and researchers' own students are not uncommon (Arnold, 1994; Whitehead, 2008). In my experience, there was more 'good than harm' as participants felt that finally they were being listened to by the school management.

As mentioned before, qualitative research is criticised for being subjective. This study was no exception. As a typical qualitative study, it was not value neutral. Participants' values, emotions and feelings were taken into consideration. The study sought to understand patterns of engagement hence behaviour was central to the study. As much as the study lacks a statistical analysis of the phenomena, it offers a thick description of the issues faced by fathers in an effort to engage in their sons' education.

The behaviour and emotions could not be quantified but were described in detail.

Also, the use of 'accumulated knowledge' and 'embodied knowledge' can be questioned. Anyone can just write what they think and call it 'embodied knowledge'. Accepting such knowledge as 'new knowledge' in academic research that relies mostly on collection, analysis and presentation of data can be difficult but as advised by Whitehead (2008), it helps to enrich the research and it is unique data. I found my personal experiences and circumstances relevant, useful and enriching to my thesis.

Although my position as a member of staff may have influenced the findings in a different way compared to if the study was carried by an outsider, there were a lot of

positives in this approach. As an insider researcher, I was familiar with the site and participants, meaning I did not have to learn anything new from them. Participants could not lie to me as they knew that I was aware of most of the things happening in the school. Any misinterpretation I made was challenged and exposed because some of the key members of staff were involved in the study and they knew our action plans. This study is not only going to benefit the school but all participants and other professionals we work with.

7.5 BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was achieved. We managed to come up with a working model to enhance the engagement of fathers in the school. It is left to the school management to maintain the policies and procedures we established. More fathers are engaging with the school (Appendix 32, question 3). There is an improvement in behaviour to such an extent that the school received an outstanding grade in behaviour management on an Ofsted inspection in 2012. The school has also benefited in having a better relationship not only with fathers but with all parents. There has been an increase in the number of parents who attend events in school since the study began (Appendix 32 question 3). The fact that participants decided to maintain the group to continue with meetings after the study had stopped shows that they recognize its benefits.

The way the study was conducted enabled the teachers to be in a unique position to inform the fathers and their sons of the nature of their role as teachers. They were able to discuss issues they would never have discussed with the fathers and their sons. For example, boys could not understand why teachers would interfere with their 'life outside school' by wanting to know what they do with their fathers. Fathers also felt that it was the teachers' responsibility once the boys entered the school gates. So teachers had the opportunity to explain their position and expectations of both fathers and sons. Although there were misunderstandings and tensions at times, all participants agreed that it was 'worth the pain,' as everyone came out of the study with a better understanding of their role.

This study was also a professional development session for teachers and other professionals involved. We were all able to reflect on our own practice and identify areas of improvement. We recognised our prejudices and biases and the whole school has become sensitive to the needs of fathers and at the same time avoiding

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patronising them. We all benefited both professionally and on a personal level from the study (Appendix 32, question 3).

Personally, the study helped me to develop both as a professional and a person. Through the study I developed many strategies to work with fathers and parents in general. I have managed to reflect on the work I do with families and develop better ways of supporting the boys in the school. As a person, my family has benefited more as I have learnt to become a better father through interaction with other fathers who participated in the study. My two sons have benefited from the study as well because I now give them more attention and love than before.

Most families of the participants have also benefited in the same way as me with more fathers visiting the school. (Appendix 32, question 3) There are reports of more stability and peace in the families we worked with. There are also more conversations and dialogues between fathers and sons. The impact this study has had so far in the school deserves to be shared with the outside world hence I am currently in the process of coming up with a dissemination strategy as explained in the next section.

7.6 DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

The findings of this study were presented as a thesis for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree. In addition, I presented the study at various conferences, seminars and public forums. The presentations served as a taster of how the public would receive the final results.

I also published an article through a student journal from the University of Birmingham. The article was more of an introduction to the study raising pertinent issues regarding the engagement of fathers in schools. Through this article I got valuable feedback about how fathers are viewed in schools. I also received constructive criticism on how I conducted the study which helped as a rehearsal to my viva.

I am still exploring more opportunities to disseminate the study's findings. I anticipate that the study will produce at least two articles that will be published in international journals. Currently, I am working with various colleagues from other universities to explore possibilities of co-writing articles. The aim of publishing these articles is to share the new knowledge and experiences that came out as a result of this study.

7.7 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Most of the literature which I have come across has focused on the engagement of parents in the education of their children (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Goldman, 2005; Carpenter, 2008). This literature offers helpful guidelines on how schools can improve partnerships with parents. There is also considerable literature on fathers and their contribution to the education of their children (Francis and Skelton, 2005, O'Connor, 2007; Burgess, 2009). These authors emphasise the contribution of fathers as role models in education. There are very few studies specifically on fathers and sons (Parke, 1998; Clough and Garner, 2008; Rimm, 2013). These authors specifically focus on the positive impact that fathers can make if they are involved in the education of their sons. Clough and Garner (*ibid*), mainly focus on boys in primary schools and apart from advising teachers on how to effectively work with fathers, they also look at various situations that fathers are in such as widowed/single fathers, teachers as fathers and separated fathers. There is very little academic research on fathers and their roles in education. Although work by Clough and Garner (2008) is more specific to education, there is hardly any other study carried out in the UK of a similar nature. Biddulph (2008) and Francis and Skelton (2005) are more focused on boys with a few highlights on fathers or males in general and their influence on boys. Madeley's (2008) work on fathers and sons is more of a personal life story. Though helpful, it is not based on credible academic work based on research. Most of the studies are by researchers from the US and Australia, though relevant to the UK. Thus, this study, apart from raising awareness of the importance of fathers, it also helped teachers and other relevant professionals to understand the relationships that exist between fathers and their sons.

Although most of the ideas in this study are borrowed from the above literature, I specifically focused on fathers and sons in a single secondary school for young people excluded from mainstream education. The uniqueness of the study is derived from the naturally occurring sample (non-engaging fathers) and the study being conducted by a practitioner researcher (me) who holds a job in the school and at the same time is involved in carrying out the study (Robson, 2002). Unlike other studies, this study allows fathers, sons and their teachers to identify a problem in the school, try out solutions, reflect and evaluate their solutions and decide on the final one or more solutions to their problems. It raises awareness to the problems faced by fathers of boys in special schools and suggests practical solutions.

Thus, two issues were outstanding as new knowledge; firstly the unique subtle contribution made by fathers in the education of their sons that teachers can tap into and secondly the father-engagement model. Both of these issues are considered as new knowledge to the education of boys. Both issues also triggered suggestions for further studies as is discussed next.

7.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Qualitative research should raise debate and provoke new thinking (Tracy, 2013). This study raised a lot questions about the influence that fathers have on their sons' education. During the course of conducting this study I was approached by many people on how I could have conducted it. I took all suggestions as opportunities for further studies in this area. Some of the most popular issues suggested as areas for further studies related to this study are listed below.

7.8.1   Issues affecting boys performance in school

This study provoked more thoughts about the continuous lack of achievement by boys in education. There are so many reasons that can be attributed to this. Some of these reasons have already been identified through research but having conducted this study, I feel that there is more to explore on this subject.

7.8.2   The changing role of fathers

The father we see today is not the same father that existed fifty years ago. There have been numerous organisations set up to help fathers adapt to their roles as the 'emancipation of women' continues. The way fathers are constantly trying to adapt to their roles in relation to the education of their children is another area of interest as far as research is concerned.

7.8.3   Parental involvement in education

This is a well-researched area but current socio-political, economic and technological changes have challenged findings from past research. Ways of engaging parents have changed dramatically, particularly with the advent of new technology in communication.

7.8.4   'Can a woman raise a man?'

During my study, I was confronted and accused of demeaning the role of mothers and women in general by 'advocating' the engaging of fathers in education of their sons. I was sent many examples of men who made it in their lives without the

influence of their fathers. I therefore suggest that the influence of mothers in education of their sons be investigated.

7.9 SUMMARY

This participatory action research case study emphasised that all fathers are important in the education of their sons. Even though the relationship may not be good between the father and his son, in most cases, there is always a desire from both sides to be together. Fathers are able to motivate, inspire and raise the self–esteem of their sons as far as education is concerned. If our school follows the recommendations made in this research, fathers can help as positive role models for their sons.

Through the study, we also established that fathers are individuals, different and diverse. It is important that the school treats each father differently as they all have different needs. A one size fits all approach will not work. Engaging fathers in the education of their sons can enrich the partnership between the school and parents. Fathers have strengths and skills. They are good at instilling discipline and monitoring behaviour. Their knowledge and strategies can be embraced and utilised to the school's advantage.

Unlike mothers, fathers have been found to have more difficulties in opening up about the challenges they face in life hence more difficult to engage. The school has to develop strategies of identifying fathers who are at risk of disengaging and offer appropriate assistance. Single fathers, non-resident fathers and fathers with learning disabilities are most likely to need more help than others. Although some work patterns and family arrangements may pose challenges for fathers in trying to engage with the school, the school should always emphasise the uniqueness of a father's involvement in the education of his son. If the school provides enough information on its expectations of fathers, they are more likely to respond in a positive way. Even though some fathers have their own beliefs, family arrangements and cultures, most fathers indicated that they were willing to engage with the school if it benefits their sons.

This study has been successful in raising awareness of the importance of fathers in the education of their sons (Appendix 32, questions 1 & 3). As an action research case study, this study was aimed at making improvements in the school and not to generalise findings. I adopted my methodology in the light of experiences and responses from participants. I wanted to respond to issues raised by participants to

enable them to fully engage with the research process. The aim was to disempower myself in order to provide participants with space and opportunities to influence the development of the methodologies. The use of qualitative methodology offered me the opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of perceptions and explanations from a participant perspective. The involvement of the participants facilitated the generation of in-depth, rich, experiential and contextualised data. Working with the participants as part of a job role and knowing them as a researcher made them feel that they can raise issues which are important to them. I remained vigilant to avoid projecting my own experience and biases. I avoided pushing my own 'agenda' but rather to accept the 'expert knowledge' of participants in providing insight into their lived experiences. I found that conducting research on one school gave the participants an opportunity to be more involved and make changes, particularly in the context of disengaged and excluded pupils. As a participant observer, I was able to foster an empathetic relationship with the fathers.

The use of the Living Theory methodology allowed me to relate my own personal experiences to the study making it more interesting for the intended readers. The collection and analysis of data using triangulation left no room for my 'embodied knowledge' to be partisan. Through this approach, a lot of improvements took place in the school as a result of this study. Management took on board most of the recommendations from this study and implemented them. One of the biggest improvements made by the school as a result of this study was to employ a parent-liaison officer specifically to work with families and emphasising the role played by the fathers in the education of their sons. Some of the improvements that came about as a result of this study included improvement in behaviour (grade 1 Ofsted), positive staff attitudes towards fathers, flexible times to meet fathers and letters that are now sent directly to fathers. A model of working with fathers was developed which can be transferable to other schools of a similar nature. The school now has a very strong partnership with parents.

The study identified barriers to engaging fathers in the education of their sons and suggested solutions. Some of the barriers raised by participants were that some fathers had work patterns that made it difficult for them to engage with the school. Also some fathers were separated from their sons and did not get invitations to engage with the school. All participants including the boys suggested practical solutions to make it easier for fathers to work with the school.

The study had its own limitations but we achieved our aims and the school is happy with the outcomes. The method of data analysis adopted in this study was aimed at bringing out suggestions to engage more fathers and improve relations with all parents in the school. Although I had my own prejudices as a father, son and teacher, these suggestions came from the fathers themselves and their sons. I was only facilitating and empowering participants to come with solutions to the identified problem. My adoption of different roles helped me to identify and understand some of the sensitive issues that an outsider would not have been able to unfold. As this was a study for fathers with all suggestions for improvement coming from them, I take the findings to be valid and reliable.

It is important to note that five main themes (redlines) characterised this thesis. Firstly, my position as an insider researcher influenced both the style of writing and the choice of methodology. It also enhanced my data collection and analysis process. Secondly, the inclusion of participants as core-researchers was an effective way of giving a voice to the fathers and their sons. This also helped to raise the confidence of the participants when they realised that their views were listened to and recorded. Thirdly, my personal experiences as a teacher and father was an effective way of reflecting on my own practice. In addition to this, the use of the 'Living Theory' enhanced my position as an insider and active participant in the study. Such a position afforded me a rare opportunity in research to use my own personal experiences. Lastly the changing role of the father became a vital topic of discussion throughout the study revealing the impact of the socio-economic and political changes on family structures and the education of boys.

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Appendices

Appendix. 1

Social Event Meeting with Fathers

18 May 2012

Feedback Form

<u>**Instructions.**</u>

Please encircle the answer you feel appropriate to the best of your knowledge.

1. The social event was useful and necessary.

Yes/No

2. I made new friends from the event.

Yes/No

3. Stories from other fathers inspired me.

Yes/No

4. I am now free to share my experiences of fatherhood with others.

Yes/No

5. I would encourage other fathers to joining such events in the future

Yes/No

How would you like the event to be organised in the future?

May be involving more fathers in the project and their friends too. That way you get more ideas.

Thank you very much for your contribution.

Appendix. 2

<u>**Meeting with Fathers**</u>

Date: 15 December 2012

Agenda: to discuss results of the interviews and plan what to implement in the first cycle.

Attended by: all fathers, 1 teacher and Abide

Time: 5.15pm – 615pm.

Chaired by: Teacher D

Teacher D: good afternoon and thank you all for coming. I am sure we all know each other and so I am not going to waste our precious time making introductions. The reason why we are here is obvious, we have all met Abide and we all agreed to support his study. We all have one goal, to raise the achievement of all our students. As a school, we can't do this on our own. We need help from various people including fathers. Abide has been looking at what we said in the interviews and this point I will ask him to share that with us.

Abide: Good afternoon everybody, my apologies these are not the final findings of the interviews, it takes a while to analyse all the interviews. Please feel free to make comments or objections. So this is what most of you said.

6. Your main goals in sending your sons to this school are to gain qualifications and improve behaviour.

7. Most of you want your sons to be well disciplined and have a culture of working hard.

8. You want the school to improve in the way it communicates with you. Most of you want to be contacted by text (8/10).

9. You want us to design activities that are suitable for you and your son to do together.

10. You want us to be flexible with our times when we call for meetings.

11. You don't want to be called in the school all the time for 'trivial issues.'

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Your sons want:

1. To achieve qualifications and behave better.

2. To do activities with you (9/10)

3. You involved in their education.

4. The school to plan activities for them and you.

5. The school to tell you if they have been good but not to tell you if they have been bad.

Teachers have said they want the following;

1. Fathers to take active role in their sons' education.

2. To be flexible in their times they meet fathers.

3. Respect fathers more by not patronising them.

4. Improve achievement and behaviour.

5. Communicate more with fathers and parents in general.

6. Avoid involving fathers in Maths and English

7. Invite fathers to help out in areas they can help.

8. Train staff on how to work with fathers.

And last but not least, we consulted a few professionals we work with such as psychologists, social workers and the police. I managed to speak to five and this is what they said.

1. They all agreed that we should work together and share vital information.

2. They are willing to help make this study a success.

3. They see fathers as vital in the education of their sons (3/5).

4. They support that we all strive to improve the boys' behaviour and achievement.

It is interesting to note that most if not all of us want the same for our young people. In total, I interviewed 35 people and most of the people, agreed that involving fathers

in the education of their sons is vital. This is the reason why we are here. At this point I will hand over back to teacher D.

Teacher D: Can I please ask you to go into two groups of five and decide on which changes we should prioritise and implement immediately. We have ten minutes to decide.

Report on Group 1

We want the following.

1. Be flexible with the times.

2. Discuss some of the issues on the phone instead of calling us.

3. Use texts for announcements and letters for information.

4. We want a contact person.

Report from Group 2.

1. Remember children with no fathers

2. We don't want to be involved in teaching.

3. Do not have secrets/deals with our sons

4. We want work placements for our sons.

5. Our children will not achieve anything if they are not disciplined.

Teacher D: Thank you very much. From your list of 9 items. Are you happy with the following?

1. We will employ a parent liaison officer as your contact person.

2. We will be flexible with times.

3. We will focus on discipline and qualifications which is probably what the government wants.

4. We will be sensitive in the way we talk about the father subject to accommodate young people whose fathers may not be engaging.

The following items will be addressed immediately

1. No deals/secrets with students. If there is any member of staff doing that, it will be dealt with as a disciplinary issue.

2. Work placements are part of the curriculum and they will be emphasised.

3. Being involved in lessons will be on a voluntary basis.

4. We will text and write letters when appropriate.

5. We will only call you in the school when it's necessary.

Abide: I am going to discuss your requests further with the head. However, i do not see us having any problems with most of them. It may take us a while to employ a parent – liaison officer though. We will take three months to monitor how successful this is. Any comments?

Appendix. 3

Meeting with Fathers

Date: 02 April 2013

Venue: xxxxx

Time: 4pm to 5pm

Agenda:

1. To evaluate the success of the plans implemented in the first cycle.

2. To suggest improvements on current plans

3. Share ideas and experiences of the activities we are doing with our sons.

Attended by: all fathers, Teacher D and Abide

Chaired by: Teacher D

Teacher D; Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. I can't believe how well this has gone. Today we are be here to reflect on our journey. As you can see from the journey agenda you have, we will be evaluating how successful we have been, make suggestions for improvement and generally share ideas. As usual, Abide will lead us on all the three items.

Abide: Good afternoon everybody. Thank you once again for your commitment. I think I will begin by giving you feedback on how we have done so far.

12. We now have a parent-liaison officer to work with you.

13. Behaviour has improved. We have not excluded any student since the project started. We have only suspended two students this term compared to twelve this time last year.

14. We have been flexible on the times we have meetings though some of you still have problems with our times. We will continue to look at it.

15. You picked your own activities and most of you have been attending review meetings.

16. We have not been calling you for 'trivial issues' though this still debatable on what is trivial.

I am sorry we have not been able to do the following two things:

1. Contacting you by text. We recognise it's cheaper and more convenient. We want to do that and we in the process of organising and purchasing the resources.

2. Some of you still feel that we call you into the school for trivial issues.

I now want to hear from you what you think about the project and how we have done so far. Shall we have the positives so far?

Father 4: thank you for the support I now have a good relationship with my son. We can now engage in a conversation whereas before it was all about shouting.

Father 1: I feel it's been good too. I like the fact that we are doing things together now. He now works with me on weekends and I see more of him now.

Father 10: I think working together with the school has been fantastic. Really good. I and my wife now know what's happening in the school. Though he doesn't like it, it's kept him on the straight and narrow.

Father7: I think this is what we should have been doing anyway. It is just going back to basics.

Abide: Many thanks and now to the not so good.

Father 10: I think you have said already. We need to be texted rather than called. Though I am not speaking on everyone's behalf but texts are easier. I wonder why it has taken so long.

Abide: I can only say management has agreed and are working on it. Apologies for that.

Father 10: And the trivial issues, I don't if I am dominating the meeting here but I don't understand why teachers should call us and tell that so and so is refusing to write his work. I feel you are teachers, make him do the work. I cannot be here in the

school every day. This sounds rude but I am sorry some of your staff have to man up a little bit. We all know how difficult these kids can be.

Abide: That's well said. We are working on staff training. I agree it's not an easy job.

Father 6: Mine is a different issue. How many new fathers are attending so far as a result of this? I am offering to volunteer to campaign for other fathers to be involved. I work with parents I may help.

Abide: We have seen quite an improvement we have a total of 6 new fathers management engaging as a result of this. I think the head will welcome your help.

Father 3: Why can't we just say all men regardless of whether they are fathers or not. Some of these kids do not have fathers. I mean they have never seen their fathers but they have other people around them.

Father 1: I like that. My neighbour is the same. We could actually help some boys be here.

Father 10: yes it's a good idea or even mothers. Why not mothers as well?

Abide: these are all good ideas we will take on board. Mothers are already invited and involved. I will forward the idea of other significant men. Thank you for that. Is there anything else?

Father 7: I suggest parenting classes. We can help each other if we meet regularly and share ideas like this.

Abide: Another good idea. Anybody else? There being none. Over to you D.

Teacher D: These are the improvements we will make:

7. Invite other males to help.

8. Ask other fathers to help in campaign for more fathers to attend.

9. Staff training on behaviour management and working with fathers.

10. We will explore the idea of parent classes led by you guys.

11. Involve the whole family but emphasise the value of the father to education.

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Father 3: I think it's good that all staff hear from us and what we think. I suggest staff training on working with fathers to be done by one or more of us.

Abide: I agree with that.

Father 10: I can help on that.

Teacher D: we will sit with management and put forward these suggestions. If there are no more questions, thank you for coming and we can now carry on with the drink!

Appendix. 4

Meeting with boys

Date: 15 December 2012

Venue: xxxxx

Time: 10am – 11am

Agenda: to discuss results of the interviews and plan what to implement in the first cycle.

Attended by: all boys, Teacher D and Abide

Chaired by: Teacher D

Teacher D; good afternoon and thank you all for coming. I am sure we all know why we are here. Who doesn't know why we are be here?

Boy 7: Me. I have not been told anything about this meeting.

Teacher D: Ok, sorry about that mate. The reason why we are here is to hear what others said in the interviews and discuss how your fathers can help more with your education, directly or indirectly. Abide has been looking at what we said in the interviews and at this point I will ask him to share that with us.

Boy3: my dad doesn't want to help.

Teachers D: Ok we will come to that later. Thanks for that. Abide please.

Abide: Good afternoon everybody, my apologies these are not the final findings of the interviews, it takes a while to look at all the interviews. So this is what most of you said. You want:

6. To achieve qualifications and behave better.

7. To do activities with your fathers (9/10)

8. Your fathers involved in your education.

9. The school to plan activities for your fathers and you.

10. The school to tell someone if you have been good but not to tell anyone if you have been bad (6/10 want us to tell your fathers).

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Any questions or comments before I move on: Do we all agree to this?

Boy7: No that bollocks. You can't we all have to things that some dude has said. No I aint fucking doing it blood.

Boy1: I am not doing it either.

Teacher D: Remember our contract guys. Language, please do not swear. Let's listen to what Abide has to say.

Abide: I am sorry; I know some of you do not like this. We will find a way by the end of this meeting. Don't worry Boy 7. You won't be forced into doing what you don't want to do. Ok be here is what your fathers said;

They want you to:

17. Gain qualifications and improve behaviour.

18. Be well disciplined and have a culture of working hard.

19. Do activities with you.

And they want the school to:

20. Improve communication. Most fathers want to be contacted by text (8/10).

21. Design activities that are suitable for fathers and sons to do together.

22. Be flexible with our times when we call for meetings.

23. Not to call them time for 'trivial issues.'

Boy7: but can we not do activities with our mates. Why with old people?

Teacher: It is to help you bond and improve your education mate.

Boy 1: what if I don't want to?

Abide: That your choice my good friend. Any more questions? Teachers have said they want the following;

9. To help you do activities with you fathers.

10. Improve achievement and behaviour through working closely with all boys and fathers.

11. Communicate more with fathers and parents in general.

12. Avoid involving fathers in Maths and English

13. Invite fathers to help out in areas they can help.

Boy 1: You are long you are?

Abide: Remember, be here is a good opportunity to bond and build a good relationship with your loved ones.

Boy10: Loved ones, you are joking?

Ok let's move on. Last but not least, we consulted a few professionals we work with such as psychologists, social workers and the police. I managed to speak to five and this is what they said.

Boy10: Oh my days! You spoke to them?

Abide: Yes I did and this is what they said:

5. They all agreed that we should work together and share vital information.

6. They are willing to help make this study a success.

7. They see fathers as vital in your education. (3/5).

8. They support that we all strive to improve your behaviour and achievement.

In total, I spoke to 35 people (That includes you) and most of them agreed that involving fathers in the education of their sons is vital. This is the reason why we are here. At this point I will hand over back to teacher D.

Boy 1: I can't remember agreeing to anything. Are we going to be paid for this?

Abide: I can always replay what you said. That's not a problem. To answer your second question. I am not allowed to pay you for this and I said well before the start. We aim and hope that this study will improve your academic results.

Teacher D: with me here is a list of activities that we have gathered. Can you please help by ticking things you want to do with your dad? There is no limit. Anymore questions? Does anyone have any other ideas on how we can do it?

Boy1: That's all you wanted and you won't get a thing from me.

Abide: It is your choice remember. I suggest that you take this list home, think about it carefully and if you want, consult your family and bring it back tomorrow.

Teacher D: ok, well done everybody. Just drop the forms in Abide's office. I will come round during my lesson to remind you. Thanks and that's the end of our meeting. See you tomorrow.

Appendix. 5

Meeting with boys

Date: 04 April 2013

Venue: xxxxx

Time: 11am – 12pm

Agenda:

1. To reflect on the first cycle

2. To suggest improvements on what was implemented in the first cycle.

3. To evaluate the success of our plans

Attended by: all boys, Teacher D and Abide

Chaired by: Teacher D

Teacher D; Good morning and thank you all for coming. I am very proud of you for what you have done since this project started. You are all amazing. Well done! Today we need to look back and discuss what went right and what went wrong. Basically, we need to put right what we did wrong. Do we all understand that?

All: Yes.

Teacher D: Abide to give us an overview of what has been happening and we move from there. Abide please.

Abide: Good morning everybody. Well it's been an exciting experience. I can't believe you guys making such a significant change in the school. We are all proud of you. We now have a parent-liaison officer to work with all parents because of your recommendations. Your fathers are now called with some good news every, isn't that good guys? I can list a lot of things the school has done as a result of your contribution. So a big thank you.

Teacher D: Just a reminder of the things we agreed to address last time.

11. To achieve qualifications and behave better.

Are we all on course to achieving this?

Boy 1: yep.

Teacher D: All of you?

Boy 4, 5, 9, 4: Not me

12. To do activities with your fathers (9/10)

Teacher D: how many of you are doing activities with your fathers?

Boy 2: Not me. Coz he lives too far.

Abide: As far I am concerned all of you are doing something with your fathers. I thought boy 2, you went to Butlins recently with your dad. Are you not planning to run a marathon this summer?

Boy 2. Yep

Abide: Those are the activities we are talking about.

Teacher D: How do you think it's been going on?

Boy 7: S***t

Teacher D: Language please. Why do you say so?

Boy 7: I am just doing this coz my 'old man said I should but I don't like it when you call him and talk about me. He now wants to know everything.

Abide: Isn't that good?

Boy 7: No man.

Teacher D: What else can we do?

Boy 10: we want prizes.

Teacher D: I think you are right. You deserve some form of reward. We will talk to the head about that.

Boy 1: Like a trip.

Teacher D: That's a good idea. Abide what has their fathers said.

Abide: Fathers want us to continue with what we are doing. They want to do the following as an improvement:

24. Design behaviour contracts with you guys.

25. Involve mums or other people you like you guys. You see it's all about you. Isn't that good.

26. Put in place a reward system for you good behaviour.

Boy7: so we can suggest anyone we like to work with basically.

Teacher D: That's correct.

Boy 1: Yeah man. That's sick.

Teacher D: Anymore ideas before we leave?

All: no.

Teacher D: Abide anything else?

Abide: Sorry guys, just five more minutes of your time. Just to let you know what will happen in the next two to three months:

1. We will not come to your houses anymore?

2. We will design a behaviour contract.

3. We will have another male person who is not your father working with you. This person is your own choice.

4. I will talk to the head about rewards.

Boy 3: Rewards please.

Abide: We all need them. Please feel free to add anything until June.

Thank you

Appendix. 6

<u>**Meeting with Teachers**</u>

Date: 15 December 2012

Venue: xxxxx

Time: 1pm - 2pm

Agenda: to discuss results of the interviews and plan what to implement in the first cycle.

Attended by: 9 teachers and Abide

Chaired by: Teacher D

Teacher D: Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. Apologies from Teacher J who isn't feeling well. I am sure we all know each other and so I am not going to waste our precious time making introductions. The reason why we are here is obvious, we have all agreed to support Abide's study. We all have one goal, to raise the achievement of all our students through engaging more fathers. As teachers here, we are responsible of making this study a success. Abide has been looking at what we said in the interviews and at this point I will ask him to share that with us.

Abide: Good afternoon everybody, my apologies these are not the final findings of the interviews, it takes a while to analyse all the interviews. What I am going to share with you are the main themes emerging from the interviews. Please feel free to make comments or objections. So this is what most of you said.

14. You want fathers to take an active role in their sons' education.

15. You agreed to look into being flexible in the times you meet fathers or parents in general for reviews.

16. Three people advised us to respect fathers more by not patronising them. I thought I should just mention it as I felt it was vital advice. Sometimes we all forget the basics.

17. This is obvious but we agreed to focus on improving achievement and behaviour of all our boys in the school.

18. As a school, we will communicate more with fathers and parents in general.

19. We will also explore other ways of involving fathers in Maths and English and avoid embarrassing those who may have literacy difficulties. This includes inviting fathers or parents in general to help out in areas they are comfortable.

20. Management will look into training staff on how to work with fathers.

Any issues arising from this short list?

Teacher P: My only worry, although I agree with most of it, is that we can't do all for fathers and we can't promise things we can't do.

Teacher D; Things such as what?

Teacher P; I am sceptical about being flexible. We have to be careful. It's give and take. How flexible are we going to be flexible?

Teacher T: P is right, I wouldn't want to be asked to come weekends here but probably we can ask parents which dates they can attend meetings and reviews. We have to be realistic as well. We all have other things to do.

Teacher P: Or come evenings.

Abide: Ok, is everyone ok to look at that later. I think these are all important issues and important suggestions. I am noting everything down as we speak.

Anyway most fathers said this:

27. We want our sons to gain qualifications and improve behaviour.

28. We want our sons to be well disciplined and have a culture of working hard.

29. We want the school to improve in the way it communicates with us. Most of them want to be contacted by text (8/10).

30. Fathers want us to design activities that are suitable for them and their sons to do together.

31. This is the most popular one, they want us to be flexible with our times when we call for meetings and they don't want to be called into the school all the time for 'trivial issues.'

Teacher T: It sounds like an ultimatum. So what are they going to do themselves? You see this is what P was saying.

Abide: They have given us the go-ahead to come up with a programme and ideas.

Teacher C: I am not surprised.

Abide: Shall we move and hear what their sons said. Most of them want the following:

13. To achieve qualifications and behave better.

14. To do activities with their fathers (9/10)

15. Their fathers to be involved in their education.

16. The school to plan activities for them and you.

17. The school to report to their parents if they have been good but not to tell anyone if they have been bad.

Teacher C: number 5 is obvious.

Teacher T: It sounds too good. Did they really say that?

Abide: Yes they did. Quite interesting isn't it? And last but not least, I consulted a few professionals we work with such as psychologists, social workers and the police. I managed to speak to five and this is what they said.

9. They all agreed that we should work together and share vital information.

10. They are willing to help make this study a success.

11. They see fathers as vital in the education of their sons (3/5).

12. They support that we all strive to improve the boys' behaviour and achievement.

In total, I interviewed 35 people and most of the people, agreed that involving fathers in the education of their sons is vital. This is the reason why we are here. At this point I will hand over back to teacher D.

Teacher D: Thank you, can I please ask you to look at the list on your table and decide on which changes we should prioritise and implement immediately. The list is a reminder of what Abide has just said. Please choose from the list. We have ten minutes to decide. We will divide them into short term and long term targets.

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Short term

5. Be flexible with the times.

6. Discuss some of the issues on the phone instead of calling fathers.

7. Use texts for announcements and letters for information

Long term

6. Employing a parent liaison officer

7. Parenting classes

8. Planning activities for fathers

9. Focus on discipline in the school

Teacher D: Thank you very much. We have three short term and four long term targets. The short term will be implemented immediately and the long term ones will be left to management to decide.

Abide: Many thanks any more comments, questions or suggestions?

Teacher S: What's the time scale of implementation and reviewing?

Abide: If everyone is ok with this, according to our schedule, its 3 months. We will meet again after 3 months and monitor this.

Teacher P: I think one group is not gonna be happy. I don't know how that's gonna work.

Abide: Do you have any suggestions on it?

Teacher P: Can't think of any at the moment. Sorry.

Abide: which group.

Teacher P: The boys. Are they happy with all this?

Abide: Sorry if this sounds rude but it's not to make anybody happy. This study has to work for their benefit. If they do want it they will say it. So far they are alright though they have issues with certain things.

Teacher D: Ok, thank you all. We are bang on time.

Appendix. 7

Meeting with Teachers

Date: 03 April 2013

Venue: xxxxx

Time: 3pm

Agenda:

1. To reflect on plans implemented in the first cycle.

2. To suggest on ideas for further development on the project.

3. Share the developments and challenges so far.

Attended by: 8 teachers and Abide

Chaired by: Teacher D

Teacher D; good afternoon and thank you all for coming. Apologies from Teacher C and Teacher P. They requested minutes of this meeting as they have other commitments. Abide is going to give us a brief overview of the project so far.

Abide: Good afternoon everybody. Thank you very much for your continued support for this study. As a result of your valuable support we have made the following changes/improvements.

21. We have employed a parent-liaison officer to help us engage more fathers.

22. We have 6 more new fathers this year engaging as a result of this study.

23. We now have flexible times to meet fathers.

Teacher J: I think that's really good but we can do better. What have the fathers said about this? Why can't we just have one big meeting rather than you speaking on their behalf?

Abide: that's a good idea but we fear that if you guys disagree on something the relationship may be damaged forever. For the future yes. To answer your other question which will help others, fathers have said they are happy with the hard work you are and they have suggested the following:

12. Invite other males who are not biological fathers to help boys without fathers.

13. Ask other fathers to help in campaign for more fathers to attend.

14. Staff training on behaviour management and working with fathers.

15. Conduct parent classes led by fathers themselves.

Teacher R: I think that's really good. I don't know about this training. Do they feel that we are lacking somewhere?

Teacher G: talk about being trained by someone who has failed to keep their son in mainstream school.

Abide: No, no, guys. Sorry for the misunderstanding. They want us to understand fathers more. For example getting to their thinking, their problems and how they feel about school.

Teacher J: That's why we have these meetings together. We are all adults we can deal with these misunderstandings.

Abide: we will try that in the next cycle. Any other suggestions please?

Teacher E: I like the training idea. Let's hear what they want to say. It may help us but I had two suggestions:

1. Is there a possibility of these fathers helping other boys in the school

2. Can we have these fathers helping in workshops such as the Carpentry one?

Abide: I will suggest that to them and to management. It may be complicated if they need CRBs. I don't know I will check. Anything else. Over to you teacher D.

Teacher D: Just to recap, we are going to suggest:

1. Other significant males for boys without fathers

2. Parent classes

3. Volunteer fathers to encourage other fathers to engage

4. Meetings together with fathers.

5. Staff training? Do we all agree?

Abide: let's try it guys and see where it takes us. We can still review it in the next cycle.

Teacher D: Thanks everybody, we are on time again. See you later.

Appendix. 8

An Extract from the school's Prospectus

<u>About Us</u>

'PP is an independent school which caters for learners from 13 to19* years old. It offers an alternative curriculum for learners who have struggled to achieve in the mainstream school environment. It also specialises in providing help for learners who have learning difficulties or behavioural issues.

Founded in 2003 by Principal and Executive Managing Director, EE, it was registered as an independent school in October 2007 following a stringent Ofsted inspection. Education and skills are provided for students who come mainly from Birmingham and Solihull, but also from Sandwell, Worcester, Kidderminster and Bromsgrove.

The academy delivers a specialist approach for those who may otherwise have had to go to residential education institutions and its one-to-one provision allows young people to remain within their own communities and receive holistic support from the academy. This involves working with their families and various agencies to deliver an educational package that will enable young people to take a responsible place in society.'

 All parents/guardians and carers are equally valued as part of our school community. Children's learning is improved when we work in partnership with their parents/guardians or carers, and their wider family. The school particularly values and welcomes more participation of fathers and other male guardians/carers. We therefore believe in close co-operation with all families, and in regular consultation between the home and the school to achieve our goals.'

Invitation Letter to Fathers

September 2011

Dear Mr: ………………………………………………

Re: Invitation to Participate in the Research Study

My name is Abide Zenenga. I am a postgraduate student at The University of Northampton (School of Education). I am also a part-time member of staff at xxxxx. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my research degree and I would like to invite you to participate in this study titled **'Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study.**

The aim of this study is to analyse the patterns of engagement by fathers in early secondary education (KS3) and investigate the relationship that these might have with the education and achievement of their sons. The study therefore seeks to:

1. Investigate if the active involvement of a father has a relationship with the level of progress by their son.

2. Analyse the range of strategies and actions that fathers adopt to enable their own engagement with the school.

3. Identify what fathers see as the principal barriers to enabling positive engagement.

4. Analyse the boys' views and experiences about their fathers' involvement in their schooling.

5. Analyse the teachers' views and experiences on engaging fathers in the school

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview. The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 60minutes. As part of the research study, I will also send a few questions for you to answer from home. Collection of data through interviews, questionnaires and observations will be ongoing from October 2011 up to October 2012. Participation is confidential. The report will be anonymous, which means that it will not reveal your

answers. You may also decide not to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering. You have a right not to participate in this study and can withdraw at any time in the future. Study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at academic and professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

I hope that this study will benefit management in the school, parents and boys in developing strategies of engaging fathers more effectively.

I will be happy to answer any questions related to the study. You may contact me at 07723404150 or abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk if you have a study related question or problem. If you have a complaint about the conduct of this study, you can contact Professor Philip Garner on 01604892418 or philip.garner@northampton.ac.uk.

Thank you for your consideration. It is only through your support that this project can succeed and we hope that you will take part. If you would like to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return it to my office or the address below. I have also attached an information sheet that outlines what the research study is about.

With kind regards

Abide Zenenga

The University of Northampton

The School of Education

Park Campus

Boughton Green Road

Northampton

NN2 7AL

abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk

……………………………….…………………………………………………………………

Draft **Consent Statement**

I have read and understood the invitation letter and the researcher has answered any questions I wanted to ask about the project.

1. I have read and understood the project aims and objectives.

2. I appreciate that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at anytime without giving a reason.

3. Within the confines of the law, the researcher will not give any personal information about me to anyone else.

4. I understand that the researcher will ensure that my answers remain anonymous which means that the report will not reveal my identity.

5. I understand that reports and publications may be written about this research, and that nothing identifying me will ever be made public unless I have agreed and in which case I will be given a pseudonym.

6. I give permission for my views to be captured and be used in publications from the study and I understand that they will not be used for any other purpose.

I have read all the above points; I understand them and would like to take part in the research.

Name:……………………………………………………

Signed:………………………………………………….

Date:…………………………………………………….

Appendix.10

Letter for Parents Requesting Permission

September 2011

Dear: ………………………….

Re: Request for permission for your son to participate in a research study.

I am postgraduate student at The University of Northampton (School of Education) and I am also a member of staff at Arch. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my research degree and your son has expressed interest in participating.

The study is titled '*Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study*. I would be very grateful if you allow your son to participate. If you agree for your son to participate, please sign the consent form below. Collection of data through interviews, questionnaires and observations will be ongoing from October 2011 up to October 2012.

I have attached an information sheet for you to refer and I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study.

Yours faithfully

Abide Zenenga

The University of Northampton

The School of Education

Park Campus

Boughton Green Road

Northampton

NN2 7AL

abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk

Appendix.11

Letter to boys

September 2011

Dear:

RE: Participating in a Research Study.

I am pleased to inform you that you have been randomly selected to participate in the research study I am conducting as part of the requirements of my research degree. The study is titled '**Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study**. This study is sponsored by The University of Northampton (School of Education).

Participation in the research involves answering a few questions in a questionnaire and being interviewed by me. Collection of data through interviews, questionnaires and observations will be ongoing from October 2011 up to October 2012.

I have attached an information sheet to this letter which will give you more information about the research. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this research study and I look forward to working with you. If you agree to participate in this research, please sign the consent form below and return it to my office. Since you are below sixteen years of age, I will be seeking permission from your parents for you to participate if you agree.

Yours Faithfully

Abide Zenenga

The University of Northampton

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NN2 7AL

abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk

Appendix.12

Invitation letter to Teachers

September 2011

Dear …………………………………..

Re: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my research degree and I would like to invite you to participate in this study titled *'Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study.* This invitation is by random selection and if you agree to participate, I will be inviting you to a staff meeting (date to be announced later) where i will explain the purpose of the research further.

The aim of this study is to analyse the patterns of engagement by fathers in early secondary education (KS3) and investigate the relationship that these might have with the education and achievement of their sons. The study therefore seeks to:

6. Investigate if the active involvement of a father has a relationship with the level of progress by their son.

7. Analyse the range of strategies and actions that fathers adopt to enable their own engagement with the school.

8. Identify what fathers see as the principal barriers to enabling positive engagement.

9. Analyse the boys' views and experiences about their fathers' involvement in their schooling.

10. Analyse the teachers' views and experiences on engaging fathers in the school

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview. I will also be sending you a questionnaire with a few questions as part of the research. Collection of data through interviews, questionnaires and observations will be ongoing from October 2011 up to October 2012. Participation is confidential. The report will be anonymous, which means that it will not reveal your answers. You may also decide not to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering. You

have a right not to participate in this study and can withdraw at any time in the future. Study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at academic and professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

I hope that this study will benefit management in the school, parents and boys in developing strategies of engaging fathers more effectively.

I will be happy to answer any questions related to the study. You may contact me at 07723404150 or abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk if you have a study related question or problem. If you have a complaint about the conduct of this study, you can contact Professor Philip Garner on 01604892418 or philip.garner@northampton.ac.uk. . I have also attached an information sheet that outlines what the research study is about.

Thank you for your consideration. It is only through your support that this project can succeed and we hope that you will take part. If you would like to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return it to my office or the address below

With kind regards

Abide Zenenga

The University of Northampton

The School of Education

Park Campus

Boughton Green Road

Northampton

NN2 7AL

abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

Draft **Consent Statement**

I have read and understood the invitation letter and the researcher has answered any questions I wanted to ask about the project.

7. I have read and understood the project aims and objectives.

8. I appreciate that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

9. Within the confines of the law, the researcher will not give any personal information about me to anyone else.

10. I understand that the researcher will ensure that my answers remain anonymous which means that the report will not reveal my identity.

11. I understand that reports and publications may be written about this research, and that nothing identifying me will ever be made public unless I have agreed and in which case I will be given a pseudonym.

12. I give permission for my views to be captured and be used in publications from the study and I understand that they will not be used for any other purpose.

I have read all the above points; I understand them and would like to take part in the research.

Name:………………………………………………………

Signed:…………………………………………………….

Date:……………………………………………………….

Appendix.13

Preliminary letter for the Director of the school

September 2011

Dear Mr XXXXXX

RE: Request for permission to conduct a research study at xxxxx.

I write to kindly ask for your permission to conduct a research study in your school as part of the requirements of my research degree. The title of the research study is **'Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study.** This study is sponsored by The University of Northampton (school of education).

I intend to interview you and a sample of randomly selected teachers and boys in the school. I also intend to involve the fathers of the boys. Collection of data through interviews, questionnaires and observations will be ongoing from October 2011 up to October 2012. This will be an in-depth single case study.

I will be very grateful if you grant me permission as I hope the study will also be beneficial to the school. If you need any further clarification, I am free to meet you at your earliest convenience. I have also attached an information sheet that outlines what the research study is about.

Please sign the form below and return it to return it to my office or the address below, if you agree to give your permission.

Yours faithfully

Abide Zenenga

The University of Northampton

The School of Education

Park Campus

Boughton Green Road

Northampton

NN2 7AL

abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk

………………………….…………………………………………………………………………

I …………………………………………………… give my permission for Abide Zenenga to conduct his research study at my school.

Signed: ……………………………………..

Date: ……………………………………

School Stamp:

Appendix.14

Invitation Letter to the school Director

Dear Mr XXXX

Re: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Thank you very much for giving me the permission to conduct my research study in your school. I now write to invite you to participate in this study titled '**Engaging fathers in the education of their sons: A case study.**

The aim of this study is to analyse the patterns of engagement by fathers in early secondary education (KS3) and investigate the relationship that these might have with the education and achievement of their sons. The study therefore seeks to:

11. Investigate if the active involvement of fathers has a relationship with the level of progress by their sons.

12. Analyse the range of strategies and actions that fathers adopt to enable their own engagement with the school.

13. Identify what fathers see as the principal barriers to enabling positive engagement.

14. Analyse the boys' views and experiences about their fathers' involvement in their schooling.

15. Analyse the teachers' views and experiences on engaging fathers in the school

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview. The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 60minutes. Participation is confidential. The report will be anonymous, which means that it will not reveal your answers. You may also decide not to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering. You have a right not to participate in this study and can withdraw at any time in future. Study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at academic and professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Collection of data through interviews, questionnaires and observations will be ongoing from October 2011 up to October 2012.

I hope that this study will benefit management in the school, parents and boys in developing strategies of engaging fathers more effectively.

I will be happy to answer any questions related to the study. You may contact me at 07723404150 or abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk if you have a study related question or problem. If you have a complaint about the conduct of this study, you can contact Professor Philip Garner on 01604892418 or philip.garner@northampton.ac.uk.

Thank you for your consideration. It is only through your support that this project can succeed and we hope that you will take part. If you would like to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return it to my office or the address below.

With kind regards,

Abide Zenenga

The University of Northampton

The School of Education

Park Campus

Boughton Green Road

Northampton

NN2 7AL

abide.zenenga@northampton.ac.uk

Draft **Consent Statement**

I have read and understood the invitation letter and the researcher has answered any questions I wanted to ask about the project.

13. I have read and understood the project aims and objectives

14. I appreciate that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

15. Within the confines of the law, the researcher will not give any personal information about me to anyone else.

16. I understand that the researcher will ensure that my answers remain anonymous which means that the report will not reveal my identity.

17. I understand that reports and publications may be written about this research, and that nothing identifying me will ever be made public unless I have agreed and in which case I will be given a pseudonym.

18. I give permission for my views to be captured and be used in publications from the study and I understand that they will not be used for any other purpose.

…………………………………………………………………………………………

I have read all the above points; I understand them and would like to take part in the research.

Name:………………………………………………………

Signed:…………………………………………………….

Date:……………………………………………………….

Appendix.15
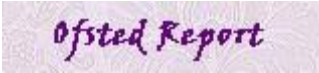
Ofsted Report

Overall Grade: Good

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils- "OUTSTANDING"

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students thoroughly enjoy their time at PP. Attendance levels are rising year on year and far exceed the poor attendance that many students had at previous setting. Students feel that they are respected and they appreciate the time that staff give to them.

Provision of information

The school provides all of the required information for parents, carers and others through its website and prospectus. Parents and carers are provided with clearly written reports about the attainment and progress of their children at the end of each term.

Students from a variety of cultural backgrounds work and socialize together very well. They report no bullying or racial intolerance. The curriculum includes excellent opportunities to develop an understanding of different religions and culture.

There is a very good sense of community in the school

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Appendix.16

Student School Report

Student:

Date: 18.06.2013

Attendance: 88%

Vocational subjects:

C has attended all vocational subjects in the school. It is reported that although he had a preference for some subjects he engaged in all of them. C has achieved:

1. Bricklaying (NOCN Award)

2. Painting and Decorating (NOCN Award)

3. Carpentry (NOCN Award)

C has also attended Hair and Beauty sessions to prepare for his Barbering Course next year.

Tutor signature: …………………………………………..

Functional Skills.

Although C had a few issues with Literacy and Numeracy, he worked very hard in all Functional Skills and achieved the following:

1. ICT Entry level 3

2. Maths Functional skills level

3. English Functional skills level

C is now waiting for his Level 1 English and Maths results.

Tutor Signature: …………………………………………..

Behaviour

It has not been easy for C at times but his behavior can be described as generally good. When C works in small groups he engages better. He likes staff to listen to his concerns and sometimes he prefers to keep himself to himself.

Tutor signature: …………………………………….

Destination

C has been offered a place at xxxxx college for a Bricklaying Course at Level 1. He has also has an option to stay at xxxxx for the post 16 programme. The school wishes C all the best in the future.

Appendix.17

Inclusion Policy

Principles

All children have a right to be educated within their peer group. At PP, we recognise equality and diversity and endeavour to support children in their journey to achieve their full potential. We believe that each child deserves to be given an opportunity to learn; whatever their age, ability, gender, race or background. We understand that in order to be fully inclusive, our teaching has to be differentiated, challenging flexible, dynamic; constantly changing to adopt innovative practices and adapt to varying learner needs.

Appendix.18

Date:

Dear: Parents/carers

RE: Attendance.

I write to inform you that as a school we are very much concerned about
……………………………..

…………………………… attendance. …………………………………..attendance is
currently ………………… and this is not acceptable by national standards. We are
therefore asking you to assist us improve this attendance to at least 95% before
Christmas. We will be writing you again in January informing you if we have achieved
this target.

Yours sincerely

Date:

Dear: all

RE: Attendance.

I write to inform you that as a school we are very much concerned about
……………………………..

…………………………… attendance. …………………………………..attendance is
currently ………………… and this is not acceptable by national standards. We are
therefore asking you to assist us improve this attendance to at least 95% before
Christmas. We will be writing you again in January informing you if we have achieved
this target.

Yours sincerely

Date:

Dear: Families

RE: Attendance.

I write to inform you that as a school we are very much concerned about …………………………..

…………………………… attendance. …………………………………..attendance is currently ………………… and this is not acceptable by national standards. We are therefore asking you to assist us improve this attendance to at least 95% before Christmas. We will be writing you again in January informing you if we have achieved this target.

Yours sincerely

Date:

Dear: mums, dads and carers

RE: Attendance.

I write to inform you that as a school we are very much concerned about …………………………..

…………………………… attendance. …………………………………..attendance is currently ………………… and this is not acceptable by national standards. We are therefore asking you to assist us improve this attendance to at least 95% before Christmas. We will be writing you again in January informing you if we have achieved this target.

Yours sincerely

Interview with teachers

Interviewee: Teacher D

Interviewer: Abide Zenenga

Date of interview: 15.11.12

Data coded by: Abide Zenenga   Time: 1pm

No	Utterance	Sub Theme	Main Theme
1.	**This is interview number 1 with Teacher D. Good afternoon and thank you very much for coming.**		
2.	You're welcome. It's always a pleasure to talk to you Abide.		
3.	**I guess that's true, ok let's get right straight into the business of the day. Can you please briefly explain your role in this school?**		
4.	I teach maths and English and they call it Functional skills here. I am also responsible for other various activities such as recruiting students every Friday, researching and careers guidance.	**role**	
5.	**Fantastic. You are aware of the ongoing project in the school, what's your view on the school's intention to engage more fathers?**		
6.	It's a good thing obviously and I hope it will work. However, I can't see many fathers coming in because basically they are not there. If you ask me where they are, I don't know because most of our kids here do not	**father absence**	

	live with their fathers.		
7.	**What benefits do you see in engaging fathers?**		
8.	Loads mate. Ehhh what can I say. Yes loads, there is research evidence showing that fathers can motivate boys to do better in school and I think it's all about discipline. If our boys know that their fathers are on their backs so to speak they will up their game. I think they will be more focused and achieve better qualifications.	**Importance of a father. fathers bring focus, discipline, motivation**	
9.	**That's a good observation but how are you personally going to contribute to engaging more fathers in the school?**		
10.	Well, that's a difficult one and I don't want to promise anything but I can only work with management and support the programmes in place. I will also participate in programmes such as this one and give my ideas and hope to make a difference. Is that any good?		
11.	**Actually that's very good. What are the main challenges in engaging fathers in general in your work that is if there are any?**		
12.	Well, there is gonna be loads I think. Number one fathers may not be there as I said before, just not there, you what know I mean. Number two, there may be legal issues for fathers not to contact their children, and you know with social services and number three we have to train staff to do it. We have to ask ourselves if we have staff to do it**.**	**staff training** **legal issues**	

13.	You have a lot in there. What do you mean by fathers not being there and legal issues?		
14.	I mean sometimes these boys don't know who their fathers are and have never seen them, that's the worst case scenario.		
15.	So what can we do with such fathers?		
16.	I suggest looking at any dominant male figures in the lives of the boys. If we are looking for proper biological fathers, we won't make it mate, sorry to be negative.	**work with dominant male figures**	
17.	Well that's one thing to consider. Let's get back to the legal issues question what do you mean by legal issues?		
18.	I mean in some cases, because of various circumstances such as domestic violence, fathers may be banned from seeing their children through courts.	**Some fathers are banned from seeing their children.**	
19.	**In your view, what kind of support do fathers need to engage more in the education of their sons in the school?**		
20.	Maybe, they need to know what's available here such as if they come in, what are they coming to do. Basically it's the information they need. Oh eh one more thing, they need to feel welcome, useful and wanted.	**information** **They need to feel welcome, useful and wanted.**	
21.	**What sort of activities do you think fathers will not be interested in?**		
22.	Not interested in? That's a tricky one?		
23.	**Yes not interested in.**		

24.	I don't think they are interested in academic stuff such as helping out in Maths and English. I want to assume they see that as the teacher's duty. I don't think they are also interested in coming to be told what to do. Try some man stuff and see what happens.	**Maths and English**	
25.	**What's man stuff? Sorry.**		
26.	Physical activities such as may be football or other sports.		
27.	**But do you not think that it's patronising fathers and depicting them as less academic?**		
28.	Ehh, well, I don't think so though to some extent it can be **seen like that. I think generally fathers like to play physically, that's** according to research though.	physically	
29.	**Ok thank you for the clarification. What are the main concerns raised by fathers in the education of their sons?**		
30.	Ehh, in my short experience here, the few fathers who come here want to know if their sons are improving in behaviour. Mainly, its behaviour and academic achievement. Sometimes they just sit there and wait for you to talk.	**behaviour and academic achievement**	
31.	**What do you think is the reason for this?**		
32.	Reason for what? For not talking.		
33.	**Yes.**		
34.	In some cases I think it's the lack of confidence and knowing what to do. They are overwhelmed by the assumed knowledge	**Fathers feel overpowered by the teacher's**	

	teachers have and it's safe to just sit, listen and go home. That way they don't expose themselves that much. This is just my own guess.	**knowledge**	
35.	**So what has been your experience of working with fathers in general?**		
36.	Quite interesting. Well, I would say non-cooperation and absence. It is hard to say and it's all sensitive. Sometimes, you don't know if the fathers can read or not, or if they had a bad experience in their schooling. Both these factors can contribute to their disengagement. To answer your question, generally I have not been lucky with fathers; sorry to be negative and I hope my views will change at the end of the end of this project.	**non-cooperation, absence, sensitive subject**	
37.	**Is there a difference in achievement between the boys whose fathers engage and the ones whose fathers don't?**		
38.	I have not been able to compare as I have not seen many fathers. To be honest I have not seen a difference.**		
39.	**Fair enough, so what do you see as challenges in engaging fathers?**		
40.	Many		
41.	What do you mean by many?		
42.	ehhh, I said that before, they do not come in, they are not there, and they do not cooperate if they are there. The father subject is sensitive for the type of our students. I		

	remember one time two years ago, a TV channel wanted to do a documentary on parents of our children and we could not go ahead with it as it was too sensitive. That's how serious it is.		
43.	**So how do you encourage more fathers to engage?**		
44.	As I said before, we have to understand fathers first and look at activities they are interested. I think the type of fathers we have need a bit of a gentle push, more information and a bit of education about education. I would suggest starting with a barbeque event or a football gala for them.	**gentle push for fathers, education about education**	
45.	**What activities do you involve fathers in in the school?**		
46.	We don't have specific activities for fathers only. We expect them to attend review meetings and other disciplinary meetings. We also have an open door policy for all parents to visit as and when they want to. I don't know what those without fathers would think if we have activities for fathers only.		
47.	**What about father's day?**		
48.	I don't believe in that kind of stuff. Sorry.		
49.	**To what extent would you say your school is father-friendly?**		
50.	All parents are welcome. We are therefore father-friendly. We don't turn fathers away nor	all parents	

	encourage fathers only to attend.		
51.	**Since you acknowledged earlier on that fathers are important in the education of their sons, do you think you will be contradicting yourself by saying that?**		
52.	Ehh, you may think like that but what I am saying here is that I don't believe in singling fathers out or I let me say I feel for those who don't have the fathers. However, yes fathers are important and it's a fact.	what about those without fathers.	
53.	**When parents are invited to this school, who attends?**		
54.	Obviously mums. That I can say with confidence. Yes its mums and nans.	mums	
55.	**How many fathers are engaging in the school activities?**		
56.	Fathers engaging with the school? I haven't counted.		
57.	**Ok my next question is what advice would you give to management school to engage more fathers?**		
58.	Use attractive activities such as football games or any other non-academic activities. Respect the fathers and value their contribution.		
59.	**Very wise words. Is there anything else you want to add?**		
60.	No thanks. Maybe all the best in your studies		

	mate.		
61.	Oh thanks.		
62.	**This is the end of the interview. Thank you very much?**		
63.	You are welcome.		

Appendix.20

Interview with fathers

Interviewee: Father 1

Interviewer: Abide Zenenga

Date of interview: 05.11.12

Data coded by: Abide Zenenga   **Time:** 12.35pm

No	Utterance	Sub Theme	Main Theme
64.	**This is interview number 1 with father 1. Good afternoon and thank you very much for coming at such a short notice.**		
65.	That's fine don't worry anytime you can call and if I am free I can come.		
66.	**Last time we met it was at a fathers meeting and we had a barbeque. How did you feel about the meeting?**		
67.	It was good as I got to meet some people I didn't know and we had a good chat. Yes, I would say it was useful for me in particular especially that we now know what you want to do in the school.	**education**	
68.	**Thanks for that. Now I am going to ask you a few questions regarding the study we are carrying out in the school. What are your goals in sending your son to this school?**		
69.	Obviously to learn and achieve qualifications. ….(silence) basically I want him to progress in his education as far as possible and do better than I did as we never had the opportunities they now have	**qualifications comparison**	

	these days.		
70.	**Good, so as a father, what are the values that you want to transmit to your son?**		
71.	Values …….. ermmmm, you mean what I want him to learn?		
72.	**Yes. what do you want him to learn from you as a father?**		
73.	Oh I got you now. Yes, a lot. I want him to learn to work hard, to be honest and be able to respect other people. You know we come from a different culture so I want him to learn my culture as well. Who we are and where we come from, a bit of history about us will do him good I think. That's how I grew up myself.	**hard work and respect**	
74.	**Why these particular values?**		
75.	They help him to be accepted in any society. You know if you grow up respecting other people and working hard and being honest, you won't have many enemies. That's how I see it and that's how I was brought up.		
76.	**That's very nice to hear. So what would you consider a positive outcome from this school and why?**		
77.	As I said before, good behaviour please, qualifications will be a bonus.		
78.	**We will try to do that for you. How often do you visit the school? And when was the last time you visited?**		

79.	Not many times. I only come when I am invited. Last time I came was in July I think for that fathers thing.........., yah July. Not too bad. Do I need to come every day?		
80.	**No that's not what I mean it's just to find out if you ever visit us at all. Anyway how often would you like to visit?**		
81.	When necessary I would. I wouldn't want to say everyday or every week. We have things to do as parents as well. So it's up you as a school to call us when you think it's important.	**onus is on the school**	
82.	**What if we call you for something we think is important and you think it's not?**		
83.	It's a problem isn't it…..(smiles) I suppose it's important to state why we are coming and always make sure we are not wasting each other's time.	**school should give enough info.**	
84.	**What are the areas you want to improve in engaging with the school?**		
85.	I think it's the communication bit. We can be contacted by phone rather than being called in. we can do other things to help if we are given the opportunities. We have the ideas on how to improve some things.		
86.	**These are very good suggestions so what sort of opportunities do you like?**		
87.	In my other son's school parents can go in and participate in other lessons and they do things like FETE and things such as		

	Fathers day etc.		
88.	**Many thanks for that we will try and gather as much information as possible. We are going to have another meeting to bring all these ideas together.**		
89.	That will be brilliant I think. There are so many ideas out there.		
90.	**What are your main challenges in being a father to your son in relation to his education?**		
91.	He thinks at 14 he is now a man and he knows everything. His mates are his family, he wants to go out and things on his own. I keep on telling him that life is not like that and sometimes he is so rude to me. You can't hit them here. It's hard with all this stupid stuff on television.	**conflict and peers**	
92.	**what stupid stuff? Can explain please.**		
93.	ok, ... it's all the stupid things shown on tele that they end up learning and try to imitate.		
94.	**who do you blame for that?**		
95.	I suppose as parents we should stop but it should not be shown on TV either. They should make it harder to access.		
96.	**What support would you require to overcome these challenges?**		
97.	I want the school to say the same things as we say at home. If you guys are not	**school and parents should work**	

	tough with him here he sees us at home as bad. We should always be informed of any unacceptable behaviour and his successes as well.	**together.**	
98.	**Who else do you think can support you?**		
99.	I don't know really because I don't want him involved with social services. Those people think of nothing but taking kids away from people. I think I can do it on my own and probably with yourselves.	**social services, past experiences.**	
100.	**Ok I understand ermmm, what kind of parent education activities are you interested in?**		
101.	I don't know. I think things should come from you guys. We don't know what's out there. Also you are a bit of a different school, you do things differently. All I have to say is that we can be involved without necessarily coming here every time.		
102.	**I understand that now and I have to tell management that. May be we need to come up with strategies to involve all parents without necessarily coming here. Some teachers have suggested coming out to see you at home.**		
103.	If they have the time, then fine but I wouldn't want people in my house all the time. What would neighbours think of me?		
104.	**I never saw it that way but it's something we can discuss. My next question is what are the things that**		

	happened to you at school that you never want to happen to your son.		
105.	I don't want him to misbehave and miss this opportunity to be educated for free and be someone in life. I missed that opportunity myself and look where I am now. I always tell him that but he doesn't seem to understand.		
106.	**What are the things that happened to you at school that you want to happen to your son.**		
107.	Well, ermm, it was never good at school anyway but I would say he needs to work hard.	**bad experience with school when young.**	
108.	**We will try to make him work hard.**		
109.	Thanks for that.		
110.	**So what activities do you occasionally do with your son?**		
111.	We work together at my garage on weekends. Nothing educational really. It's hard to get him. He wants to be out and about with his friends. That is what worries me because I don't know what he will be doing. Last time we had the police knocking on our door at 11 in the night to bring him back. As a parent I don't like that but he doesn't listen.	**garage**	
112.	**I understand its hard. So why the garage activities in particular?**		
113.	That's the only thing he is interested in. He gets paid a little bit and I don't think he		

	would have been attending if it was not for the bit I pay him. He won't do anything else with me. May be you can encourage him to join in with family on meals and the allotment we have. Probably we will be able to drink together when he is older.		
114.	**We will look into that. The next question is on communication. How do you want the school to communicate with you?**		
115.	My other son's school texts and it helps. I get the texts instantly.		
116.	**Why this mode of communication?**		
117.	It's obviously direct and instant and I can have a chance to look at my phone all the time.		
118.	**What advice would you give to the school to engage more fathers?**		
119.	If possible create more time and flexible hours for us to attend. I do not see the point anyway if my wife attends and you want me to attend. You guys we have a lot of time on our hands. We don't. (smiles).		
120.	**Is there anything you would like to say?**		
121.	No thanks.		
122.	**You don't have time on your hands?**		
123.	Ah you joker!		
124.	**Thank you very much for your time.**		
125.	You are most welcome.		

Interview with boys

Interviewee: Boy 2

Interviewer: Abide Zenenga

Date of interview: 09.10.12

Data coded by:　　Abide Zenenga　　　　　　　**Time:** 3pm

No	Utterance	Sub Theme	Main Theme
126.	**This is interview number 2 with boy 2. Good afternoon and thank you very much for agreeing to speak to me.**		
127.	……….. It's ok.		
128.	**How are you doing here at school?**		
129.	I am good.		
130.	**What do you mean you are good?**		
131.	Everything is ok. No problems.		
132.	**Wow, I am sure your father will be happy to hear that.**		
133.	Yes. I have been out of trouble for like three months now. No more police on my yard anymore. I am good boy now.		
134.	**What were you like before then?**		
135.	Are you recording this? ....No I can't say man. Let's leave it like that and do the questions please.		
136.	**Ok here is the next question then. How does your father help you in your education?**		

137.	Nothing. He does not help me with anything.		
138.	**What about the school materials he buys for you and the bus fare he gives to you?**		
139.	Oh I thought you meant as in teaching me. Yeah he buys education stuff for me. Which is good really?		
140.	**What else does he do?**		
141.	Nothing man.		
142.	**What's your view on the school's intention to involve your father more into your education?**		
143.	Good. I have nothing to hide now. He can come in any time and see what I am doing. No problem.	**ok to involve father**	
144.	**Did you have something to hide before?**		
145.	You know so why do you ask. Yes but not anymore.		
146.	**Ok so what would you consider a positive outcome if your father participates more in your education?**		
147.	Maybe he will see what I am doing well and he will like me more and appreciate my hard work. He will be happy I think.	**Wants to please dad and prove he has now improved.**	
148.	**Good so how do you want your father to be involved?**		
149.	I want him to come in and see my work so that I can prove that I doing well. He doesn't	**Sees it as an opportunity to**	

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	believe that I am coming everyday you know.	**prove innocence.**	
150.	**What a shame, I will make sure that he knows this. What is it that you want to achieve by coming to this school?**		
151.			
152.	Qualifications man. Yeah qualifications and nothing else.		
153.	**Excellent let's move on so what stuff do you learn from your father?**		
154.	Nothing man. He doesn't like me and I don't like him end off….		
155.	**Do you want to learn more from him?**		
156.	Ummmm ……..ummm I don't know.		
157.	**Do you want me to talk to him about this?**		
158.	If you like but I don't care.		
159.	**I will speak to him. What kind of activities do you do with him?**		
160.	Zero, zero man.		
161.	**How can the school help you do things with your father to improve your learning?**		
162.	You need to talk to him man. Just talk to him and tell him to leave me alone.		
163.	**But we want you to do things together.**		
164.	I don't know what to do with him.	**Cannot suggest activities.**	

165.	We will help you find things to do with him. Next question, Who do you want you to help you with your homework?		
166.	My sister helps and I help myself.		
167.	Fine. Do you want a break?		
168.	No.		
169.	Can you do homework with your dad?		
170.	I don't think he wants to help		
171.	If you have been very good, who should I tell first?		
172.	Anybody you want man.		
173.	Your father?		
174.	Anybody!		
175.	Ok, what if you have not been very good?		
176.	I told you I am good man …(smiles)		
177.	Two more questions, what sort of things to do with education have you shared with your father?		
178.	I told him that I am good now.		
179.	And what did he say?		
180.	Nothing.		
181.	You have done really well in this interview, is there anything else you want to tell me?		
182.	Tell him I am doing well.		
183.	Thank you very much, see you later?		

184.	Cool.		

Interview with other professionals

Interviewee: social worker

Interviewer: Abide Zenenga

Date of interview: 01.10.12

Data coded by: Abide Zenenga   **Time:** 1pm

No	Utterance	Theme	
185.	**Good afternoon and thank you very much for coming.**		
186.	You're welcome.		
187.	**I am sure you are now aware of the study we are carrying out at this school. I want to personally thank you for your time.**		
188.	No, not at all I think we will all benefit from it and I am personally interested in the results.		
189.	**To start with, can you please tell me why you are involved with student M?**		
190.	There is a bit of an offending history with M. He was referred to us by the police after a number of issues were raised. My duty is to make sure that he is safe and well looked after whilst at home. We monitor his attendance at school, his whereabouts in the community and try to find out activities that can keep him busy and away from bad influence.	Behaviour, offending, attendance	
191.	**That seems a mammoth task, do you think it's important to involve his**		

	father in the work you are doing with him?		
192.	It's a good idea actually but the funding is just for him. I see where you are coming from that some of the activities would be better done if his father is involved as well. Unfortunately, his father is not bound by any law to attend so it becomes difficult especially with the job he does. I personally think if there was funding and opportunities to involve his father and do some work with him, there will be more positive results.	Funding to engage fathers, fathers are important	
193.	**What benefits do you see in involving his father?**		
194.	Well, he will attend his sessions more; he will comply with what we want more, he will see its importance more. Its all positive if the father was involved but then talking generally, that depends on the type of the father and what sort of influence he has in his son's life.	Fathers can bring the positive side	
195.	**Can you please expand on what you mean by type of father?**		
196.	Well, this is not by research but it's just my own experience that sometimes you would rather not have the father participating. Some fathers in my experience are actually the reason why some of our young people are as they are. They are a bad influence to say the least. Sorry!	Not all fathers are useful.	

197.	**No that's fine; you are saying your peace of mind. So how often do you see M's father?**		
198.	I have never counted but sometimes I see him in and out when I visit. I see him oftenly but since he is not part of the project, it doesn't matter seeing him or not seeing him.		
199.	**Do you give any feedback to him on the progress of his son?**		
200.	Oh yes we do and we talk to them as parents but when it comes to activities they are not involved. That's what I am trying to say.	Always give feedback.	
201.	**Do you think this is good enough?**		
202.	Well, I have to be careful here, it's not really, and the ideal situation will be to have more meetings and telling them why we are doing what we are doing. Yes, I agree we have to do more.		
203.	**What are the main challenges in engaging fathers in general in your work that is if there are any?**		
204.	I can answer that without any hesitation. Fathers are absent and rare to find. Most households are led by mums. If at all when fathers are present sometimes they do not live with their families, if they do live with their families, they are always out working. In a nutshell, fathers are difficult to engage. This not to say all fathers are difficult, some are brilliant	Fathers are difficult to engage.	

	and ever helpful. I am talking in general and in the type of work we do.		
205.	**In your view, what kind of support do fathers need to engage more in such activities as yours?**		
206.	It's both ways isn't it? I think we need to do more from our side by educating fathers about the work we do. Also I think fathers need to be approached and shown that we value their work. We need to give them ownership of their children because at the end of the day it's their child. I have a feeling that we just come in as social services do our work as if we own the child and leave. That should stop. We have to communicate more. Fathers should also show interest and stop playing the victim.	Communication with fathers should be both ways.	
207.	**How do they play the victim?**		
208.	Umm, by always thinking they looked down upon and no one is interested in them. I have a feeling they feel that way.		
209.	**What sort of activities do you think fathers will not be interested in?**		
210.	Fathers don't like time wasters. They want meaningful activities and opportunities to make a meaningful contribution if I may say.		
211.	**What are the main concerns raised by fathers about their sons in the work that you do?**		

212.	.....Many fathers are worried about their sons going off the rails, influence from peers and generally behavioural issues. There is always a fight if I may put it that way between fathers and their teenage sons. On one hand the sons think they are grown up and they can look after themselves and on the other hand, fathers still see them (and rightly so) as their children who need advice and guidance.	Peer pressure, control, behaviour	
213.	**Quite interesting, so in your experience of working with families, what role do fathers play in the lives of their sons in general?**		
214.	That is very broad but I will try to answer it in general as you have requested. In general both good and bad fathers want to be disciplinarians and advisors. Trying to make sure that everything is ok and wanting the best from their sons. However the majority of fathers I come across have their own problems and that's why we are involved. They may say one thing to us but meaning another. They may be involved in other criminal behaviours or just failing parents. They don't play much of a significant role in reality.	Sometimes fathers are seen as disciplinarians	
215.	**Umm... you got a lot on your hands then.**		
216.	sometimes		
217.	**Maybe closely related to my previous**		

	question, what has been your experience of working with fathers in general?		
218.	As said before, absence and non-cooperation, sometimes sceptical and suspicious. I will explain this further. Most fathers are just not there. If they are there sometimes they haven't got time or interest to be involved. You see, for us to work with these young people, they will have come a long way and sometimes especially with fathers, relationships will have broken down by the time we are asked to intervene. So when we intervene, it's as if we are saying to the fathers, you guys have failed and we are here to fix up things for you. That's not nice for a man to feel like that. So if they feel like that, they become suspicious and non-cooperative.		
219.	**That's a deep analysis. So you have to look at yourselves first and probably change strategy in your work?**		
220.	We all have to do that. As I said before, we need to explain to fathers why we are here and what we want to achieve with their sons. You have to do the same as well yourselves especially with this project of yours.	Educate the fathers.	
221.	**Thanks for your advice. It's as if you knew what my next question was going to be. What advice would you give to the school to engage more**		

	fathers?		
222.	Yes educate them first. Fathers don't like being dragged along to things they don't understand purpose, value and use.		
223.	**Is there anything else you want to add?**		
224.	All the best in your study.		
225.	**Thank you very much? This is the end of the interview.**		
226.	You are welcome.		

Appendix.23

Observations

Observation Time	Activity	Comments
Date: 3.7.12 From: 11AM To: 12PM	**Review meeting** Absent Engaged **X** Challenging Father involved	All targets from last week completed. Discussed a trip to London and was excited about the travelling. Looked more relaxed and contributed more than last week.
Date: 3.7.12 From: 1PM To: 1.30PM	**Behaviour during breaks** Absconded Involved in an incident Well behaved **X**	Was involved in an argument with a group of boys about a missing phone. Calmed down after a few minutes. Father informed of a potential fight on the way home. His father promised to pick him up before home – time.
Date: 3.7.12 From: 9AM To: 10AM	**Behaviour in class** Completed tasks **X** Challenging	completed work on fractions and joined a group discussing Romeo and Juliet. Did not say much in the group. Answered his phone during the lesson and was cautioned for it.

	Well behaved **X**	
	Father involved	
	Attendance Punctual x Late x Father involved Absent	Arrived by taxi on time. Eleven minutes early and stood outside smoking. Went into his lesson six minutes late because he had not finished his cigarette.
Date: 3.7.12 From: 2PM To: 3PM	**Participation in co-curricular activities** Engaged **X** Challenging	Did not attend as he was picked up earlier by his father.

Appendix.24

Interview with my father

time	utterance	theme	Main theme
1	This is my special interview with my father. This interview was inspired by my study on engaging fathers in the education of their sons. I had to travel to Africa to find out why my father was so much interested in my education. So dad thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.		
2	You are welcome.		
3	What made you interested in sending your sons to school?		
4	Ehh it's a long story but in short I can say I left school at standard 6 (yr 9) and became a temporary teacher. I always got teased by other qualified teachers that I didn't have a course and I was like an unfinished product. That spurred me to encourage my children to be educated and get courses for themselves.	Poverty Intrinsic motivation	
5	Why didn't you go for a course yourself?		
6	Well, I wanted to but I didn't have any money. Also when I registered to be a nurse, the papers were sent to a wrong address in Bulawayo yet I was in Harare. It all got confused and the missionaries took advantage of it by encouraging me to be a vicar.		

7	So why didn't you become a vicar?		
8	Well long story again. Some people felt because I believed in our tradition, I was not suitable enough.		
9	Ok we will move on to something else. In all your education, who was paying for the fees?		
10	My father died when I was very young so my brother paid for it. He was our father. He took my father's place when he died.	Brother as a father figure	
11	Can I just clarify that in our culture when a father dies, the eldest son takes the role of a father by looking after all the other siblings.		
11	So in this case, how did your brother encourage you to go to school?		
12	Again, it's a long story; he picked up a lost pen on his way from a beer drinking party. He brought it home and said, you see I have this pen which I can't use and you can't use it either. What shall we do with it because all of us can't write or read in the family? He was very emotional about that and it again motivated me to want to learn to use a pen. My brother never went to school.		
12	So what did he do?		
13	He was a farmer. He worked on the land and sold what he harvested.		
14	I think all your children have done exceptionally well by any standards. Some		

	are abroad and all your daughters are teachers. That's really good. How did you manage this? How involved were you in their education?		
15	It was a struggle. We sold everything we had. I taught my first two children Ray and Norest at a makeshift school at a farm I worked as a temporary teacher. There were only two teachers, myself and my wife. So I was very involved. My wife helped a lot as well. She was good at advice and guidance in and outside school. She monitored the homework and looked after everyone.	Professional fathers can be involved	
16	Sorry to repeat this but your sons have done really well. Do you see yourself in your sons and that you could have done as well as them if you had an opportunity?		
17	I think I could have done better. My white teacher from Natal (SA) once said I was so good so much that if he had money, he could have sent me to SA for further studies.		
18	That's good to hear. So you are proud of your son's achievements?		
19	Yes, very proud.	Pride in sons achievement	
20	I know all your sons are now grown up with your youngest, myself approaching 40. Are you still interested in our education and how we are progressing?		
21	Yes.		

	Do you still encourage your children to get more education?		
22	Yes but they are now working far away. I feel lonely sometimes especially when I have things to discuss.		
23	What makes your sons stand out from the rest in the village? What's the inspiration?		
24	My wife played a big part. She made sure you were well prepared for school . She made all children see the importance of education.	Mothers role	
25	I remember you used to collect some old books for us when you worked as a boarding master. In a way you built a library without knowing. I think that gave us a good start and an edge over other kids in the village. What's your view on that?		
26	That's very true. Actually, it was your mother who collected all those books. I always worked hand in hand with your mother. I went to work and she looked after you. I provided the money and she prepared you for school. I was always at work looking for money for fees.	Work commitments Breadwinner Time	
27	What concerns did you have about us at school?		
28	I never had any concerns. Maybe I can say my only concern was when I was diagnosed with asthma and I feared that I would die before my children finished school.		

29	That must have been difficult. What other concerns did you have? Did you not think that we could be involved in drugs or other mischief?		
30	No never. All my children were raised on Christian values and your mother was a very strict disciplinarian. She would keep all of you on the straight and narrow. She was a no nonsense woman when it came to disciplinary issues. She never spared the rod.	Mothers role	
31	Did you receive any help to educate your children?		
32	Yes. Many other teachers who taught my elder sons came to tell me that my sons were very intelligent and I should do everything to send them to school. We sold everything we had to pay for the fees. Mr Samriwo, one of the teachers helped us with applying for scholarships and that helped a lot. Whenever I was about to give up, there was always two teachers to encourage me to work hard to look for more money to send my children to school.	Engaging with teachers Financial commitment	
33	What values did you instil in your sons?		
34	Christian values. Dignity, respect and helping others. All my children were raised on Christian values.		
35	Do you have any regrets in the way you educated your sons?		
36	Yes, one, I have one regret. I wish I had acquired a house in the city, my sons could		

	have found it easy to settle when they were looking for jobs. It was not easy for them to rent and ask relatives for places to live whilst job hunting.		
37	I guess we all have regrets. Sometimes it's for the good. If we had lived in the city we could have been influenced to do bad things. I am personally happy we grew up here with the peace and quiet. What one thing are you proud of about your sons?		
38	Ehh, one thing I am proud of about my sons is that they look after me and many people say I am a very well looked after old man. I have clean smart clothes. I have never been without. Some people in this area where we live are starving but my children look after me. A good investment I made, hahaha.		
39	Have you ever sat down with one of your sons to discuss fatherhood?		
40	No, It's only you who have started it it's something I wanted to discuss with all of you anyway.		
41	Do you agree that fathers and sons should have these times together?		
42	Very much so.		
43	I think you have done really well as a father and as your son on behalf of my brothers we thank you for all the sacrifices you made for our education. That's the end of our interview. Do you have anything else to say?		

44	No not all.		

Appendix.25

<u>**Research Information Sheet.**</u>

Research Title: Engaging fathers in the education of their sons. A case study.

About the Research: This research is commissioned and supported by the University of Northampton through the School of Education.

Purpose of the research: To analyse the patterns of engagement by fathers in early secondary education (KS3) and investigate the relationship that these might have with the education and achievement of their sons.

Aim: To improve the engagement of fathers in the school and raise awareness of their importance in the education of their sons.

Who the researchers are: The research will be conducted by the researcher (Abide Zenenga), the director of studies and two supervisors whose details are provided below. The researcher and the supervisory team have current criminal records bureau certificates. Abide will be responsible and in charge of the project. He will also chair meetings and direct all proceedings.

What the study involves: The research team intends to gather data from teachers, fathers and boys to evaluate father-son relationships and the impact they have on the sons' achievement.   Three personal documents will be analysed: Achievement reports, review meeting minutes and written academic work. You will also be invited to two meetings to share your ideas on some findings during the process of the research.

What kind of participation is expected? Participants will be required to answer questionnaires, participate in interviews, or be observed whilst in the review meetings at school. The boys' personal documents will also be analysed. Transcriptions of interviews will be provided to participants to confirm the accuracy of their narration.

What will happen to the information? All data collected–both written and electronic - will be kept securely in a locked storage area and will be accessed only by the researcher, the supervisors and the participants concerned. The identity of each participant will remain anonymous throughout the research process and in the report. Each participant will be assigned an identification code and any information provided will be identified only by this code. Once the research is completed, the data collected will be destroyed. The information you give or collected about you, will be

for research purposes only. It will not be shared with anyone else for any other purpose. However, in the event of any harmful practice being mentioned, the research team would be obliged to inform the appropriate agencies.

Consent and Withdrawal.

Written consent will be obtained before the commencement of the data collection. Each participant will be given access to all the details regarding the purpose and extent of the research and every participant is free to withdraw from research at any time. However, if this happens after completion of the interview, the information may be used, but no further participation will be requested.

Possible outcome of the research: A report of the outcome of the research will be made available to all the participants, and the school. It is hoped that the result of this research will improve both academic and social achievement of the boys in the school and also help the school come up with better policies and procedures on engaging fathers.

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Research Supervisor: Prof. Philip Garner. School of Education, The University of Northampton, Park Campus, Boughton Green Road. NN2 7AL. 01604-892762. philip.garner@northampton.ac.uk

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Appendix 26

Draft Risk Assessment

Hazards Identified	Possible risk	Current Control Measures
Participants may feel embarrassed or humiliated by some issues raised in study.	Bullying Embarrassment Emotional distress Humiliation	Participants will be assured of the purposes of the study and a channel of communication will be established to clear any potential misunderstandings. In case of any humiliation or embarrassment, the participant will be withdrawn from the study and a letter of apology sent.
Some participants may not be able to read the letters.	Agreeing/disagreeing to things they do not understand.	I will personally read the letters to participants who will ask for help.
Confidential data for the school may be lost during the study.	Data getting into the wrongs hands and being abused.	Confidential data will only be accessed in the presence of management and locked away soon after use.

Appendix 27

List of Codes

Teachers	Fathers	Boys	Professionals
father absence	time	work	Legal
mums	work	mum	hatred
time	family	pride	hard done by
work	behaviour	behaviour	confidence
flexibility	listen	school	communication
weekends	friends	ambition	culture
evenings	talk	negativity	language
separation	communication	hatred	literacy
single parents	mother	friends	mothers
attendance	flexibility	help out	family
behaviour	respect	computers	flexibility
qualifications	education	games	internet
friends	privacy	brothers	training
culture	culture	sisters	hard to reach
language	protection	talk	uncooperative
men	other children		
intimidation	authority		
confidence	help		
training	computers		
females	attendance		
motivation	pride		
embarrassment	chores		

Professionals

Legal issues, divorce, living arrangements, culture, step father, foster father, adopted father, father figure, useless, non-cooperative, interests, bonding, activities, health, problems, gangs, sensitive, mother, arrested, prison, family, meetings, humiliation, emotional, offspring, time, risk, family, family arrangements, love, training, learning, together, cultural, intimidation, education, school, man, conflict, meeting, he doesn't listen, there are issues, conversations, child, authority, stubborn, shy, embarrassed, No, nope, step dad, important, what's more important for me as a father – job, meeting, paying for the bills, decision, family, attendance

Teachers

Qualifications, time, pride, don't care, don't know, work, busy, help, books, homework, brother sister, computers, mates, football, clothes, learn, living, hate, school, mother, behavior, good, excluded, mother, boy, That's what we do, my father family, love, training, learning, together, my father, cultural, intimidation, education, school, man, , conflict, meeting, he doesn't listen, I don't want to talk about it, there are issues, conversations, child, authority, stubborn, , shy, embarrassed, No, nope, step dad, important, what's more important for me as a father – job, meeting, paying for the bills, make a decision on who attends and who does what in the family.

Fathers	Time, work, help, mother, attitudes, teachers, busy, living arrangements, teachers, school does not specify we are needed, pride, qualifications, behavior, attendance, hard work, independence, role model, letters, communication, skills, chores, listen, trouble, grass, violate, cool, gassing, long, yolo, dbi computers, my father, friends, Its shit, leave me alone, I don't want to talk about it, no one tells me what to do,

Boys	Don't care, negative attitudes, busy, work, literacy issues, father friendly school, engagement, confidence, attendance, behavior, sensitive subject, professionals, educational background, history, activities, reports, meetings, flexibility, improvement, change, future, success, mother, help, involved, volunteer, partnership, other agencies, motivation, targets, read, write, homework, They don't talk about it, there are issues, conversations, child, authority, stubborn, , shy, embarrassed, No, nope, step dad, important, what's more important for me as a father – job, meeting, paying for the bills, make a decision on who attends and who does what in the family.

Appendix 28

List of activities fathers and sons can be involved in.

1. Charity work (fundraising by walking, running or climbing)

2. Fishing

3. Football

4. Cinema

5. Gym

6. Homework

7. Work experience/voluntary work

8. Review meetings

9. Stopping smoking in stopover

10. DIY

11. Riding bikes

Appendix 29

SAR

- PP Ltd is a proprietorial independent school which aims to provide integrated and specialist support, through an alternative curriculum, for young people facing substantial multiple problems which prevent them from engaging in mainstream education and training regardless of gender, religious affiliation or race.

- The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

- PP Academy recruits learners who have social and behavioural needs and difficulties, often from families who have generations of unemployment. PP recruits from communities which have some of the highest unemployment rates amongst young people in the country and works with other partners to enable low achievers to regain access to education, training or employment.

- There is a high proportion of ethnic minority students in the Foundation Learning department who arrive with few or no recorded qualifications and poor literacy skills.

- PP is known for its successful personalised and holistic learning approach, which rewards and encourages hard-to-reach young people to take part in flexible learner-led accredited courses. Vocational and individual mentoring-style support with financial incentives help to promote ambition and encourage progress in literacy, language and numeracy qualifications in under-achievers.

- Post 16 students refer themselves or are referred to PP through schools, Connexions, Job Centre Plus, and the Youth Offenders' Team. The flexible programme is not time bound and PP has encouraged more to stay longer with an average length of stay between 20 and 25 weeks. Pre 16 and One to One students attend on a part-time or full-time basis according to their needs.

- Leavers with unknown destinations are telephoned regularly and offered support if direct contact has been established.

- PP provides up-to-date courses and has piloted appropriate and attainable qualifications using NOCN Level 1 Diplomas and OCR certificates from Entry Levels to Level 2.

- The school works very closely with feeder schools, agencies and local authorities delivering training and assistance.

Appendix 30

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Aims and objectives

PP is fully committed to the principle of equal opportunities in recruitment and employment and opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination including those on the grounds of: age, nationality (including citizenship), colour, race, disability, religion, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status and

1.1. We do not discriminate against anyone, be they staff or child, on the grounds of their sex, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic or national origins. This is in line with the 1976 Race Relations Act and covers both direct and indirect discrimination.

1.2. We promote the principles of fairness and justice for all through the education that we provide in our school.

1.3. We ensure that all children have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the school.

1.4. We constantly strive to remove any forms of indirect discrimination that may form barriers to learning.

1.5. We ensure that all recruitment, employment, promotion and training systems are fair to all, and provide opportunities for everyone to achieve.

1.6. We challenge stereotyping and prejudice whenever it occurs.

1.7. We celebrate the cultural diversity of our community and show respect for all minority groups.

1.8. We are aware that prejudice and stereotyping is caused by low self-image and ignorance. Through positive educational experiences and support for each individual's point of view, we aim to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all.

Appendix 31

Confidential agreement

I ……………………………………………………………….agree that I shall not divulge any confidential information regarding the study carried at this school on 'Engaging fathers in the education of their sons.' I understand that if I do not adhere to this agreement, I will be responsible for the damages caused.

Signature: …………………………………….

Date: …………………………………………

Appendix 32

Last questions

Thank you very much for participating in this study. For the last time, I am now asking you to assist by providing feedback on what you think about the process of the study.

1. In your view, do you think the aims of the project were achieved?

Yes/No

....
....
....
....
....

2. Has the study changed your thinking regarding fathers?

Yes/No

....
....
....
....

3. What changes have you noticed in the school as a result of the study?

More people are now talking about fathers. We now understand the needs of fathers better. There are also more fathers visiting the school more than in past.

4. What could we have done better in the study?

Maybe involve all fathers not just ten.

5. Any other comments?

Really enjoyed it.

Thank you

Appendix 33

Monthly reviews

MONTHLY REVIEW FORM   **REVIEW NO:**

1. *Name*	Xxxxx

Agreed targets for the period up to the next review and the support required to meet targets	Comments on progress against targets including views of the learner, Key Worker, Personal Adviser, Employer and others participating in the review
To improve my attendance from 38% to 65%	
To complete all 3 homework worksheets per week	
To research and apply strategies to manage my anger.	
Date planned for progress to be reviewed	**Names of personnel involved in review of**

	progress
Names of personnel involved in agreeing targets: • Xxxxxxx • Xxxxxx • Xxxxxx	 • Xxxxxxx • Xxxxxx • Xxxxxx

Comments on progress in any other aspects of learning since the last review

I agree to the targets set for me and will work to achieve them.	I agree with the comments made about my progress since my last review.
Young person's signature	**Young person's signature**
Date	Date