



**IDENTIFYING AND EFFECTIVELY MANAGING
ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES IN IMPROVING
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL
IN KANO, NIGERIA**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of
Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in a private school. The objectives of this research have been to identify the challenges faced and to provide ways of effectively managing them in order to enhance parental involvement in the school. This research has further aimed to initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges faced in improving parental involvement. The latter aim is mainly central, since this study was conducted as an action research inquiry within the context of a practitioner researcher.

This study addresses the limited research by practitioners in school administration in Nigeria towards improving their schools' management effectiveness. Using an action research inquiry approach to provide information on scholar practitioner research on organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in Nigeria, the study will be transformative in motivating other schools on their managing involvement responsibilities especially in Northern Nigeria, as most of the available empirical studies were conducted in the country's southern region.

A literature review was conducted to get a better understanding of organizational challenges and parental involvement, including the drivers and forces within a change context. Based on the existing literature and the research instruments, the organizational challenges were investigated. To gain a better understanding of the scope of the problems, the author adopted social constructionism as an ontological position. This has generated actionable knowledge relevant for the school to change from a less effective towards an effective management of challenges.

To achieve the objectives of the study, an action research design was adopted which utilized qualitative methods. Through my position as the chief executive officer in a private school, I collected first-person data from parents and teachers on parental involvement and on parents' and teachers' current participation in order to identify the areas of organizational challenges, which needed intervention. This consequently enabled me to initiate a change that brought about improved and effective management in the school, leading to improved parental involvement.

Findings from the study revealed that the organizational challenges related to the timing of PTA meetings, getting parents to respond to invitations, improving the relationship between parents and teachers, communicating with stakeholders, providing decision roles for parents and diversity among parents and teachers. To deal with these challenges, changes were initiated in three areas of the organizational life, namely in the individual workers in the organization, in various structures and systems of the organization and in the organizational climate. Based on these, proposing a framework along these organizational areas is important for attaining effective management of organizational challenges.

The findings of this study will create awareness about the importance of initiating change in schools in order to engender effective management of challenges in the context of parental involvement. A comprehensive framework is consequently provided, which involves parents, teachers and the school, thereby improving the empirical literature on the framework of functional change management in the school system.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis:

- To all students (alumni, current and future) of Yandutse College.
- To Mrs. Antonina Semeonovna Kravets, my beloved mother-in-law
- To my late mother who laboured to single-handedly see me through my school days. Mama, if you were alive, I know you would have been proud of your son.
- To late Mr. Marinus Verhoeven; the Dutch adventurer, engineer, businessman and educationist, who gave me the opportunity for high school/technical education.
- To My very dear wife for her loving encouragement and implicit support throughout the period of this study
- To my children: Dr. Diana Chilaka, Dr. Linda Ahiome-Purmer and Mr. George Ahiome (Junior).

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Finally, I will like to thank all the participants in this study. The teachers and especially the alumni students and their parents who ordinarily could have declined participation considering the fact that they no more have close ties with me or Yandutse College. I cherish their friendship and great interest in the education of their children.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Description
APPL	Academic, Personal, and Professional Learning
AR	Action Research
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
GCE	General Certificate of Education
JSS	Junior Secondary School
PIS	Participants Information Sheets
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
PTG	Parents Teachers Group
SBMC	School Based Management Committees
SSS	Senior Secondary School
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Boards
TQ	Teachers' Questionnaire
UBE	Universal Basic Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The effective management of a school is by no means an easy task. The job expectations for school leaders and administrators have increased and redefined as they are compelled to take on many roles, including those of teacher, psychologist, assessment expert, diplomat, mentor, among others. While the focus of management is getting the work of the organization completed in an efficient and effective manner, leadership focuses attention on the future, what needs to be done and hence on vision, empowerment and attainment of goals (Lalonde, 2010). Consequently, the change agent in the school should combine leadership, an influence process with management viewed as the use of control (Catano and Stronge, 2007). According to Leithwood et al. (2008), there are seven areas that constitute successful school leadership, which are vital to educational institutions. These include focusing on teaching pupils, responding to situations, improving learning, developing leadership capacities and distributing tasks between staff.

Schools as social institutions are created to serve the community and educate children, necessitating a close link between the school and the community. In the open-systems theory, organizations are viewed as constantly interacting with their environments and thus need to structure themselves in order to be able to deal with forces in the world around them (Scott, 2008). Since change is an ever-present part of organizational life, both at an operational and strategic level (Burnes, 2004), the importance of identifying where an organization needs to be in the future, and how best to manage the changes required to get there cannot be overemphasized. Thus, identifying organizational challenges and finding an effective management to deal with them require changing the way things are done. In other words, it deals with change, which

according to Kanter (1992, p.279) involves ‘the crystallisation of new possibilities (new policies, new behaviours, new patterns, new methodologies, new products or new market ideas) based on the reconceptualised patterns in the institution.’ In the context of a private school, the researcher’s view of change is ‘the shift in behaviour of the whole organization’ (Kanter, 1992, p.11). Thus the change agent who could be the proprietor, principal or teacher puts in place planned initiatives in consultation with all internal stakeholders if the change is to be accomplished (Dunphy, 1996), and the goal is to bring the seemingly different employees’ interests into harmony with the common vision (Lawrence, Dyck, Maitlis and Mauws, 2006), while combining technological, structural and behavioural approaches (Harvey and Brown, 1996). The need to communicate the vision of the change agent is critical in the process of initiating change if all employees are to see the basis for change and support it (Handy, 1996).

The context of change in the present study is the need to respond to low parental involvement in a private school in Kano, Nigeria. Context is usually described in terms of all the external factors that induce the need to change. These environmental factors could be general (on the country level) or specific to certain industry or even an organization (Kuipers et al., 2014). However, due to the differences in environmental factors, it has been argued that managers need a method of change that is situational or contingent, one that ‘indicated how to vary change strategies to achieve ‘optimum fit’ with the changing environment’ (Dunphy and Stace, 1993, p.905).

Two key stakeholders in a school are the teachers and the parents. Teachers are critical actors in the educative process as they implement designed curriculum to achieve the national educational goals (Chapman, Snyder and Burchfield, 1993). Parents on the other hand are important as they provide the first form of education to children in the home, and can influence

their children's academic outcomes through parental involvement, a practice that starts when children are in pre-school and progresses right up to high school level. It cultivates benefits such as improved school grades and scores, positive student's attitudes and behavioural tendencies toward school, improved school climate and school efficiency, high graduation rates as a result of fewer drop out incidences at school (Pomerantz, Moorman and Litwack, 2007; LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling, 2011).

Nigeria, the country of focus in the present study, operates the National Policy on Education, which guarantees every child's access to education. However, it contains only sketchy references to parental involvement in schooling. The policy merely encourages private agencies, communities and parents to be involved in the education of children (Kutelu and Olowe, 2013). Olibie (2014) observed that all Nigeria's education policies do not contain clear guidelines for the realization of parental involvement. This lack of clear policy direction has compelled some schools to develop and adopt variety of policies and strategies that they deem appropriate to address their local parental involvement challenges and needs. However, the organizational challenges faced by schools in improving parental involvement, as well as the effective management of parental involvement activities are hardly emphasized. In the light of this, I have embarked on this insider action research study in my own school – Yandutse College, Kano Nigeria, with the hope of identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement, the findings of which could lead to developing a framework or model/strategies that when implemented, could improve and promote greater parents' involvement in their children's school lives, while strengthening the capacity of school management.

Although it is generally accepted that parental involvement boosts students' academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995), research has shown that parental involvement is low in both developed and developing countries (Cutright, 1984; Pansiri and Bulawa, 2013 cited in Kutelu and Olowe, 2013). Research in Nigeria on parental involvement has reported a similar trend (Olatoye and Agbatogun, 2009; Olibie, 2014). Importantly, what are the challenges faced by schools in managing parental involvement activities, and what are the management or organizational changes that could be initiated and implemented to improve parental involvement? These questions are pertinent to education providers in general and to Yandutse College in particular. Through this study, the researcher hoped to initiate changes and to develop creative solutions and a working model of our own, which when put into practice helped to effectively manage the organizational challenges of the school to enhance parental involvement.

The research field on parental involvement is replete with a large body of evidence supporting the significant role it plays in children's achievement at school and in their social development (Epstein, 1995; Domina, 2005; Fan and Williams, 2010). However, my concern is about the management issues that emerge from parental involvement in the study area. Thus, the aim is to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement, and to provide effective ways of managing them. Although in a previous study of Yandutse College, parental involvement was found to be low (Ahiome, 2013), it did not reveal the organizational/management challenges faced in attempts to deal with parental involvement. As the Director/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Yandutse Schools, I decided to find out the challenges faced by the school, initiate changes that would lead to effective management of the challenges, in order to enhance parental involvement. Based on this, there was a need to explore

action research (AR), which is ‘informed investigation into a real management issue in an organization by a participating researcher, resulting in an actionable solution to the issue’ (Thorpe and Holt, 2008, p.17).

1.1.1 Contextual Background

1.1.1.1 The Nigerian Education System

A six-year-old child is expected to enroll into the primary school where he or she undergoes the prescribed 6 years primary school education, at the end of which the child proceeds for a further compulsory 3 years Junior Secondary School (JSS) education program. A child at the end of the junior secondary program may decide to proceed to the Technical College or opt to pursue the GCE ‘O’ Level and ‘A’ Level before gaining admission into the university. Alternatively, the child may proceed to the Senior Secondary School (SSS) for another 3 years to attain the Senior Secondary School Certificate, which qualifies them for entrance into the 4-year university degree programmes (with slight variations in the years depending on the programme) or the Higher National Diploma courses in the Polytechnics. Yandutse College, offers the middle and upper level of the Universal Basic Education system (UBE) of Nigeria. The UBE operates a 9-3-4 system comprising:

- (i) Primary School education and Junior Secondary School education - 9 years
- (ii) Senior Secondary education - 3 years
- (iii) Tertiary Institutions - 4 years

1.1.1.2 Education in Kano State

Kano State is one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it is located in

the North Western region of the country. According to the 2006 National Census, Kano State has a population of about 9,400,000. About 47% are aged between 0-14 years (Maigari, 2014), which is the average primary and secondary school enrolment age. However, only a small percentage of these children have access to basic education. An estimated 1,650,000 children in Kano State were enrolled into primary and secondary schools in 2004/2005 (Education Data Bank, Federal Ministry of Education).

Low pass rates have been reported for final year secondary school students of Kano State origin who sat for placement examinations into tertiary institutions in the country. Part of the goals of this study is to find ways to contribute to efforts to reverse the trend, fully conscious of the fundamentals of parental involvement, which from personal experience, is low in my community, an observation that is supported by a variety of studies (Cutright, 1984; Ahiome, 2013). However, my focus is not to re-examine the level of parental involvement in the school but to explore the management/organizational aspects.

1.1.2 Situational Context – The Research Site

This research is being conducted in Yandutse College, Kano, Nigeria. The College is situated in the serene, low-density area of Bompai District in the ancient city of Kano, the administrative and commercial city of Kano State of Nigeria. Yandutse College is regarded as one of the foremost private schools in Kano State. It was established in 2004 and has since been recognized for its quality education delivery for which it has been honoured with many awards of recognition and excellence by such bodies as the National House of Representatives Committee on Education, Kano State Government, The National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools, African Youth Assembly for Peace, National Association of Nigerian Students,

Ahmadu Bello University Students' Representative Council and a host of others. Other notable quality of the College is the adherence to its core values by which it strives to provide quality education that inculcates discipline, integrity and leadership qualities in the students.

The College is endowed with state-of-the-art infrastructures necessary for delivery of 21st century learning experiences. Since its establishment in 2004, we have graduated over eight hundred students who have distinguished themselves in tertiary institutions where they have gone to further their studies. Our students' admission rate into universities and other institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and abroad has been consistently in the 100% range. The graduates who are employed have been impacting the community positively and this has made them to be in high demand in the industry. The College is also in partnership with many universities in Nigeria and abroad for their foundation courses and for direct admission into their institutions. Yandutse College has been able to achieve this feat, because the management has put in place structures that ensure appropriate school climate, qualified teachers and workforce who are trained and retrained in order to ensure continuity of quality education delivery. Of the teaching staff force of seventy-eight, ten of them hold the master's degree in various fields in education and sciences, thirty-eight bachelor's degrees in Education and the least qualified members of staff are those with National Certificate in Education.

The population of parents in Yandutse College is made up of a mixture of middle and high-level cadre of professionals, civil servants and businessmen and women. My DBA conference paper on parental involvement (Ahiome, 2013) revealed that despite our parent/teacher relationship, coupled with perceived parents' levels of educational attainment, only few parents have demonstrated appreciable level of involvement in their children's achievement at school. For example, 95% of parents claimed to have attained either secondary

school and up to higher degree levels of education, yet about 12% failure rate was recorded at examinations, with only 3.3% of the students scoring 'A' grades. This also did not reflect the 62% of parents that had reported moderate or high involvement in students' school lives.

In the present study, the organizational or management aspects of the immediate context that were most important for the present study include the timing of PTA meetings, how to ensure that parents respond to school invitations, what is to be done to improve the relationship between parents and teachers, how to enhance communication among all stakeholders and managing diversity among parents and teachers. Evidently, these issues are related to such management concerns as planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling, staffing, delegating and communicating. The suspicion is that the organizational and decision making structures of the school might be responsible for the low parental involvement experienced. In the light of this, the study hoped to identify modifications (changes) to how the school prioritises parental involvement issues and how it acts on (manages) them.

1.2 Problem Statement / purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify organizational challenges, and to provide a framework for managing them in order to improve parental involvement in schools. Despite the parent-teacher relationship in the author's organization, only few parents had demonstrated considerable level of involvement (Ahiome, 2013), thus posing a challenge to the school management. The need to identify the challenges faced by the organization (the school in this context) and effectively managing them with respect to parental involvement was thus underscored. In other words, the school management was faced with the task of identifying the challenges of low parental involvement and to provide effective ways not only of addressing

them in order to reverse the trend, but sustaining and continuously improving on the new level attained. The undercurrent therefore is that there was the need to change how the school managed the challenges it faced in an attempt to address the issues of parental involvement.

Transforming a private school to better manage identified challenges in improving parental involvement requires organizational changes. Importantly, Yandutse College lacked knowledge of how to effectively manage challenges related to parental involvement. Consequently, conducting an action research based qualitative study which identifies the challenges that the school faces, including mechanism for managing them is justified. This study intended to identify challenges on issues of parental involvement within educational organizations, and action research can bring about a change for the author's organization. For this reason, this study identified challenges, examined effective ways of managing them, and provided mechanisms of enhancing and sustaining parental involvement in schools.

1.2.1 Relevance of the problem

Being the Director of the organization – Yandutse College, the problem in scope is relevant to the author of this study and his organization. As an education service provider, the effective management of identified organizational challenges on parental involvement has effects on students, and therefore has long run impact on society. An exploration of the topic of this study would enable me gain a better understanding of organizational challenges and effective management tools, which are critical for the change required in the school with regards to the level of parental involvement.

The results of the study can be relevant to both teachers and parents, even if they seem to be more relevant to the school management. On one hand, teachers have a role to play in

bringing about an improvement in the level of parental involvement, as parent-teacher relationship is critical in the educational system. On the other hand, improved parental involvement has impact on children's academic outcomes (Sanders and Epstein 1998; Fehrmann, Keith and Reimers, 1987; Stevenson and Baker, 1987; Useem, 1992). Identifying various challenges faced by the school and providing the management tools to effectively manage them would have significant impact on the school in the long run.

The results can also be critical in the management of organizational challenges where the management is faced with the task of coming up with effective ways of enhancing parental involvement in the school as well as establishing framework for improving parents-teachers involvement. Identifying the challenges of the organization and providing an atmosphere for organizational change in order to promote parental involvement is therefore very important for maintaining the standard of education services provided by Yandutse College.

1.2.2 Approach used in the study to address the problem

This research was conducted on a school by a researcher who is, at the same time, an active manager in the school. This makes the researcher to be in a dual role – that of being a manager as well as a researcher, bringing change into the organization, although this creates some problems (the dual role issue is discussed in chapter 3). Action research is appropriate in this context, defined as an ‘informed investigation into a real management issue in an organization by a participating researcher, resulting in an actionable solution to the issue’ (Thorpe and Holt, 2008, p.17).

From the foregoing, an insider action research approach was followed in this study, designed to take action on an issue concerning an organization while, at the same time,

researching the problem in scope, the intention of which is to bring about change and create actionable knowledge (Holian and Coghlan, 2012). According to Somekh (2006), various research methods are employed in action research, depending on their appropriateness within the particular context. The underlying motivation for the use of action research is to have an approach that addresses the issues at stake and combines all the relevant sources (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy, 1993). Although action research is not a single methodology and that it has different understandings and practices, it however has some common themes. According to Coughlan and Coghlan (2002), action research supports the organizational development by facilitating learning in the organization. It is 'research in action, rather than research about action; participative; concurrent with action; a sequence of events and an approach to problem-solving' (Coughlan and Coghlan, 2002, p.222). In addition, it is problem focused, context specific and participative.

Action research is relevant to the present study for a number of reasons. First, it dealt with a real life problem (organizational challenges) within its social context and the intention was to solve it by taking action on it (ZuberSkerritt and Perry, 2002). Second, it involved a researcher who is part of the organization and who is also concerned with solving the identified problem. Lastly, a key feature in action research is that it is collaborative and democratic, while the cyclical process of identifying and analyzing a problem involves planning, acting and evaluating (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009), planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; 1988), all of which were important to the researcher in providing a framework to better manage the organization's challenges and thus to enhance parental involvement in the social context (the school).

1.3 Research Questions

The following are the research questions posed, for which answers are sought:

- (i) What are the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school?
- (ii) What changes can be initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school?
- (iii) What framework can be provided for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The above questions guide the objectives to be achieved in the study. The research seeks to identify the challenges faced and to provide ways of effectively managing them in order to enhance parental involvement in schools, using Yandutse College, a private school in Kano State Nigeria, as a case study.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- (i) To identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school.
- (ii) To initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school.
- (iii) To provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school.

1.5 Significance of the Study

I have been working with primary school pupils, college students and their parents for well over thirty years and experience has shown that improved parental involvement could add value to school efficiency, quality education delivery and improved students' achievement in schools (Epstein, 2001; Fan, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Rafiq, 2013). Every school therefore should, as a matter of priority devise measures and provide favourable school climate (Rosenblatt and Peled, 2002) that could encourage and motivate parents for active involvement in the students' school lives and school programmes. For this reason I, as an education provider, embarked on this study for the purpose of identifying the challenges faced by the school, examining effective ways of managing the challenges and developing strategies for improving parental involvement, leading to enhanced school efficiency. In so doing, I recognized the need for change in the school if the aforementioned results were to be realized. In addition, there is a general dearth in scholarly research on parental involvement in Nigeria by practitioners in school administration. In particular, there is no study that addresses parental involvement from the point of view of organizational challenges and the imperative of organizational change as a way of dealing with the phenomenon. In other words, no study has been undertaken on change management (organizational change) with focus on parental involvement in Nigeria. This study is being undertaken to bridge these gaps.

Findings from this study will add to the body of knowledge in the fields of educational management and change management literatures (see sections 2.7 and 2.8 for details), which could become transformational for education practitioners in northern Nigeria in particular. Despite the importance of parental involvement in schools, the evidence points to an underutilization of parent involvement. Eccles and Harold (1993) found that the level of parental

involvement falls far below the expectation of parents. Many schools are deficient in terms of having a comprehensive framework that involves parents, despite the overwhelming evidence pointing to the critical role of parent involvement in schools, a paradox noted by Swap (1993). This study will therefore improve the empirical literature on the kind of organizational change that would engender improved parental involvement as it relates to private schools in northern Nigeria in particular, and Nigeria in general.

I chose to apply action research approach for this study in exploring organizational challenges in a naturalistic setting in which, I, the researcher, am an active practitioner. I used the action research approach to design strategies that could be deployed to promote effective school management and thus to create awareness and motivation to improve the already existing parents' and teachers' involvement. Thus, the study empirically investigated the management of challenges with reference to parental involvement in an organization, with specific focus on a private school, using action research methods. No study to the best of my knowledge has employed the use of the action research to address parental involvement challenges in private schools in Nigeria's educational system. It is my hope that the framework developed would provide valuable materials and information which education providers could use in managing the challenges in their various schools. The expectation is that the study will become a reference material useful to Kano State, the Federal Ministry of Education and school owners/administrators in the formulation of education policies on parental involvement, and who are desirous of initiating changes that would bring about improved parental involvement.

1.6 Limitations of the Case Study

This case study examined organizational challenges and how best to institute the management framework that would improve parental involvement in a private school. A successful implementation of the desired state of affairs necessitated a planned change process which involved teachers in the school and parents.

Because the study was on a private school, the findings are specific to the particular case, in a specific location. Consequently, the interpretations of the findings arising from the study may not be applicable to other situations, as is the case with all case study research. However, the findings could be used to make comparison with the extant change management and educational management literature which could be tested with other similar private schools in other locations and at some other period.

1.7 Organization of the Research

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. In chapter one, the general introduction is presented. It comprises the background, objectives, significance, and research questions, in addition to the scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review, which explores the extant literature on change/effective management, educational management and parental involvement, in terms of conceptual and empirical underpinning for the study.

The methodology of the study is provided in chapter 3, including the procedures used for data collection and analysis. The Action research (AR) process in action is presented in chapter 4. The empirical results are presented in chapter five. The results are discussed in chapter six. The thesis is concluded in chapter seven.

The thesis contributes to the empirical literature linking parental involvement, educational management and organizational change (change management), while exploring the mechanisms that can be put in place by school administrators to manage identified challenges with a view to promoting parental involvement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates some previous research relative to this study so as to provide a more vivid understanding of the context of organizational challenges, the direction and type of intervention that this study proffers for managing the organizational challenges to improve parental involvement in schools. It also explores options for framing the problem, alternative solutions, and provides the basis for evaluating success.

2.2 Management

2.2.1 Management and Effective Management in the School Context

According to Hersey and Blanchard (1993), ‘management is thought of as a special kind of leadership in which the achievement of organizational goals is paramount.’ Several authors see management as a process of planning, organizing, leading and supervising of the members of organization (Dubrin, 2004; Dessler, 2001). Management in the school context involves the identification of learning standards, acquiring the right kind of personnel and keeping learning attuned to the ever-changing environment. Here, teachers and school management, being in a learning organization, understand the problems of the students and provide the required solutions in the changing environment. Importantly a school promotes the exchange of information among employees, and this assists in creating a better-informed workforce. Although transformational leadership is considered an effective tool towards organizational performance and success (Yukl, 1998), managerial effectiveness is critical in the educational setting. In this connection, a review of the characteristics of an effective leader is germane towards understanding managerial

effectiveness in the educational context. According to Hayes (2007), management is about modifying or transforming organizations with a view to maintaining or improving their effectiveness. Thus effective management in the context of the school can be viewed as the appropriate modification and transformation of the processes leading to the achievement of school objectives.

Effective management is one that recognizes the different approaches available and can adapt them to particular circumstances. Because routines and experiences can set precedents that can become difficult to change if the need arises, effective management takes all of these into account, making room for the creation of new ideas and reworking old ones in light of changes in the internal and external environment. In light of change, effective management would involve the identification of a mission and strategy, encouragement of stakeholder support, building responsive organizational structure and culture, deployment of appropriate new technology, institution of reward systems and clear design of new individual roles. An effective manager is one who is able to see the interconnectivity in the organization and who is able to put in place a system of shared values, a level of communication, openness and engagement, which ultimately result in everyone being conscious of the need to constantly improve in both productivity and efficiency.

2.2.2 Change management in the context of organizational challenges

This study seeks to identify the organizational challenges faced in improving parental involvement and to initiate changes to effectively manage them. The current state of parental involvement needs to change and this directly relates to managing organizational change in the context of parents and teachers. As most change initiatives are not completely successful (Burnes

and Jackson, 2011), stakeholders in the context of a school (i.e. school administrators, teachers, parents) should envision the kind of change required and embrace it, without which the change initiative is likely to be far from being easily accomplished.

In the context of change management, the following factors are important for a successful organizational change:

- Culture, which is both a dynamic phenomenon and a set of structures that guide and constrain behavior (Schein, 2004).
- Quality leadership, which entails that the leader possesses clarity of vision, is able to articulate values, communicate effectively and create new realities (Dunphy et al., 2007).
- The change agent, who must possess a two dimensional expertise, one that combines managerial judgment and core competences. Managerial judgment encompasses diagnostic skills, judgmental capability and behavioural flexibility while core competences are in five clusters namely, goal setting, role specification, communication, negotiation and managing upwards (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992).
- Effective communication, in which consistent change message needs to be persuasively communicated in order to bring about readiness for re-organization (Armenakis and Harris, 2002).
- The context under which change is to take place (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008).
- Training and development as an important component of any change project and to counter resistance to change (Kotter, 1996; Jurisch et al., 2014; AbuKhader, 2015).

2.3 Managing Parental involvement in the School

Being an integral part of school management, the principal is generally viewed as one saddled with the responsibility of ensuring effective parental involvement (Pearson, 1990).

However, in the context of change management, the role of the change agent is critical. For a successful organizational change, quality leadership is critical, including the role and competence of the change agent, who in this study is the researcher as well as the Director/CEO. My position was particularly crucial given the context under which change was to take place in the school. Considering that the status quo needs to be altered (Connor and Lake, 1988) in order to bring about new ways of doing things in a private school, the principal was not in a position to act as the change agent. This is because his job description does not entail bringing about the kind of change desired at Yandutse College. His leadership role does not involve ‘a person’s ability, in a formally assigned hierarchical role, to influence a group to achieve organizational goals’ (O’Reilly et al., 2010).

In the educational management literature, parental involvement, viewed as an integral part of school management, is associated with school-based management (hereafter SBM), which Murphy (1997) postulates as primarily a strategy to decentralize decision making to the individual school site in order to facilitate the empowerment of parents and the professionalism of teachers through shared decision making. However, the central aim of all SBM reforms is to place the locus of decision-making and authority closer to those at the school level (Malen, Ogawa and Kranz, 1990). However, as a private school, there has been participative management in Yandutse College. What was however lacking was the required degree of participative management that would lead to the effective management of organizational challenges.

2.4 Organizational challenges in the context of parental involvement

2.4.1 School/teacher-Centered Challenges

2.4.1.1 Administrative support

It is often seen that teachers do not have the requisite knowledge on how to go about involving parents, even though school administrators would want it (Decker et al., 2000; Shores, 1998). What has tended to exacerbate this is that there appears to have been no deliberate effort on the part of the relevant regulatory bodies to include, as a matter of priority parent involvement in teacher education programmes, and no certification is required in this regard. Where efforts are made in this direction, in terms of courses and professional experiences in pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers, it is generally inadequate (Greenwood and Hickman, 1991; Katz and Bauch, 1999).

2.4.1.2 Time factor

That teachers may not be disposed to encouraging parental involvement may not be unconnected to the increasing complexity of modern education, which requires more use of their time. With little or no incentive on the part of school administrators to support them in that direction, teachers have little time left to deal with parents, even though they are disposed to doing so (Shartrand et al., 1997; Baker, 2000).

Furthermore, conflicts are likely to arise when scheduling and planning school-home activities. When higher demand is made on the time of parents who may be faced with uncertain work schedules or who have to do multiple jobs to keep their families, getting them to promptly respond to school demands arising from parental involvement cannot be guaranteed (Eccles and Harold, 1993; Greenleaf, 2000).

2.4.1.3 Teachers' perception about parental role

Where parental involvement is not accorded any modicum of value by teachers, parents are not likely to be interested in participating in school. This may be due to the belief on the part of teachers that giving emphasis to parental involvement can erode their (i.e. teachers') own value in the educational process, and this is reinforced by feelings of resentment due to lack of respect by parents. How teachers perceive parents and parent involvement is largely a function of several factors, including practices taking place in schools, history as well as prevailing cultural trajectory (Ramirez, 1999; Lazar and Slostad, 1999).

2.4.1.4 Non-assignment of specific roles to parents

According to Shartrand et al. (1997), there are no specifics as to what the role of parents should be in their child's education. Epstein and Becker (1982) surveyed the practices of 3700 elementary school teachers across 600 schools in Maryland in the United States of America. Teachers reported little or no parental involvement within the school and even when parents were requested to get involved in the education of their children, no specific roles were assigned, rather, they simply meant to complement the emphasis on basic skills and not geared towards enriching the pupils' academic experiences. In another survey of 307 high school teachers in the San Francisco Bay area in the United States, Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) found that more than half of the teachers had no close contact with parents, with as high as 63% of the teachers reporting that no effort was made to involve or contact any of the parents of their students under them. When contact was made at all, it was merely to work on the child's discipline or report on academic progress to parents who had indicated interest in the first instance.

In a similar study involving primary schools in Botswana, Mannathoko and Mangope (2013) investigated the obstacles to parental involvement in Primary Schools and found that parents are not actively involved in schools due to the feeling of alienation in the hands of teachers who do not regard them as an integral part of the school system, and are considered relevant merely to progress report of their children, or when they are invited to Parent-Teacher Association meeting or when time for payment of school fees is due.

2.4.1.5 School Climate

The frosty relationships that sometime exist between the school and parents may have roots in some schools playing ‘hard to reach’ (Harris and Goodall, 2008). Williams, Williams and Ullman (2002) reported that parents are frustrated by unfavorable school climate. Parents have to be encouraged to be implicitly involved and be proactive in creating a school climate that is favorable to them and conducive to their children school lives. In order to achieve this, there should be synergy between parents, teachers and school-based leaders.

I have observed from experience that parent-teacher/school synergy could be hindered by cultural dichotomy accentuated by ethnicity and religious beliefs, which could form the behavioral patterns of teachers in relation to parents. For example, in my school, although over 90% of the parents are of the Hausa speaking tribe, an almost equal 90% of the teachers are of the non-Hausa speaking stocks. While some teachers do not usually understand the behavioral tendencies of some parents in relation to them, some parents also feel the same way. This dichotomy tends to hinder cohesive relationships and ultimately, hinders improved parental involvement. To alleviate the problem, both the teacher and the parent should be educated. While teachers require training and information to enhance their knowledge to facilitate better working

relationships with parents (Kraft and Rogers, 2015), the same opportunity could be extended to parents as well.

2.5 Parental Involvement

2.5.1 Definitions of Parental Involvement

Several definitions and insights have been given to the concept of parental involvement. The key word in the clause is ‘parents’ which Dekker and Lemmer (1993, p.153) consider ‘as neither an amorphous nor a homogeneous mass, but they all have one trait in common, namely that they have children.’ To consider the meaning of parental involvement therefore, it is pertinent to discuss the key term ‘parent’. Parents belong to differing social and cultural contexts and groups in society, and therefore are not a homogenous entity. Thus, parents’ engagement with education is raced, classed and gendered (Lareau, 2011; Lunneblad and Johansson, 2012). Epstein (2011, p.4) echoed this view thus, ‘Students’ families ... are not all the same. Some students live with two parents, and others have only one parent at home; some parents are working and some are unemployed; some speak English and some speak other languages. These contexts manifest themselves in different ways for the various parties and have a bearing on how parents deal with their children’s schools, and the extent to which parents are able to negotiate with the schools on behalf of their children. They also affect how the schools view parents and the extent to which they may be prepared to listen to parents and allow them to voice their needs and concerns.’ Moreover, the term ‘parent’ is generic and therefore hides the gendered nature of parenting (O’Donoghue, 2013).

There exist considerable variations of definitions apportioned to parental involvement. Researchers’ own perception of parental involvement and its impact on students’ achievement

may have influenced this, in addition to what they may consider as the factors that determine stakeholders' involvement (Feuerstein, 2000; Fan and Chen, 2001). Thus, parental involvement is used differently by different people in quite different contexts. According to Morgan (1996), the concept of parental involvement means parents and teachers working in a close partnership for the benefit of the child. In this context, partnership and involvement are regarded as synonymous.

Some definitions consider parental involvement as having to deal with the amount of synergy that parents have with teachers in their joint effort at raising the child. In the light of this, Ndlazi (1999) opines that parental involvement relates essentially to parents willingly making themselves available to work in conjunction with teachers in such areas as school policy and vision, resource management and governance mechanisms. In the light of this definition, parental involvement encompasses a wide range of activities, including providing a conducive atmosphere to learning at home, and taking active part in the child's learning in the school, as all of this has direct bearing on their academic achievement (Khan and Haupt, 2006). Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) define parental involvement as the commitment of resources by the parent in the child's school life.

In my opinion, parental involvement may be defined as the conscious initiative given by parents to support the overall educational development of their children through engaging in both educational and non-educational activities. The essence, therefore, is to be able to improve the child's overall wellbeing by giving the needed stimulants that complement what is available in the school environment.

Several concepts are used synonymously with parental involvement. While some refer to it as parental participation, a few refer to it as parental engagement. Wolfendale (1983) and

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), opined that at some point, parents develop a personal understanding of their parental roles that include participation with the school in their children's education. Harris and Goodall (2008), on the other hand, argue that there is a significant difference between parental involvement in schooling and parental engagement in learning. In this research, I will be using the inclusive term 'parental involvement'. I believe that the active parental involvement (involvement in school activities supported with engagement in learning at home) in collaboration with the school in a student's school life, affords the parent better perception of school programmes, the child's school antecedents, such as behavioural tendencies, learning abilities and knowledge, which help the parent(s) and the school to nurture the child for better achievement in life.

2.5.2 Parental involvement within the school context

Singh and Hardaker (2014) maintain that parental involvement in schools is characterized by varied level of interaction among the teachers, school administration and parents. Central to this observation is that teachers, school management and parents are critical stakeholders in the educational system. One major area of parental involvement in the school context is Parents-Teachers Association (PTA), which according to Dwyer (2012) is critical when identifying potential ways of improving the school management. Improvement in this context could be in the form of providing adequate funds, skills and advice on school activities in order to run the school effectively. The roles and status of PTA are in various contexts and as such are diverse, and may be formal or informal. PTA aims at enhancing the collective participation of parents and teachers in the education of children. PTAs thus provide a mechanism in which parents and the rest of the community engage in a partnership in the education of children (Onderi and Makori, 2013).

2.5.3 Parental involvement in Schools

2.5.3.1 Parental Involvement Globally

The importance of parental involvement and parents as important stakeholders in the education process of their children are globally acknowledged, although the degree differs from countries to countries and from regions to regions. In the United States, the role of parents as children's first and most important teachers and their necessary involvement in education is recognized by the American Government (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern and Duchane, 2007). This has led to schools adopting different strategies to involve parents, ranging from parent interactions with their high school children about their studies and post-schooling plans (Simon, 2004), and plans which require the involvement of family activities (Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). However, differences in the level of involvement amongst the various types of people in the United States have been observed (see Huntsinger and Jose, 2009; Lee and Bowen, 2006; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo and Pituch, 2010; Graves and Wright, 2011; Wong and Hughes, 2006).

In the United Kingdom, parental involvement has for several years been encouraged by government through policies (Conteh and Kawashima, 2008). Of particular note is the issuance of the 1997 White Paper 'Excellence in Schools', which provides strategies on how to involve parents in the education process, including the provision of information to parents, boosting parent-school partnerships and giving parents more room to be heard (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). However, it has been observed that not everyone supports parental involvement in schools in the United Kingdom, despite legislative strategies (Crozier and Davies, 2007). What the foregoing discussion shows is that parental involvement seems to have been well entrenched in the educational system of the developed countries.

Park, Byun and Kim (2011) reported that some countries experience difficulty in parental involvement, citing the case of Korea where parents give high priority to education and where the education system is highly standardized, a situation that gives very little room for parental involvement at schools. Instead what parents do is to get the services of high quality tutors for their children and this at high costs, and it is through these tutors that parents keep up to date with the progress of their children. Another feature of parental involvement type in Korea is ‘mothers network’ in which mothers are expected to partake, while for some who due to their full time work were unable to be a part of this network had to change their jobs to be able to be involved in the scheme. Education is thus highly important to Korean parents and the process undergone to find a quality tutor for their children highlights their involvement in the education process. Similar cases of difficulty with parental involvement are reported for Brazil where teachers face huge challenges in trying to promote parental involvement (Souto-Manning and Swick, 2006).

2.5.3.2 Parental involvement in Nigeria and other African countries

The empirical research on parental involvement in Nigeria shows mixed results, with low involvement dominating the results. In a study conducted by Olatoye and Agbatogun (2009), some parents were found to be involved in their children’s education while others were not. In the same study, it was reported that the degree of parental involvement could be explained by the type of schools to which parents sent their children. Thus, parents of children who attended private schools were more involved than those whose children attended public schools. Other factors found to explain the differential are the child’s gender (parents are more involved in their son’s education than in their daughter), variations in fees charged by schools, of parents’ socio-

economic status and educational qualifications.

Even in specific parental activities, parental involvement has tended to be low in Nigeria. Amanchukwu (2011) for example, found that parents exhibit a lukewarm attitude towards PTA meetings. Consequently, effective administration of schools could be hampered where the PTA is not performing its roles as expected (Ajayi, 1999). The situation is even worse where the school is unable to provide clear roles for parents or does not know the benefits of parental involvement. Kimu (2012) found that principals and teachers are unable to understand the potential benefits accruing from comprehensive parental involvement, while most of the schools had no defined parental involvement policy. Importantly, it was found that teachers did not consider involving parents as part of their roles.

The low parental involvement experienced in Nigeria could be traced to the poor strategies by schools with respect to parental involvement and where such strategies exist, there are no clear-cut roles for the different stakeholders (Ajayi, 1999). Sanders and Epstein (1998) argue that when the school, parents and the community cultivate close partnership in children's school lives, the result will be improved school climate, better parenting skills, better students' achievements at school and enhanced community involvement. However, LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011) observe that teachers and parents do not possess the requisite knowledge, training and information that could have been useful for effective partnership between the two groups. The lack of a clear government policy guideline in Nigeria for stakeholder involvement in schooling has compounded this inadequacy for education providers (Olibie, 2014) and has caused schools to design strategies suitable for their local realities and which could improve parental involvement.

The evidence points to increasing parental involvement in some African countries, while in others involvement appears to vary. In a study on Ghana, Pryor and Ampiah (2003) reported that while some parents are indifferent to schooling, it has been noted that some parents lack interest in education and even interrogate the significance of schooling for their children, all of which are capable of influencing their involvement in education. Due to this, parental involvement has been dismally low in some schools. As reported by Donkor, Issaka and Asante (2013), students received little support from parents. Specifically, parents blame the teachers when the child's performance at school was poor, even when they (parents) fail to provide educational materials like exercise books, textbooks and school supplies, while claiming to lack the capacity, yet displaying ostentation in parties and funeral ceremonies. Parental involvement in Ghana however is changing as parents are starting to involve themselves in education, both at home and at school by ensuring that their children's homework is completed, a situation that has improved academic performance by students (Chowa, Masa and Tucker, 2013). Interestingly also, there has been report that school-based parental involvement is on the rise as indicated by the rate at which parents attend parent meetings and events (Malakolunthu, McBeath and Swaffield, 2014), discuss expectations with their children (Chowa et al., 2012), in addition to showing interest in the learning of their children (Malakolunthu et al., 2014)

A different situation was reported for Namibia in which both privileged and underprivileged parents were highly involved in their children's education at school and at home, demonstrated in such activities as parents monitoring their children's time outside of school, maintaining good and cordial relationship with the teachers, assisting their children with homework, discussing schoolwork with their children and closely following the child's progress (Erlendsdóttir, 2010). Due to the prevalence of PTA in many African countries, we use it as an

indicator of the level of parental involvement to discuss parental involvement in African countries. PTAs play several roles in schools (Onderi and Makori, 2013). In the USA, Lin (2010) reports that PTAs involve parents in classroom decisions, promotes communication, social events and fundraising, and involved in lobbying the state and national legislation on behalf of the students.

PTAs are involved in monitoring implementation of school programmes, education services and help in mobilising additional resources in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2005). In Ghana, cases have been reported in which PTAs made efforts at reaching out to parents whose children had missed school for a long time and encouraged them to send their children back to school (Dunne, Akyeampong and Hamphreys, 2007). Pansiri and Bulawa (2013) found that there is minimal parental support, especially in rural and remote areas and in boarding primary school system in Botswana. Mannathoko and Mangope (2013) reported that most parents indicated that they were not aware that they were supposed to offer teaching assistance services in schools in Botswana.

2.6 Empirical Literature

2.6.1 Action research and organizational problems

Several investigators have pointed out the appropriateness of action research in dealing with management issues (Dick, 2002; Zuber-Skerrit and Perry, 2002; Coghlan and Brannick 2001; Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Eden and Huxham, 1996; Gill and Johnson, 2002). A number of empirical studies that employed action research methodology in solving specific organizational problems include: marketing (Vignali and Zundel, 2003); product development (Anders and Agnar, 2003); manufacturing, engineering and operations management (Coghlan

and Coghlan, 2002; Westbrook, 1995); Organizational change and transformation (Kotnour, 2001; Kotnour et. al., 1998); information systems and E-Commerce (Kock and McQueen, 1995; McKay and Marshall, 2001; Chiasson and Dexter, 2001; Yoong and Gallupe, 2001); accounting (Kaplan, 1998); management development (Sankaran and Sng, 2002)

There are several antecedents of successfully planned change in change management studies. Those most frequently reported are active participation (e.g., Walton, 1985; Coch and French, 1948; Lewin, 1947a), communication (e.g., Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1947a), clear vision (e.g., Kotter, 1995, 1996; Lewin, 1947a), readiness for change (e.g., Jones, Jimmieson, and Griffiths, 2005; Armenakis, Harris and Feild, 1999; Wanberg and Bana, 2000; Lewin, 1947a), demonstration of progress in change (Kotter, 1996; Lanning, 2001), and top management support and commitment (Burke, 2002; Abramson and Lawrence, 2001; Kotter, 1995; Greiner, 1967). It needs to be noted that the antecedents are often complementary.

2.6.2 Educational Action Research

The role of AR in the educational management literature has been stressed. Mills (2003) argues that action research is one of the strategies that can be used by teachers to undertake school improvement activities either to improve themselves as well as to enhance the performance of their respective schools. This view is consistent with the idea that action research is important to change in school. Booth and Ainscow (2002), and Meyer et al. (1998) consider action research as an effective means of developing reflective and critical skills which are important towards making positive contribution to school improvements and change. In the light of this, several areas of the school have been investigated using the AR framework, including

curriculum development, institutional development, pedagogies, staff development, student engagement and teacher training.

Action research has often been deployed to identify strategies for curriculum development. Millwood and Powell (2011) reported an institution which implemented a project seeking to develop a framework that gives faculty members the insight for effective curriculum design. Benn and Dunphy (2009) employed AR to address the implementation of sustainability issues within and across curricula, which led to the identification of negotiation as an intervention. Similarly, Trevitt (2005) used AR in a project that aimed at refining academic identity, which led to development of enhanced curriculum development strategies.

For institutional development, Avdjieva (2005) and Kur, DePorres and Westrup (2008) and several others noted that due to the rising trend to investigate AR at an institutional level, the gap and demarcations between traditional scholarship, research and administration/organization have broken down. Bringing together AR pedagogic case studies to examine the role of AR in narrowing this gap, Tormey et al. (2008) in their findings concluded that the barrier between the two mind sets needs to be reduced, thereby supporting Hubball and Burt (2006) and Sankaran et al. (2007). The implication is that the school support is required to improve this interconnectivity between teaching and research which is significantly blurred through AR. Change management and the emancipatory potential of AR informed the study by Hodgson, May and Marks-Maran (2008) on the need for developments in supportive learning environments to facilitate widening participation. By using a participant AR cycle, faculty members and students have the opportunity to contribute toward the accomplishment of institutional change. Taylor and Pettit (2007), Guy Wamba (2011), Humphries-Mardirosian and Belson (2009) and several other

scholars have reported that AR has been employed to evaluate efforts to introduce critical pedagogies in teaching into higher education settings.

Findings from AR investigations have been utilized to advance pedagogical practice in such areas as curriculum design (Walton, 2011), teaching (Abell, 2005; Abraham, 2014; Shalom and Schechet, 2008; Tormey et al., 2008; Wrench et al., 2013; Zambo and Isai, 2012), and innovation in assessment (Simms, 2013; Ward and Padgett, 2012). Modern institutional changes have brought eLearning to the fore, with AR used to explore the changes (personal and professional) required to implement online learning (Aksal, 2009; Cochrane, 2014; Singh and Hardaker, 2014) or blended learning (Kenney and Newcombe, 2011).

Some empirical studies have also used AR methodologies on student engagement, with particular emphasis on obtaining feedback or appraisal on teaching practice from students (Banerjee, 2013; Stewart, 2012). The value of AR has also been demonstrated in enhancing student engagement through reflective practice, active participation and empowerment. The areas investigated include its role in student involvement in curriculum development and delivery (Coates and Dickinson, 2012; Seib, English and Barnard, 2011), the development of student-led aims and learning objectives (Peters and Gray, 2007), the development of student self-awareness (Duenkel and Pratt, 2013), promotion of participation in social change (Taylor and Petit, 2007; Zhang et al., 2014), development of student ownership of the process of teaching and learning (Goh and Loh, 2013; Kurzel, 2011), cross-curricular collaboration (McAllister et al., 2013; Wisker et al., 2001) and peer-assisted learning (Hodgson, Benson and Brack, 2013). AR has also been used in teacher training programmes, with focus on the perspective of both the learner and the teacher (Katsarou and Tsafos, 2013; Price and Valli, 2005). AR has also been considered in

the teaching and utilisation of an AR dissertation (Cornelissen and Van der Berg, 2013; Furtado and Anderson, 2012; Moate and Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2014; Simms, 2013).

Noteworthy is that Cummings and Worley (1993) reported that most organizational change programmes in schools follow collaborative problem-solving pattern. This involves academic administrators, faculty, students and various external stakeholders. Additionally, the elements of work identified by change management theorists as critical to success are supported by most of the publications on change management issues, including communication, vision, followership, short-term wins, training and re-culturing. It has been emphasized (e.g., Greenwood and Levin, 1998) that organizational change initiatives in educational institutions utilize action research. Change management in schools has been seen in the process of reviewing and redesigning curricula and the application of knowledge and techniques such as student feedback. In a study by Stich (2008) which investigated the process of change in four community colleges, it was found that change strategies following the recommendations of experts were effective.

2.7 Summary of Review

A review of the literature indicates that while previous efforts addressed parental involvement in schools, none was done in the context of organizational or change management. Thus, previous research dealt with mechanisms for improving parental involvement without considering management aspects with specific reference to organizational change. The reason for the approach utilized in previous investigations is by no means surprising. Most of the researches were conducted on public schools whose management is largely controlled by public authorities and hence an insider research would hardly be expected to implement a strategy of planned

change in an organization in which they had very little if any control on altering the existing management or organizational configuration. Even in organization in which AR was utilized, it was mostly initiated from within by the owners and this is understandable, given that there are significant constraints to implementing a change in an organization where the change agent has neither ownership nor control.

The aforementioned limitation faced by the insider researcher utilizing AR is linked to the type of framework used in existing studies. In a majority of the past studies on parental involvement, the Epstein framework was utilized. This framework with six typologies (Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at home, Decision-making and Community collaboration) hardly makes room for planned organizational change, which is the hallmark of the action research (AR) methodology. To this extent, there is hardly any reference to the use of AR which necessitates planning, acting, observing and reflecting in the research process. Furthermore, the Epstein typology which characterizes majority of the literature dealing with parental involvement does not explicitly address issues of organizational (school) management as a mechanism for parental involvement.

The current study differs from previous investigations on parental involvement in four key aspects. First, it investigated management aspects of parental involvement rather than parental involvement *per se*. In the study, parental involvement only provided the lens through which the school management is examined. Second, management of parental involvement in the school was investigated in the context of organizational change (change management or organizational development as synonymously used in the change management literature). Third, AR was used in the study as a methodology in the research process and as a guide in the change process. Lastly, it effectively combines the insights in the educational management literature

with those found in the change management literature, thereby adding to the body of knowledge on the integration of methodological approaches to organizational studies. Interestingly, this study was done within an educational setting (a private school) in which the school (the organization) required a planned change (organizational change) in order to improve an identified area of interest (parental involvement), using qualitative analysis (centred on the AR framework). The study therefore brings to bear aspects of parental involvement, educational management and organizational change (change management). Despite the hundreds of literature reviewed on the three identified areas (i.e. parental involvement, educational management and organizational change), I did not find any that addressed an educational/organizational issue (parental involvement) from the perspective of planned change (organizational change) and educational management.

An examination of the empirical literature indicates that although AR has been widely used in the educational management literature, it has rarely been deployed in the management or organizational aspect of schools with particular emphasis on parental involvement. Consequently, what is obviously lacking is the use of AR to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school, initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges and to provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. This is a major contribution of the current effort.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

There is a wide range of research work, in which various frameworks and guides were developed and are reported for the management of organizational challenges in different contexts. The extant theories however can be characterized in terms of the variations in the

amount of responsibility that is attributed to each key player in the organization, in addition to the extent to which specific internal, external as well as inherent personality factors influence the management of change. Thus the theories try to give useful explanations and understanding about the connection between the change agent and the school, and thus on the responsibilities of actors in bringing about the needed change. The thesis benefits from a number of change management perspectives aimed at making such changes successful.

In this section, I have presented key traditional models of change that show the fundamental approaches that explain the nature of change processes and its understanding when implementing successful change. These models are basic frameworks that guide the strategies for change, rather than the change strategies themselves. In addition, a framework for enhancing and sustaining parent-teacher involvement is important for this study, as one of the objectives is to provide an effective means of managing identified challenges with focus on parental involvement. Consequently, models of planned approach to organizational change provided the framework for this study.

2.8.1 Models of Planned Approach to Organizational Change

According to Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958, p.10), ‘planned change originates in a decision to make a deliberate effort to improve the system.’ The notion of planned change has led to different kinds of approaches or models for implementing the planning itself and the action following it. Several ‘planned approaches’ or models to change have been developed. A common feature of these models is that they all contain a sequence of phases (steps or stages) to be implemented. In phase models, the word “phase” is used deliberately to underscore the point that

different phases may and do overlap, while the word “step” in turn, connotes discrete action, i.e. step 1 is completed before step 2 can be taken (Burke and Litwin, 1994).

This study is based on the work of Lewin (1947a) who provides one of the most influential perspectives on organizational change. Lewin (1947a) proposed a 3-step model, often referred to as the planned approach to organizational change. The model is helpful in the management of change and relevant for individuals, groups and organizations. The model is important in dealing with resistance to change and how the change once made can be sustained. He argued that people may come to a group with different reasons, but that they are more likely to achieve the group objective if they share a common objective. Thus, group conduct needs to be changed and prevented from reverting to the old level within a short time.

Action Research as conceived by Lewin is a two-pronged process which would allow groups to address three questions: (1) what is the present situation? (2) what are the dangers? (3) most importantly of all, what shall we do?. In the light of these questions, Lewin emphasized that change requires action as the first prong. The second prong recognizes that the situation should be correctly analysed. This implies that all the possible alternative solutions should be identified from which the most appropriate one is chosen, depending on the situation. A very vital element in the Lewin’s AR process is that there has to be a realization that change is necessary (‘felt-need’, described as an individual’s or group’s inner realization for change), without which, ‘introducing change becomes problematic’ (Burnes, 2004, p.984). Rooted in Gestalt psychology, AR thus emphasizes that it is by helping individuals to reflect on and gain new insights into the totality of their situation that change can be successfully achieved, so that in Lewin’s view, it is not possible to understand an organization without seeking to change it. Implicit also in Action Research is that effective change must take place at the group level, must be a participative and

collaborative process involving all those who are concerned (Bargal, Gold and Lewin, 1992; Lewin, 1947b).

Lewin (1947a) argued that there are three steps in a successful change project.

Step 1: Unfreezing

In this step, the status quo is investigated with particular reference to the driving and restraining forces, in order to determine the nature of the forces and how best to modify them. Lewin was of the belief that ‘the stability of human behaviour was based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium supported by a complex field of driving and restraining forces’ (Burnes, 2004, p.985). What was required therefore was to destabilize (unfreeze) the equilibrium in order to do away with the old behaviour and to bring about new behaviour that is successfully adopted. Bringing about a successful change did not in Lewin’s view imply the application of the same approach to all given situations or that change would be easy. He was of the view that ‘to break open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness it is sometimes necessary to bring about an emotional stir up’ (Lewin, 1947a, p.229). According to Schein (1996, p.27), the key to unfreezing was to be aware that ‘change, whether at the individual or group level, was a profound psychological dynamic process’. The author thereafter identifies three processes required to achieve the goal of unfreezing: (1) disconfirmation of the validity of the status quo; (2) the induction of guilt or survival anxiety; and (3) creating psychological safety.

Step 2: Moving

This step is aimed at moving the change target to the new level or kind of behavior. As noted by Schein (1996, p.62), unfreezing should not be regarded as an end in itself, this is

because while it creates motivation to learn, it ‘does not necessarily control or predict the direction’. According to Lewin (1947a), it is difficult to predict or identify a specific outcome from planned change, due largely to the complex nature of the forces concerned. What is of importance therefore is take all the forces at work into consideration and then identify and evaluate all the available options, based on trial and error. Hence as noted by Lewin (1947a), it calls for reinforcement, without which whatever change that is experienced could be transient.

Step 3: Refreezing

This step reinforces the new behaviors or level of change in order to make it permanent, without which there is the danger of regression to the previous state. To achieve these supporting policies, norms and mechanism are put in place to institutionalize change. Thus, this step seeks to ‘stabilize the group at a new quasi-stationary equilibrium in order to ensure that the new behaviours are relatively safe from regression’ (Burnes, 2004, p.986). Cummings and Huse (1989) have stressed that for an organization, refreezing requires that changes are made to organizational culture, norms, policies and practices.

Since its formulation, the Lewin’s model has been reviewed and modified. For example, Bullock and Batten (1985) developed a four-stage model comprising exploration, planning, action and integration. Schein (1987) added and described the psychological mechanism distinctive for each phase of the model. Goodstein and Burke (1997) added more details to Lewin’s model as follows:

Unfreeze

- Changes to top management
- Reducing the levels of hierarchy

- Redefining the business
- Top management involvement and commitment

Move

- Empowering employees and encouraging their participation
- Supporting the change by support groups
- Putting New incentives and bonuses in place
- Providing intensive training in accordance with the business strategy and values
- Providing management tools to support the change

Refreeze

- Monitoring and feedback on a continuous basis
- Promotion of the new values
- Providing new performance appraisal scheme
- Making use of task forces

Implicit in Lewin's theory is that planned change, through learning, would give individuals the opportunity to understand and restructure their views on how to overcome social conflict, since it is by so doing that 'religious, racial, marital or industrial, could the human condition be improved' (Burnes, 2004, p.311). According to Lewin (1952, p.229), 'To break open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness, it is sometimes necessary to deliberately bring about an emotional stir-up.'

Several criticisms have been leveled against the Lewin's planned approach to change, including ignoring the role of power and politics in (Hatch, 1997; Pfeffer, 1992; Dawson, 1994;

Wilson, 1992); being too simplistic and mechanistic given that organizational change is a continuous and open-ended process (Dawson, 1994; Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992; Nonaka, 1988); its approach being a top-down, management-driven approach to change which does not consider bottom-up change needed in certain situations (Dawson, 1994; Wilson, 1992; Kanter et al., 1992); and that this approach is beneficial only when the organization wishes to implement incremental change and relevant only for isolated change projects (Harris, 1985; Miller and Friesen, 1984; Dawson, 1994; Dunphy and Stace, 1992, 1993; Pettigrew, 1990a, 1990b). Burnes (2004) has done a thorough examination of the nature of the Lewin's approach and of these criticisms and have thus rejected them and demonstrated that Lewin's work continues to be relevant, 'whether in organizations or society at large' (p.997. See Burnes, 2004 for a comprehensive discussion).

A review of the literature on Lewin's model shows that it provides an interesting and useful framework for understanding organizational change and although simple, the change management model, it continues to be a relevant for organizational development (Weick and Quinn, 1999). However, for a planned change to be successful, the insights from other change models are important. In the light of this, the model by Kotter (1996) is a useful complement to the Lewin's model for a successful change to be implemented. This is because there are steps in the model developed by Kotter (1996) which can be directly linked to the Lewin's model. Kotter (1996) developed an 8-step Model in response to criticisms levelled against the planned model of change by Lewin (1951). It gives emphasis to the view that change is an open-ended and continuous process of adaptation based on the changing circumstances (Dawson, 1994), which are so fast that it is not possible for senior change originators to identify, plan and execute the necessary organizational changes effectively (Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992). This is consistent

with one of the ‘changes’ I sought in this action study, which is changing the school from an organization that is in the business of education to being a school that is a learning organization, with commitment to continuous improvements and meeting the requirements of all stakeholders including parents, teachers, the school management, students and the wider society.

From the foregoing, Kotter’s model of change is viewed as one involving learning processes, rather than one dealing with how organizational structures and practices are changed, with the result that how successful the change will be is largely dependent on how the various actors in the organization are able to learn and adapt to changing circumstance (Dawson, 1994; Mabey and Mayon-White, 1993). The steps in Kotter’s model were considered to be a process and not as a checklist (Burnes, 2004). Kotter (1996) proposed structured steps on how these phases can be effectively realized:

- Creating a sense of urgency
- Building the guiding coalition
- Developing a vision and initiatives that are strategic
- Communicating the change vision
- Empowering employees/people for broad-based action to eliminate barriers
- Producing short-term wins
- Consolidating gains and producing more change
- Institutionalise change

It can be seen that the first three steps in the Kotter’s (1996) model correspond neatly with the first phase of Lewin’s model (“unfreeze”). Similarly, the 4th, 5th and 6th steps in the Kotter’s model are consistent with the second phase (“moving”) of Lewin’s model. However,

Branch (2002) provides insights that are important to the present study, in terms of the ways of implementing change using the Lewin's model. According to the author, there are three ways to achieve Lewin's model of organizational change: (1) changing the individual workers in the organization, in terms of their attitudes, values, skills, and ultimately their behavior, bearing in mind the intended organizational change; (2) changing the various structures and systems of the organization such as the system of reward, work designs and reporting relationships; and (3) changing the organizational climate or interpersonal style, in terms of the frequency of people being with each other, conflict management style, and decision-making procedure. Finally, the 7th and 8th steps in the Kotter's model (i.e. consolidating gains & producing more change, and institutionalise change) tie neatly with the third phase ("refreezing") of the Lewin's model.

Kotter's model has been criticized, the major drawback being the difficulty that can be experienced in implementing all 8 steps without skipping any, as this is likely to create problems for a successful implementation. Thus, a successful implementation depends largely on following through to the final step, which may be difficult in practice. The researcher's view from the literature on Kotter's model is that the model can be simple to implement. The model takes note of the changing external environment and the need for the organizations to adapt their internal practices and behaviours to meet them (Burnes, 2004), and thus is critical in a fast-changing and globalizing world. However, the major drawback would tend to be how to successfully bring about an orderly implementation of the 8 steps, without having to skip a step, and implementing the steps in an orderly and successful manner is likely to be time consuming (Rose, 2002). What is clear from the various models is that each strategy is aimed at making change realizable and that each strategy can directly or indirectly impact the target.

2.8.2 How the Theoretical Framework Helps Address the Research Objectives

From the point of view of change management, the present study has theoretical roots in Lewin's (1947a) change management model, comprising three stages, namely (1) unfreezing, (2) moving and (3) freezing. The model has motivation as its basis. In other words, there must be motivation for change before change can take place. Importantly, motivation alone is not sufficient to lead to action. What links motivation to action is a decision which has a "freezing" effect. Furthermore, the tools of analysis according to Lewin (1947a, p.39) are 'equally applicable to cultural, economic, sociological and psychological aspects of group life' which are applicable to the setting of this study. The need for motivation as a basis for change needs to be created to enable the change, Action Research (AR) is proposed as a tool and technique of positive change of the organization, helping to create the conditions under which parents and teachers become motivated to change. In addition, AR was important in the collection of data and in conducting the PTG meetings, during which parents and teachers were treated as informed agents in planning and implementing change in the school.

The first phase of change management in Lewin's (1947a) model is "unfreeze". Here, an organization has recognized the need for change. In an earlier study, it was found that the level of parental involvement was low at Yandutse College (Ahome, 2013). In the present study, there was the need to find out the challenges faced by the management in order to address the problem. To build motivation and to enable the planned change to occur, there was the need to (1) Create urgency, and (2) form a potent coalition (Kotter, 1995, 1996). Creating urgency implies identifying and discussing challenges and areas of opportunities. In the study, this was achieved with the PTG meetings. Forming a potent coalition means putting together people who are capable of leading the change. In the action research case, I as the Director/CEO of the College

was the change agent, together with the school management team. Thus, the Lewin's stage 1 (unfreeze) was used to achieve the first objective of the study, i.e. to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school.

The second phase of Lewin's (1947a) change management theory is "moving". This stage involves implementing decisions and taking action in order to achieve the planned change, while providing explanation as to how the change benefits the organization and stakeholders. There is where the issue of effective management is critical. To achieve this in the study, the researcher (as Director/CEO of the College), together with the school management adopted the three-pronged strategies suggested by Branch (2002), namely: (1) changing the individual workers in the organization (in terms of their attitudes, values, skills, and ultimately their behavior); (2) changing the various structures and systems of the organization such as the system of reward, work designs and reporting relationships; and (3) changing the organizational climate or interpersonal style (in terms of the frequency of people being with each other, conflict management style, and decision-making procedure). Details are presented in the results section of the thesis. These strategies are also consistent with the three steps in Kotter (1996), namely: (1) creating a vision for change; (2) communicating the vision; and (3) empowering parents and teachers to act on the vision. Thus, the Lewin's (1947a) second phase ("moving") was used to achieve the second objective of the study, namely: to initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school.

The third phase of Lewin's (1947a) change management theory is "re-freeze". Here, planned change that has taken place is maintained and efforts are put in place to prevent a return to the time before unfreezing. In this study, the school management and teachers were made to understand how things should be done to ensure stability. In addition, the school management, in

consonance with the two steps in Kotter (1995, 1996): (1) consolidated improvements and produce still more change and (2) institutionalized new approaches (keeping the vision “alive” in Lewin’s terminology), in order to promote the behavior required for continued success in parent-teachers involvement. Consequently, the “re-freeze” (third phase) of Lewin’s (1947a) change management theory is used to achieve the third objective of the study, i.e. to provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. Thus, each phase of the Lewin’s (1947) change management theory was used to achieve each of the three objectives of the study and to answer the three research questions. Importantly, the first and second objectives of the study produced actionable knowledge, which brought about a change in parental involvement in Yandutse College arising from effective management of the identified organizational challenges.

2.8.3 Why Change Management is the Appropriate Approach in the Study

From the preceding discussion, a change management framework enabled the questioning and rebuilding of the present parental involvement for the parents and the school (the stakeholders), which provides an interesting research basis (Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996). The change management model by Lewin (1947a) adopted in the study helped to identify the areas of change (unfreeze), implementing decisions and taking action in order to achieve the planned change (moving), and finally maintaining/sustaining the planned change that occurred (unfreezing). The study however benefited from insights on the various stages/steps of the AR cycles from other scholars in the change management literature.

Dickens and Watkins (1999) have remarked that Lewin’s wider social agenda has been mainly undertaken under the umbrella of Action Research, an area where his planned approach

has been dominant. The creation of the Organization Development (OD) movement has demonstrated that it is the organizational side of Lewin's work that has been given more prominence over the years (French and Bell, 1995), with particular emphasis on his planned change (Cummings and Worley, 1997). That change management is the appropriate approach in the study is thus underscored.

2.9 Chapter Summary

Literature was reviewed in this chapter, in the context of the main objective of the study, which is identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in a private school in Kano, Nigeria. It was noted that an organization can face several challenges which limit the extent to which it can manage key areas on which improvements are desired. Thus, having identified the challenges, changes may be needed. The change management literature was reviewed and it provided several perspectives that are useful in guiding the organization on the various processes involved in identifying challenges or problems and in resolving them. The literature on parental involvement was also reviewed. It was shown that each covers a range of meanings, so that the term can refer to a range of different practices, both within and outside the school. Results emerging from a large number of studies indicate the need to develop a framework that brings about change and effective management in organizations. Consequently, the research questions posed in the present study are still relevant and valid for identifying organizational challenges, initiating changes to effectively manage the challenges and finally in providing a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in a private school.

The study is based on the Lewin's (1947a) 3-stage (Unfreezing, Moving, and Refreezing) change management model, and is used as the basis for the development of an implementation strategy for effective management of identified challenges. In this study, "unfreezing" was achieved after the initial evaluation of what was desirable to comprehensively assess the level of parental involvement. Also, I first established the target individually and then collectively by using Action Research to give a broad definition of the vision of the desired state of the school (improved parental involvement through effective management). In addition, AR was used to engender motivation for change. The change envisaged enabled parents and teachers to participate in discussions that led to the discovery of and solutions to management challenges. The intention of the last stage (refreezing) was to support the desired change that was achieved and ensuring that the vision was kept "alive". Importantly, the review of literature points to the process of action research as suited to the framework for this study (change management), aimed at identifying organizational challenges, introducing an intervention and finally coming up with effective management framework for enhancing and sustaining the desired change. Thus, the action research adopted in this study is consistent with the change framework.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis have been presented in the preceding chapters. A synthesis of the current research and theories into the identification of organizational challenges and the direction and type of intervention required for effectively managing the challenges of parental involvement in schools was provided in Chapter Two of the thesis. The literature reviewed showed that research on organizational/management aspects of parental involvement, identifying organizational challenges faced and initiating changes to effectively managing them in order to enhance parental involvement in schools would be an area worthy of further investigation. In this chapter, the most suitable design necessary for answering the research questions are selected, including its description, and rationale for selection.

In this thesis, I sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

- (i) What are the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school?
- (ii) What changes can be initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school?
- (iii) What framework can be provided for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school?

Essentially, my intention was to identify the challenges faced by the organization in improving parental involvement in the school. In this connection, it would be desirable to know what teachers and parents think and feel about the challenges each of them faced on the basis of

their experiences, as a way of providing the school management effective means of addressing parental involvement challenges in the education of children. To address the research objectives and provide answers to the research questions, I used the AR approach. In this chapter therefore, I discuss the data and the methods used, while linking them to the objectives of the research and the research questions formulated. Some epistemological approaches used in the research are also discussed. My choice of research design and methods of data collection are explained. Explanation is also given of the procedures used to administer the instruments, together with the analysis of the qualitative data. Explanations on Action Research (AR) as a tool of qualitative investigation are presented and how they served the objectives of the study and the research questions, and importantly linked to the theoretical framework.

A previous study of Yandutse College (Ahiome, 2013) showed that parental involvement was low. That study did not reveal the organizational challenges faced in attempts to deal with parental involvement issues. In my leadership role as the Director/CEO of Yandutse Schools, I set out to identify the challenges faced and to initiate changes to effectively manage them. I decided to use AR in this study for a number of reasons. First, identifying and initiating changes to effectively manage organizational challenges in improving parental involvement can be implemented using AR, since it allows teachers to make use of the ideas and enhance their assimilation of the information, while helping them to align the concepts with the current curriculum of the school and its goals. Thus, the use of AR provided the teachers the skills and knowledge that would enhance their engagement in their professional practice. In the same vein, it allowed me to critically examine the various changes that would occur over time. This is in line with the view that, ‘Action research, as disciplined inquiry, is an invaluable tool that allows educational leaders to reflect upon their practices, programmes, and procedures’ (Glanz, 2003,

p.27). My intention in bringing about a change in the school is aptly echoed by the definition of AR by Brown and Dowling (2001, p.152), ‘Action research is a term which is applied to projects in which practitioners seek to effect transformations in their own practices.’

In Yandutse College, where this study was conducted, the use of AR approach enabled me to freely bring the creative imagination and innovative ideas of participants to evolve a framework that addresses organizational challenges and how to effectively manage them in light of parental involvement. It was possible to make parents and teachers share a common vision of what the problems are, the challenges faced and the mechanisms needed to deal with them. To this end, my use of AR ‘aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework’ (Rapoport, 1970, p.499). The AR approach used for this study was able to inquire and reveal explicitly:

- (i) The organizational challenges in improving parental involvement;
- (ii) Factors that hinder effective management of challenges associated with parental involvement in Yandutse College and how to ameliorate them;
- (iii) Not only what is wrong, but acknowledging what works for us presently so as to develop what could work for us better in the long run in Yandutse College with regard to school-home relationships that will enhance our school’s management effectiveness;
- (iv) Changes needed in order to effectively manage the challenges associated with parental involvement in the school;
- (v) A framework that could be developed and applied to enhance and sustain parental involvement; and

- (vi) Production of actionable knowledge which could bring about change in parental involvement and school climate in Yandutse College, thereby adding to the available body of knowledge with regard to managing parental involvement. The implication of this is that changes in parental involvement in the College will be a consequence of the organizational actionable knowledge.

3.2 Epistemological, Ontological and Methodological Issues

3.2.1 Epistemological and Ontological Issues

Pouliot (2007) acknowledges that research methodologies are made up of a set of epistemological and ontological requirements, which should possess alignment with the epistemology and ontology of the researcher. According to Alcott (1998, p.8), ‘epistemology is the philosophical enquiry into ‘the nature of knowledge, what justifies a belief, and what we mean when we say that a claim is true.’ In the constructivist paradigm, the epistemological assumption is that knowledge is socially constructed. In the present study, in one of the phases of the research, the researcher and the participants interacted, so that the findings based on the experiences of the participants, are viewed as knowledge from a subjective construction. One key area of the research therefore is interpretation, in which, reliance was placed on participants’ reflection on their experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

According to Crotty (2003, p.3), ontology is ‘the study of being’, which deals with the ‘kind of world we are investigating, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such’. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.83) went further to state that ontological assumptions are concerned with ‘what is there that can be known.’ According to Moore (2005), ontological assumptions are concerned with questions on the nature of being and the form of knowledge. In the light of this, a research needs to pose some questions, which relate to the methodological

assumptions, which a researcher makes about the world. In addition, emphasis is given to the kind of knowledge which the methodology used by the researcher is aimed at reproducing. Of importance also is the way the methodology used conceptualizes the researcher in the process of research.

From the foregoing, it is necessary that in the course of undertaking a research, some epistemological assumptions are brought to bear and these have some influence on the researcher's understanding as well as the interpretation of data, with particular reference to what is regarded as acceptable knowledge as far as a discipline is concerned (Bryman, 2004).

3.2.1.1 My Epistemological position

Epistemology is dependent on ontology. Based on my position that the world is socially constructed, it follows that there are limits to what can be known and how it can be known. One way to gain knowledge is through prior experience. When investigating the parental involvement challenges in Yandutse College, I utilized this way of knowing (experiential knowledge). As a Director in Yandutse Schools for over thirty years, I have rich prior knowledge, which enabled me to take my position and inform my thinking. Through interaction with the school management and parents over the years, the challenges of identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school were largely experienced.

Reading the literature is another way to gain knowledge. My literature review, undertaken in Chapter 2, includes some of the insights, which I gained while reading the research relating to management, change management, organization change and parental involvement. This assisted me in knowing about identifying organizational challenges and parental

involvement issues, and to provide a context for the thesis, including providing insights on how the analysis should proceed.

Interacting with participants in the research is a third way of knowing. The thesis in respect of the objectives depended mostly on talking to, and listening to parents and teachers. This is based on the epistemological approach of creating a new kind of order among the people that will lead to improvement and positive change within Yandutse College using AR. In this connection, action research is related to an interpretive approach that is concerned with the explanation of human behaviour in terms of understanding the meanings and interpretations attached to social phenomena. Social research, cannot, therefore be undertaken by applying the methods of natural sciences. Instead, the exploration of what motivates people, including their perceptions, and experiences should be the guiding principles.

The methods of data collection chosen with respect to the aims of the research gave me the opportunity to interact with participants. Specifically, one method used was the PTG meetings, in which data was generated by discussion amongst parents and teachers. Another method used was questionnaire, which helped consolidate the data from the interactions. Both methods of data collection fit very well with the qualitative data analysis used in the thesis.

3.2.1.2 My Ontological Position

To answer the research questions in this study, a qualitative method for data collecting and analyses was used. My epistemological and ontological position regarding the paradigm and associated methodology selected for the present study can be outlined as follows:

- i) There was need to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school. In the light of this, the research is exploratory in nature. Therefore a

constructivist paradigm was adopted which helps one to have a better understanding of the subjective realities of participants in the study. In the constructivist methodology, there exists a link between knowledge and reality through the social constructions of interpreting the data and the organization of knowledge (Pouliot, 2007). Hence, separating the inquirer from their subject is impossible (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The researcher is seen to be active (as was the case in the present study) in the formation of knowledge, since in interpreting data, I was engaged in a social construction, which according to Rossman and Wilson (1985) is focused not on methods but on the research problem, so that fully comprehending the phenomenon under investigation necessitates the researcher to deploy qualitative approach.

- ii) Data were obtained from the perspectives of individuals (parents and teachers) who are stakeholders in a school, and whose views and understanding are subjective and influenced by multiplicity of factors including background, culture, religion, social interactions, among others. Through this, different meanings and multiple realities were gained (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000).
- iii) The participants and the researcher in the present study both had some influence in the manner that experience was transformed, from the interactions and subsequent data collection, through to the data transcription and analysis. Hence a qualitative method was adopted to further elucidate the findings.

3.3 Research Design

According to Creswell (2007), research designs are a product of philosophy, selected strategies of inquiry and specific research methods. This study has been undertaken on the basis

of action research philosophies, which have some themes in common, despite its varied understandings and practices. All action research approaches have the following key principals: problem focused; context specific; participative; and providing support to organizational development by promoting organizational learning (Coughlan and Coghlan, 2002).

3.3.1 Action Research in the context of identifying organizational challenges

Action research deals with the test of changing attitudes and behavior, but also the change technique being deployed (Argyris, 1970; McShane and Von Glinow, 2018). Action research consists of five steps: diagnosis, analysis, feedback, action and evaluation. What is implicit in the first stage of the change process is that action needs to be taken in order to make change happen.

In the present study, the researcher was the change agent, who was keenly interested in generating data and thus identifying the challenges of the organization (the school) from teachers and parents. The second part in the action research is concerned with analysis, in which a real situation that requires change is examined in light of a framework in order to verify whether or not the theories really work. The third step (feedback) in the action research process requires bringing to the attention of employees (teachers in this context) what the research has been found in earlier steps, and on the basis of this, action plans are put in place (effective management tools/framework) which are expected to lead to the desired change. When the action plans are put in place, the change agent (the researcher in this context) and employees (teachers in this context) implement the actions in the framework (effective management style) to correct the problems earlier identified (parental involvement in this context). The last step is to evaluate the effectiveness of the action (i.e. evaluating the effectiveness of the management style in this

context).

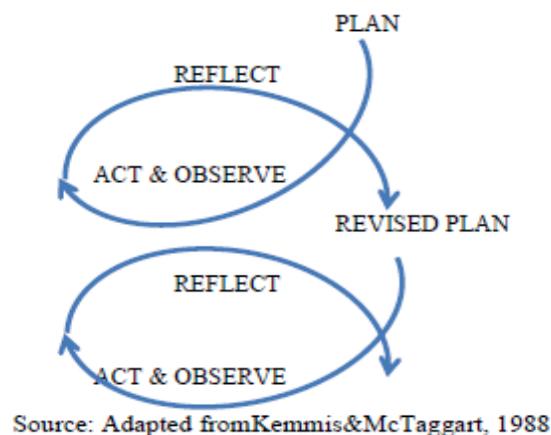
3.3.2 The process of action research used in the study

There are several models or guidelines of action research that can be applied when engaged in this research methodology. Several terminologies have been used to describe it, including ‘spiralling’, cyclical process (Lewin, 1952), a research ‘cycle’ (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; 1988), and as a helix (Stringer, 2007).

AR as a cycle was adopted in this study and included four stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; 1988). Planning involves identifying an area of concern that needs to be addressed, in the context of this study, identifying the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement (the first objective). The planning stage also involves the identification of possible interventions that could be used to bring about changes or improvements related to the area of interest. Acting (the second stage in the AR cycle), involves implementing one of the interventions, which in this study dealt with identifying the effective ways of managing the challenges of parental involvement in the school, and the actual management of the implemented intervention (the second objective). The third stage (observing) entails evaluating the implemented strategies which in the study dealt with monitoring the management strategies deployed. This logically leads to the fourth stage in the AR cycle, which is reflecting. This is based on the information collected to ascertain whether or not the intervention is successful and to implement other strategies if the area of concern has not been improved, which in this study implies providing a framework to enhance and sustain parents-teachers involvement (the third objective).

According to McTaggart (1991), the way action research project progresses during the process cannot be designed at the beginning of the research project, in that its procedures unfold during the recurring cycles. Moreover, it always considers the findings of and reflections on previous action research cycles. What this implies is that designing the whole research process would be contradictory to the action research philosophy because AR plans action after appraising the previous actions. Moreover as expressed by Mackenzie et al. (2012), action research cycles may lead to a new kind of knowledge or understanding of a problem, and thus can result in new questions. Thus, in action research projects, the aim is to generate actionable knowledge by taking action on an identified social issue. The AR cycle is presented in figure 3.1

Fig. 3.1: Action Research Cycle



In the study, the AR cycle fits very well into the epistemological and ontological positions which essentially emphasize that the world is socially constructed. In designing the study, the constructivist methodology was followed in which a link is established between knowledge and reality through the social constructions of interpreting the data and the organization of knowledge (Pouliot, 2007). Data were collected by an insider from participants,

so that separating the inquirer from their subject is impossible (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). This further reinforces the active participation of the researcher in the formation of knowledge, since in the data interpretation, I was engaged in a social construction, thus linking the researcher to the planning, acting, observing and reflecting aspects of the AR cycle. How the AR cycle was applied to the aim of the study is discussed in chapter 4.

3.3.3 Action Research: The Methodology

Action research can be defined as a process of systematic inquiry whose objective is to enhance social issues that affect people's everyday life (Lewin, 1947a; Stringer, 2008). Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) consider action research as a collective process carried out by people who share a common concern, undertaken in social situations with a view to improving the rationality and justice of their own practices, in addition to their understanding of these practices and the situations in which they are implemented.

A key feature of action research is collaboration (Reason and Bradbury, 2011), thus amenable to a broad range of beliefs and relationships and helping in the development of practical ideas germane to human beings. In the light of this, action research is participatory, democratic, leading to practical solutions to pressing human issues. In this way, action research provides an opportunity for researchers to develop a systematic, inquiring approach dealing with their own practices, geared towards bringing about positive change in such practice and which can extend to the broader community (Holter and Frabutt, 2012; Mills, 2011). All of these views echo Lewin (1947a), who is historically associated with the term and who considered it as cyclical, dynamic as well as collaborative in nature.

According to Stainback and Stainback (1988, p.1), the distinguishing characteristic of action research is that it ‘calls for the investigator to enter into the lives of the persons being studied as fully and naturally as possible’. The overriding objective in this case is for a researcher to gain an in-depth, all-inclusive perspective of events, or any phenomenon of interest through close interaction with the people being studied. In this way the researcher consciously tries to reduce the distance between them and the object of investigation. In the words of Creswell (1994, p.6), ‘The researcher tries to minimize the distance between him- or herself and those being researched.’ What can be inferred from this is that AR is an interpretive and qualitative method that attempts to fracture away from traditional social science methodologies. The method thus encompasses integrated activities that are participatory. The participatory nature of AR is aptly captured by Reason and Bradbury (2001, p.2), who considers AR as:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice in participation with others, in the pursuit of solutions to issues of pressing concern to people and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

The foregoing definition has relevance for the study. The action research used in this study is one of mutual-collaborative, practical-deliberative interpretive perspective, in which the researcher and practitioners as a team together identify the problem, the underlying reasons for the problem and possible interventions to resolve the problem. Thus, the concept ‘action’ means that the research intends to contribute directly to efforts in changing the participants in specific situations, while the concept ‘research’ means a systematic effort to generate knowledge (Holter

and Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). A very important aspect of this perspective is that the problem is defined after negotiations between the researcher and practitioner and a mutual understanding of the problem and solution is reached, while the process is flexible. Moreover, this form of action research 'indicative of this flexibility is the frequent use of 'interpretive' as an umbrella term that comfortably accommodates interactive and phenomenological perspectives' (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990, p.146). AR was imperative for this study in that the method identifies a social problem along with participants and carries out a process of fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, implementation and evaluation to simultaneously solve the identified problem and generate new knowledge. In the context of this study, emphasis was on identifying organizational challenges with respect to parental involvement, and which required action on the part of the researcher. This is in line with the view that AR can be categorized as 'a family of research processes' (Dick, 2000), in which both research and action are given equal weight. In this connection, my role as the researcher was that of a facilitator who collaborated with the stakeholders (teachers and parents) in the research process (McTaggart, 1991). The AR approach as used in this study has the ability to:

- engender imagination and innovation and compliment the strenuous task of planning interventions; utilize its processes of planning, acting, observing and reflecting in an effective manner in order to deal with prolonged spiraling analysis;
- build a union between co-researchers that is productive;
- link its core directly to any agenda for change; and
- motivate or inspire changes in a democratic manner

3.3.4 Importance of Action research in education

Although this thesis deals with identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges, the goal is to improve parental involvement in a private school. Thus, the use of AR in management linked to education logically invokes the imperatives of AR. Johnson (2012) defined action research in education as the process of studying a school situation in order to understand and enhance the quality of the educative process. Thus, action research in education is important. According to Mills (2011), AR is very important for teacher researchers, school administrative staff, and other stakeholders in the teaching and learning environment. First, it provides practitioners with the opportunity of being acquainted with new knowledge, greater understanding about improvement mechanisms in educational practices and the best ways to deal with classroom and school problems (Stringer, 2008).

Action research benefits the educational process in that it utilizes a systematic process (Dinkelman, 1997). In addition, its participatory in nature is critical in the learning environment (Holter and Frabutt, 2012), thereby offering several opportunities which are of benefit to those professionals within the teaching profession (McTaggart, 1997). In the light of this, action research bridges the gap between research and practice (Johnson, 2012), facilitates the professional development of educators (Tomlinson, 1995) and improves the empowerment of teachers (Fueyo and Koorland, 1997). The critical role of action research in the life of children (students in the context of this study) cannot be overemphasized. According to Mills (2011), action research aims at determining ways of enhancing children's lives.

3.3.5 Qualitative Methods as Part of Action Research and Type of Organizational Change/Development

The approach adopted in this study and the methods of data collection were dependent on the type of information required to identify and effectively manage organizational challenges in improving parental involvement. What determines the choice of research methodology is usually the nature of the study. Thus this study was conducted using a qualitative approach, which deals with the determination of the natural flow of processes and events, including how participants would interpret them. Thus the focus was on participants' perspectives on the meaning of events and actions and 'involves multiple realities as different people construct meaning from the same event' (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.321). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), researchers often examine a single case in qualitative research methods. This is because of the amount of effort needed to collect data typically from focus group discussions, participant observations, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. As part of action research, the subject is investigated in qualitative research within their natural environment, while describing their norms, relations and experiences associated with the research. Mackenzie et al. (2012) assert that researchers can integrate various methods while undertaking action research, change the methods and the focus during the research process, because there is more flexibility in the data collection instruments. A main feature inherent in qualitative methods is that the investigator is often the only instrument for the collection and analyses of data, the implication of which is that the risk of influencing the process by personal errors and biases may be high (Donmoyer, 2008).

Qualitative analysis was used in this study and was considered as part of action research, in which data collected during observations or interviews captures a rich understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative research methods have since the 1970s been

considered a valid and useful method in educational research (Lemmer, 1992). According to Neumann (1999), the methodology of qualitative research comprises the documentation of real events, the recording of words, gestures and tone of people, the observation of specific behaviours, and the examination of visual images. Educational outcomes are often too complex to reduce to a number (Suter, 2006: 41), so that words are used to describe what have been observed empirically. Based on the nature of the problem under investigation, I decided to follow the qualitative approach to explore the life-worlds of the participants by conducting Parent-Teacher Group meetings and using structured questionnaire to elicit responses from teachers in Yandutse College. Thus qualitative analysis is rooted in an interpretive approach which aims at understanding social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life.

Qualitative analysis is suitable when the researcher is concerned with understanding the phenomenon under study, conducted in a naturalistic setting rather than controlled measurements, using subjective exploration of reality from the standpoint of an insider. Qualitative research employs inductive approach to data, which emerges from subjects rather than *a priori* identification. Thus, things are investigated in their natural settings. Emphasis is placed on the different meanings and experiences that people have. Thus it is holistic and permits the researcher/investigator to study the attitudes and aspirations of people in their natural settings, which subsequently enables the researcher to gain an overview of the context under study, including its arrangements, logic, and explicit and implicit rules (Punch, 1998). The use of qualitative analysis in this study led to the use of descriptive data in the written or spoken words of the participants in detailed, thick description, using direct quotations to capture personal perspectives and experiences (Risimati, 2001). Thus, the approach is appealing because I used observations rather than assumptions as my starting point while the actionable knowledge gained

extends beyond my prior knowledge. In so doing, I was able to identify the organizational challenges faced at Yandutse College through understanding the actions of parents and teachers involved in the school, and consequently come up with actionable plans to manage the challenges and institutionalize realized gains. In the light of this, I was able to address the objectives of the research and provide answers to the research questions posed using the qualitative analysis.

Essentially, the use of qualitative research in this study was anchored on the fact I needed to discover accounts of meanings, experiences or perceptions of participants, and qualitative research is suited for this kind of undertaking in which the investigator is interested in exploring and explaining occurrences from the views of those who are studied, including their beliefs and values (Smit, 2010; De Vos, 1998). Using qualitative research enabled me to focus on gaining meaning (Toma, 2005), making it possible to increase the respondents understanding of the phenomenon under study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). I wanted to gain the understanding of the experiences and perspectives of parents and teachers on the phenomenon of parental involvement. The purpose of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of people's experiences and perspectives in the context of a phenomenon, and that reality is a social construct (Johnson and Christensen, 2010; Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). In the study, I used focused group (the PTGs) in which I was a moderator (Hoberg, 1999), while emphasis was given to communication and interaction (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000), which ensured that the quality and richness of the data I generated is viewed in the empirics as higher than that generated by interview (McMillan and Schumacher, 2000).

According to Revans (1972), action research is a method that can be applied to bring about continuous change in an organization. Thus, organizational change or development is an

important part of action research methodologies, whose aim is to create knowledge that promotes the development of individuals and organizations (Coughlan and Shani, 2013). By promoting organizational learning, action research is instrumental to the development of organizations' capabilities required for the constant evaluation of prevailing situations and behaviours (Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002). Due to the ever changing organizational landscape, preparing for constant change especially in the modern times is aided by action research and thus helps prevent an organization from persisting with its status quo (Badger, 2000). Thus, qualitative analysis is appropriate in the context of change management. The basis for qualitative analysis is that the human being is the examiner and the examinee and, in addition to the living-world where the research takes place. The concept of living-world refers to the reality of people, in other words experienced reality, which creates meaning for them.

According to Varto (1992), the researcher in action research is part of the context of meanings as well, because all qualitative research happens in the living-world. Objects of qualitative research, in addition to the information collected are always singular, a justification for this study which occurred in a private school in Kano Nigeria. Although the aim of scientific research is to produce information that can be subject to generalization and transference to other contexts, it cannot be wholly applied to qualitative research. Therefore a major challenge in qualitative research is that of eliciting the required qualitative information without sacrificing its individuality and uniqueness. The view therefore is that generalizations of qualitative research is not a norm because they are based on living-world entities which occurs at a particular time and place and understood as such by people. Above all, qualitative methods are relevant for practitioners and policymakers, as it helps them to become more 'appreciative' of the viewpoints of others (Hammersley, 2000). It has also been argued that qualitative methods may be more

appropriate when explaining causal relationships in which research questions are not based on assumptions about the existence of a single reality but one that aims at uncovering a ‘plurality of truths’ (Fraser, 2004, p.181).

3.4 Data Collection (Research Methods)

Two research instruments were used to generate data in the study. These are the Parents-Teachers Group (PTG) meetings and Teachers’ Questionnaire (TQ), their use being informed by the AR method of qualitative data analysis. The action research cycle was implemented using data from PTG meetings. Here qualitative data analysis was used. The results generated from the PTG meetings were used to further explore the parental involvement challenges from the Teachers’ Questionnaire (TQ). Thus, data generated from the PTG meetings were utilized in achieving the first and second research objectives, namely to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school, and to initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school. The PTG meetings and the teachers questionnaires were used in achieving the third objective, namely: to provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school.

Action research is consistent with the theoretical framework of the study. It needs to be noted that Kurt Lewin is often cited as the founder of action research, described as ‘research that will help the practitioner to generate knowledge about a social system while, at the same time, attempting to change it’ (Elden and Chisholm, 1993, p.121). As used in this study, action research is ‘a flexible spiral process’ which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding and knowledge) to be achieved at the same time (Dick, 2002, p.1). In trying to find out the challenges faced by my organization, I was interested in seeing a future that is much

better than the present. This intention is consistent with the view expressed by Parkin (2009, p.22) that while traditional research collects data and culminates at the point of discovery, action research collects data expressly to guide the future.

In the next section, I provide explanations on the Parents Teachers Group (PTG) meetings, the questionnaires and the procedure for their administration.

3.4.1 Parents Teachers Group (PTG) meetings

As earlier mentioned, the PTG meetings provided a forum for the working of the AR cycle. The meetings were essentially designed to identify parental involvement challenges and how to effectively manage them so that parents and teachers could be brought to recognize the imperative of having harmonious interactions that put emphasis on partnership and cooperation in the task of improving the school system. Due to the importance of the PTG meetings, details of the phases of the AR cycle arising from them are devoted to a separate chapter and discussed in chapter four.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

As earlier mentioned, the Teachers' Questionnaire (TQ) was one of the instruments used to collect data in the study. The TQ contains open-ended questions, the latter being informed by the need for deeper insight to enable participants answer questions in their own words. Such responses are meant to enable understanding of participants' attitudes, perceptions and views on parental involvement challenges, school climate and academic environment in the school. In constructing the questionnaire, I reviewed some research reports to which this present study relate. The aim was to have an objective assessment of the suitable structure of questionnaire that

I could administer for this study. I settled for the PIRLS 2006 Contextual Questionnaires (http://timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/context_quest.html#).

To avoid a situation where the results of the research would be based on the assessments and decisions that I might have inadvertently imposed, I ensured there was interpretive validity, which according to Maxwell (1992, p.289) relates that the manner that the process followed in conducting a research permits thoughts and meanings to arise from the participants' perspectives. One way I dealt with this was to allow one of my colleagues in the PTG meetings to assist in the categorization of the transcripts, in terms of major themes arising from discussions, in order to avoid a situation where I might inadvertently give my own interpretation to what was discussed.

The teachers' survey was conducted using the qualitative approach in the design of the teachers' questionnaire (see Appendix C). The questions in the TQ were designed to induce answers from the teachers, which could provide data regarding their views on the school's challenges in the effective management of parental involvement, as well as parental involvement challenges and school climate while they were in the school. Participants were requested to return the completed questionnaires within 14 days (2 weeks), sealed in an envelope that was provided. Additionally, all teachers in the school were invited to participate in an anonymous survey, as a bid to address the issue of preunderstanding (more of this is taken up in chapter 4). This survey inquired into their perceptions of barriers to and factors that they considered to have contributed to hindering or promoting parental participation. It was also to collate their views and suggestions on ways to improve parental involvement in Yandutse College. Invitation letters, together with Teachers' Questionnaire (TQ) were sent to all the teachers and only the volunteers completed the forms and returned same as stipulated in the PIS (Participant Information Sheet).

3.4.3 Participant Recruitment

Two factors determine who and how many participants will be asked to take part in a study utilizing action research, namely (i) participants who will be able to provide valuable information for a study; and (ii) criteria for selecting participant sample. In the first factor, emphasis is on participants who affect or are affected by the subject under investigation. In this context, they can contribute valuable information that will help the researcher answer the research questions. In the second factor, it is generally acknowledged that there are no formulated set of rules about the size of the sample or how it is selected in a qualitative action research. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), sample selection depends on the relevance of the experiences possessed by the participants in terms of the subject being investigated in the study, which will contribute to a better understanding of the issue.

However, the specific purpose for choosing the participants for a study has been emphasized by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). According to them, several options are available: (i) selecting a purposive sample, in which the participants are chosen deliberately according to a predetermined purpose; (ii) selecting a volunteer sample, in which case selection is based on willingness to participate in the study; and (iii) selecting a convenience sample, in which case participants are selected from among the most accessible individuals. Purposive sampling was used in this study, based on what I intended to achieve, namely to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school (Yandutse College) where I am Director/CEO, in order to initiate changes that would bring about effective management of the challenges. According to Hesse-Biber (2010), purposive sampling is non-random and its selection is aimed at addressing the research questions properly either by identifying the most extreme cases or by representing the sameness or diversity of respondents.

The unit of analysis (participants) for my study is the parents and teachers in Yandutse College. Table 3.1 shows the total number of participants by category used.

Table 3.1: Participants in the study

PTG				TQ
Parents		Teachers		
Number of Male	Number of Female	Number of Male	Number of Female	
10	10	5	5	27

All the teachers, irrespective of their length of stay in Yandutse College, were invited to participate in a general survey. Invitation letters together with the Teachers’ Questionnaire (TQ) were distributed to them in the school. Teacher participants for the PTG meetings were those that were in the school employment from the inception of the school in 2004 and who must have taught sets of alumni students and have had contact with their parents. All participants were identified from available school staff records and invitation letters were distributed to them in the school as well.

In my capacity as the Director of Yandutse College, I invited the parents of some of the alumni students, as well as some teachers to participate in dialogue on parental involvement. This dialogue, which is termed in this study as PTG meetings, was informed by my engagement with AR. It is not a research method, but was in form of the usual PTA meeting. Ethical considerations necessitated that the PTG meetings were conducted in my leadership role and not in my researcher role. Since the teachers are my subordinates, this approach resolved my dual role dilemma in the research and subsequently minimizes any perception of coercion among the teachers, who may feel pressured if their participation is linked primarily to my doctoral study.

Following the advice from the Chair of the Ethics Committee therefore, the PTG meetings were therefore designed and adapted as an AR approach. It is a pragmatic approach to resolving my dual role dilemma. The minutes of these meetings were used to collect useful data of the AR process. For convenience, only participants that are resident in Kano were invited. The minimum participants considered were 10 mothers and 10 fathers.

3.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data, I followed the suggestion by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10), that there should be three elements in analyzing qualitative data, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To make sense of the series of questionnaires and formal meetings, a detailed description was done with respect to the issues of the case and the process of AR to identify the challenges faced by the school (the organization) in addressing parental involvement. Part of the analysis process is data reduction, which according to Huberman and Miles (1998) 'refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the "raw" data that appear in written-up field notes', the aim of which is to ensure that the data could be managed and that meaningful conclusions can be reached. As stated previously, the purpose of the PTG meetings was to engender dialogue between teachers and parents in order to elicit their response in terms of the objectives of the study. The proceedings of the PTG meetings were tape-recorded, and transcribed for the research data. A number was given to each of the participants. For example number *PTG 1* represents the transcription of the first participant, *PTG 2* the second participant and so on.

As stated earlier, the teachers' questionnaire (TQ) was made up of open-ended questions. A number was given to each of the teachers. For example, number *TQ 1* represents the data from the first teacher, *TQ 2* the second teacher and so on. These numbers (from the PTGs and TQ) will

be used in the results presentation section of the thesis. In summary, qualitative analysis will be used on the interview data from the PTG meetings, as well as the open-ended questions in the TQ.

3.6 Ensuring the Validity and Trustworthiness of this study

Validity refers to the degree to which the study, the data collection tools, and the interpretation of data correctly embody the issue being investigated. In qualitative investigations, validity deals with the extent to which data reflect participants' views of the issue being studied. This definition takes into account the essentially subjective nature of qualitative studies which focus on the perspectives of participants. Due to the kind of data, the term trustworthiness is often preferred to describe the kind of data used in qualitative analysis. In qualitative studies, the most common methods to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative action research studies are triangulation, disciplined subjectivity, thick description, member checking, peer review, and data audit.

Triangulation is the practice of using many methods to obtain varied perspectives, and thus reliance is on more than one source of data. The use of interviews and surveys, for example would enable a researcher to triangulate the information gathered and thus establish the trustworthiness of interpretations. In this study, I used two sources of data (PTG meetings and questionnaire) and the data from these two sources were triangulated to answer the research questions. *Disciplined subjectivity* relates to the need for researchers to carefully monitor their biases. Thus, trustworthiness in a study requires continuing self-reflection with regard to the setting, participants, and the topic being investigated as the researcher is involved in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. To achieve this in the study, I was conscious from the onset of my dual role, namely that of a researcher and Proprietor; the teachers were

involved in an anonymous survey and no consent form was required to be completed by them. In addition, the PTG meetings were not conducted as a research process in my researcher role, but were called in my leadership role of the school. It has been remarked in the AR literature that the positioning of the researcher is important and that there can be conflicts arising from the dual role (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014; Zuber-Skerritt and Fletcher, 2007; Torbert and associates, 2004; Roth, Sandberg and Svensson, 2004; Coghlan, 2006). How the issues arising from my role as an insider action researcher (including the dual role problem) and how they were addressed in the study are discussed in sections 3.7.

Thick description refers to the presentation of a detailed account of the context of the research and perspectives of participants in their own words. This allows readers or the audience to enter into the world of the participants and to be able to sense their experiences. Detailed account of the participants' perspectives will make the audience better understand how data has been interpreted by the researcher, and this can enrich the trustworthiness of the study. To achieve this in the study, I have provided the views and perceptions of parents and teachers in their own words. Where they have been paraphrased, there is no loss of meanings. *Member checking* is done to ensure that the perspectives of participants are presented accurately and honestly. This was achieved in the study as I shared the interview and observation transcripts with parents and teachers, in addition to discussing my interpretation of findings with them. *Peer review* provides one with some sort of extra "set of eyes" which assists one to determine the credibility of the interpretation and the accuracy of the research findings. To achieve this in the study, I recruited two colleagues, who were participants in the PTG, to review the data generated and my interpretation, after which I enriched the study with the constructive feedback received. *Data audit* is referred to as the process that records and lists the raw data used in a study, which

allows readers or the audience to evaluate the extent to which the researcher's interpretations and conclusions reflect the information gathered. To achieve this in the study, I carefully documented and kept the notes transcribed from the PTGs, original documents such as letter granting permission and participant information sheet.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

For action research within educational and other organizations, the positioning of the researcher is important. Johnson and Duberley (2000) have stressed that in order to ensure academic rigour, the researcher has to ensure the objectivity between himself and the subject researched. However, the relationship between the researcher and the subject researched varies and this depends on the ontological and epistemological assumptions adopted in the study. Given the collaborative nature of action research, the researcher is usually part of the organization (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014; Zuber-Skerritt and Fletcher, 2007), a situation that brings some difficulties with regard to the relationship between the researcher and the organization, in addition to the research results. Three main issues or challenges are emphasized by Coghlan (2006), when the manager of an organization conducts action research within their own organization. There are preunderstanding, role duality and organizational politics.

According to Gummesson (2000, p.57), 'preunderstanding refers to such things as people's knowledge, insights and experience before they engage in a research programme'. The major problem of the manager who undertakes an insider action research is that in undertaking the research, they may not inquire as much as if they were outsiders or ignorant of the condition, and are likely to assume too much, and thus affect the amount of the data that can be obtained in

the process, due to cross departmental, functional or hierarchical boundaries. To address the challenge of preunderstanding of one's own organization, Argyris et al. (1985) and Torbert and associates (2004) are of the view that what is required are rigorous introspection and reflection on experience. This is done in order to subject underlying assumptions and unreflected action to continuous testing. Preunderstanding was considered in this study because I have worked with many of the teachers who were required to get a better understanding of the problem of low parental involvement and the organizational challenges faced by the school in an attempt to address and manage it. During the PTGs meetings, I was very conscious of the fact that my views could influence the kind of responses they would have. Thus, to mitigate the risk of influencing the discussants by asking questions or stating personal views, I avoided getting into any discussion, but merely posed the questions. Moreover, discussions in the PTGs meetings were recorded and transcribed, as a means of minimising the risk of taking notes based on my personal interpretations or bias.

Roth, Sandberg and Svensson (2004) argued that when managers combine their normal organizational membership role with the research enterprise, it can be a difficult, awkward position and confusing for them. This can result in role conflict and they can be caught between loyalty tugs, behavioural claims and identification problems. In the light of this, such researchers need to be able to manage role duality and organizational politics. Importantly Coghlan (2006) is of the view that the most important issue for manager action researchers in light of the duality problem and especially in the context of their progress in the organization is managing organizational politics. This is critical, given that when they involve in the two roles, it can affect their relationships with fellow organizational members. Coghlan (2007) has remarked that role duality may occur in the informal roles of collegueship or friendship and that role duality has to

be addressed, even if it does not play an important role in an investigation. The fact that the PTG meetings were conducted as the usual PTA meetings, guaranteed that the views of the teachers were not influenced by my role as the Director/CEO of the school. Nevertheless, role duality is not limited to a relationship between a manager and his subordinates within the formal boundaries of an organization. Role duality may also occur in the informal roles of collegueship or friendship, entailing that it also has to be considered when research involves personal contacts or organizational stakeholders.

Coghlan (2007) argued that undertaking an action research project in one's own organization is political, because it examines everything, stresses listening, emphasizes questioning, fosters courage, incites action, aids reflection and approves of democratic participation, any or all of which may threaten existing organizational norms. Therefore, in deciding to engage in insider action research, political astuteness is needed by the manager who is expected to have requisite strategies and tactics, including a reflective self-critical perspective on how they are used (Buchanan and Badham, 1999). In the study, I used performing and backstaging as activities to manage the political role in line with the recommendation by Buchanan and Badham (1999). My performing activities were carried out by my role as active in the change process, building participation with teachers and parents for change in the college, and ensuring that the change agenda was pursued judiciously. My backstage activity involved getting the right personnel to manage the change needed, justifying the need to change, and putting in place some motivation to reduce resistance. Luckily for me, I did not experience much resistance in the organization where I worked partly because I was able to balance the need for the organization to change with my own credibility as an effective driver of change, by assessing the power and interests of teachers and parents in relation to aspects of the project.

To overcome the problem associated with managing organizational politics, I was able to achieve participation by convincing the parents and teachers that research and the results of research would be useful for their individual interests. For teachers, it was emphasized that results of the study would facilitate increased parent-teacher relationship and involvement. For parents, aside the advantages of improved involvement, it was understood that the ultimate beneficiaries would be their children and wards. Thus, the relevance of the research outcomes was used to overcome the potential challenge associated with managing organizational politics in the course of conducting the research.

However, the point was made that it was a purely voluntary exercise and that no parent was under any compulsion to be involved. Thus their willingness to be part of the process leading to change was borne out by the imperative of being seen as part of an evolving success story to which they owed some obligation to contribute to the improvement of the school's progress, and by extension the life of the children. In the light of this, their being 'convinced' was borne out of the key issues in our discussion and which they expressed and had nothing to do with any concerted effort on my part to ensure that they participated. To this end, it was a voluntary participation on their part, which precluded me from facing the ethical dilemma of prevailing on them to take part.

Overall, research ethics is the principle that guides the conduct of research in an appropriate and acceptable manner (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). Ethical considerations are important and imperative to all research processes particularly those that involve human subjects, the objective of which is to ensure the safety of participants in the research (Stringer, 2007). Issues that are of particular interest and scrutiny are those that border on risk of physical or psychological harm, privacy of participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of data and

clear information about the context of the research as well as gaining express consent for participation. There is also the issue of transparency and credibility of the research as part of ethical consideration of a research.

According to Bassey (1995, p.15), there are three ethical values that should be emphasized in a research. These are *respect for the person; respect for the truth; and respect for democratic values*. In keeping with this requirement and prior to commencing this study, ethical approval was obtained from the International Online Research Ethics Committee (IOREC) of the University of Liverpool Online program. Shaw (2008) is of the view that qualitative research presents particular ethical questions. Very important is the question of power. This is particularly serious given that compared to their participants, qualitative researchers may be more economically and socially privileged, a situation that may lead to the exploitation of participants' experiences for the professional advancement of researchers. Ethical issues that were addressed before the approval were given border on the following:

3.7.1 The Fear of Risk of Coercion of Participants

The participants in the study would have been my current students, their parents, and teachers. Involving participants that are currently under my sphere of influence would have created ethical dilemma of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. To avoid this, only parents of alumni students were invited to volunteer for participation in this study. In addition, care was taken to exclude parents whose children are currently studying in the school.

The teachers were involved in a survey, which was also anonymous. Privacy and confidentiality was assured, as no consent form was required to be completed by them. As earlier mentioned, the PTG meetings were not conducted as a research process in my researcher role,

but were called in my leadership role of the school. The primary purpose of these meetings was to seek ways to improve the existing parental involvement practice in the school. It also served as data collection and secondary analysis for the doctoral project.

3.7.2 Vulnerability of Persons

I was not exposed to this kind of risk, as all parents and teachers who participated in the study were over 21 years old and capable of making independent informed decisions on issues.

3.7.3 Risks and Benefits of the Study

The need for harmonizing and evaluating benefits and risks of the study were addressed in the Participants Information Sheets (PIS) (see Appendix B), which were sent to the participating teachers in the surveys. Importantly, the PIS for the parents did not present the PTG meetings as research procedure since such meetings were designed primarily to enable dialogue between the teachers and parents. One of the requirements in the application for ethical approval was the precaution to be taken to minimize potential adverse effects or hazards arising from the research. In the course of this research, I encountered this ethical dilemma with regard to considering and pursuing the aspect of community collaboration in parental involvement. The prevailing cultural attitude, the general insecurity occasioned by the prevailing Boko Haram insurgency and the like would have impeded the research process.

3.7.4 Steps taken to address the potential risks in the study

I took certain steps to address the potential risks in the study. I discussed the purpose of this research and the potential risks with the participants. Importantly, it was stressed that any participant could withdraw at any time during the course of the research if they were no longer

inclined to participate. To further ensure the security of both the researcher and the participants, an informed consent form was required to be signed by the participants

To ensure that no participant's privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were breached, I discussed it with all the potential participants before I eventually collected the data. I promised to keep all that was discussed strictly confidential. I also declared that the findings would be in the form of a research report which would be made available to them on request. To further ensure anonymity, I informed that their names would be explicit in the report. Instead, what would be used in the report were numbers (codes), which would make it impossible for members of the public to identify them. All of this information (i.e. on protection of the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity) were included in the informed consent form.

As a reasonable step towards ensuring the safety and protection of all participants from any physical, mental or emotional distress, what I did was to conduct debriefing interviews immediately after a meeting session, in order to find out if participants was adversely affected by any of the issues discussed in the meeting and to forestall the implications of researching sensitive issues capable of posing risks for researchers (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). To avoid deliberate misrepresentation of facts, as this could make a participant believe what is not true, and thereby violating the respect that they are entitled, I emphasized verbally what was to be discussed in all the meetings, in addition to a written agenda for every meeting. This was done to avoid potential long run undesirable consequences of deception. Finally, I sought confirmation from the respondents in order to strengthen the validity of the findings, as feedback from participants is considered very important in the research process (Burton and Bartlett, 2009)

3.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter deals with the methodology used in the thesis. The qualitative AR design and the rationale for choosing it were discussed. The qualitative method as part of action research was highlighted. For epistemological and ontological issues, the study is rooted in the constructivist paradigm, which is consistent with the qualitative design.

Importantly, it was demonstrated that the analytical tool of AR very neatly fits into the theoretical framework of the thesis, i.e. the 3-step model of planned approach to organizational change provided by Lewin (1947a), comprising (1) Unfreezing; (2) Moving; and (3) Refreezing; which are important to organizational change. Thus AR as a qualitative research method is able to provide answers to the research questions. A discussion of how I ensured the validity and trustworthiness of this study was provided. The ethical considerations relating to the study, the steps taken to address the potential risks, and how I addressed the challenges of my role as an insider in the action research were also discussed. Due to the importance of AR as a methodology in the study, I next provide in detail the various phases of the AR cycle and how it was applied to the aim of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AR PROCESS IN ACTION

4.1 Introduction

In the methodology section of this thesis, it was indicated that the qualitative approach with justification was considered suitable for the study. A key element of the qualitative component of the methods is the AR, which was extensively described. In this chapter, I present the various phases of the AR cycle and how it was applied to the aim of the study, namely to identify and effectively manage the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school.

The following are the research questions posed, for which answers are sought:

- (iv) What are the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school?
- (v) What changes can be initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school?
- (vi) What framework can be provided for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school?

The following is a summary of the approach used in the chapter:

- The teachers' survey was used as initial problem identification and reflection.
- The PTGs were used to obtain the perspectives of parents and teachers on the various aspects of the school ('defreezing' in the theoretical framework and 'Planning' in AR cycle 1; and from whose responses, the areas that management should intervene are

identified, as well as the type of change strategy required, with regard to parental involvement ('moving' in the theoretical framework, 'acting' and 'observing' in AR cycles 2 and 3). These help answer research questions 1 and 2.

- Information collected from earlier phases were then used to ascertain whether or not the intervention is successful (to implement other strategies if the area of concern was not successful) and through these provide a framework to enhance and sustain parents-teachers involvement ('refreezing' in the theoretical framework, 'Reflecting' in AR cycle 4). This helps answer research question 3.

From the foregoing, the theoretical framework is linked to the AR (the methodology) and the research questions.

4.1.1 Initial identification of problem

In the study, the intention was to address the issue of organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in Yandutse College. As outlined earlier, a previous investigation showed that parental involvement was low in the College and that this might be due to the way the school managed the phenomenon, the implication of which is that a change in the way the management conducted its affairs was imperative. This implies organizational change. Therefore, the initial problem concerned the question of how organizations address requirements for change and which tools (ways) are effective to support this process. For this reason, taking action on the problem is not only about having knowledge on the process of managing change, but also about the standards that make successful school (educational) organizations with respect

to parental involvement. Thus, in the initial problem identification, a major concern was how the process would deliver insights on the criteria that would make for effective management.

4.1.2 Literature review and initial reflection

After defining the initial problem, the next thing was to investigate its relevance for the school or the wider academic community, with focus on secondary schools. I therefore had initial reflection sessions with some teachers in the College and the Directors/CEOs of other private schools in Kano. The latter was made easy due to the network provided by the Association of Private School Practitioners. All the teachers and my peers in other private schools considered the idea as very relevant, thereby establishing the relevance of the problem. Thereafter, the existing literature was reviewed and it revealed the current state of managing parental involvement in the school, identification of organizational challenges, including the organizational/management aspects of parental involvement. Importantly, it demonstrated that leadership is required in identifying organizational challenges and effectively managing them, while indicating that effective management is one that recognises the different approaches available and can adapt them to particular circumstances. It also provided insights into identifying organizational challenges in the context of change management, the criteria (factors) for successful organizational change, and indicated that a key element in identifying organizational challenges is the role of the change agent. As such, the literature demonstrates that identifying organizational challenges in improving parental involvement and providing an effective management to deal with them is justified.

I next present the various phases of the AR cycle and how they were applied in the study.

4.2 Action research cycle one: Planning

As mentioned earlier, planning involves identifying an area of concern that needs to be addressed. It also involves the identification of possible interventions that could be used to bring about changes or improvements related to the area of interest. The first action research cycle was designed, on the basis of both the problem and the literature review. In order to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement (addressing research question 1), and to initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school (addressing research question 2), an appropriate method had to be determined. The PTGs and TQ were identified as an appropriate method. It needs to be noted that the TQ are complementary to the PTGs. As such details of the PTGs (in terms of the AR cycle) are discussed in this chapter.

The PTG meetings were fashioned along the line of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. Three meetings, which were to be within two weeks interval, were arranged. The meetings were scheduled for 3rd, 10th and 17th of October 2015. However even before the first day, it was clear that the attendance was going to be very low. Only two follow-up acceptances were received from the parents prior to the first meeting. It dawned on me that I had to strategize to get the buy-in again of these parents who now considered they had no more ties with the school to warrant attendance of any parents/teachers meeting at Yandutse College. A couple of phone calls to as many parents explaining the benefits of the project paid off and a reasonable number of parents promised to attend. To ensure maximum participation I decided to delay the meetings for another two months. This was to give enough time to encourage buy-in and eventually, the first meeting was called for 5th of December 2015. For six days prior to the meeting, I used text messages and phone calls to remind the invitees about the meeting. On the

5th December 2015, the meeting was fixed for 11am at the Conference hall of the College. The atmosphere was palpable and I was worried if the invitees would respond this time? What if the turn up is low? How do I handle the issue of lateness? Will I be able to collect valuable data? Questions and questions ran through my mind until the appointed time. A mother was the first to arrive well before 11am and that gave so much hope. Minutes rolled by, and then at around 12noon two people strolled in. By this time all the teachers were seated and I could hear hushed discussions about this meeting becoming a flop again. However, by 12.30pm, I had 19 participants seated in the hall. These were 10 teachers (5 males and 5 female teachers), 5 mothers and 4 fathers. I decided at that point to start the meeting. About 40 minutes after the commencement of the meeting, another father strolled in to make a total of 20 participants.

The meeting kicked off with introduction of the participants after which I gave a brief background of the meeting. I then stressed the need for us to discuss the perspectives of parents and teachers on the school generally, with particular focus on parental involvement. The aim was to help the school management better improve parental involvement through a planned organizational change. A good number of the parents raised the issue of exclusion of parents that still had children studying in the school. I was able to steer us away from this argument, explaining that at this point views of everyone on parental involvement would be valued, particularly the voices of parents that could speak even more freely about any negative or positive experiences and the challenges that they might have encountered in engagement in their children's school lives. I explained that the PTG meeting was going to follow a cycle of AR phases. I gave a brief overview of the AR phases and I explained that after these phases, the framework for enhancing and effectively managing parent-teachers involvement would be designed and it will be presented to the management of the school and the parent/teacher

association for ratification before its implementation in the school. The participants welcomed the whole arrangement and it generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm. I also informed the participants that the meeting would be audio-taped and that the tape would be destroyed after it would have been transcribed. I also stressed that no names of any of the participants would be mentioned in any of the reports/minutes. This, I explained, was to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Each session of the PTG meetings spanned 120 minutes. The sessions for each of the groups were to be held at 2 weeks interval, but ended up being held within convenient days, which was mutually agreed by the participants at the first meeting of the groups. At the first PTG meeting, the participants generally reflected on parental involvement characteristics and activities in Yandutse College so as to identify their experiences and also to identify challenges experienced by the school management in their effort to improve parental involvement in the school. At the second meeting, the participants, having defined the problem, collaborated in dialogue to plan and develop possible actions that could lead to change in practice. The third meeting involved dialogues on how to develop action plan necessary for effecting change. They also evaluated the general outcome of the PTG process and reflected on the likely consequences of the prescribed action plans. The proceedings of the PTG meetings were audio recorded, and transcribed for the research data. To ensure anonymity, names of participants were coded and not directly mentioned in the transcript document. Similarly, the tapes were destroyed immediately after they were transcribed. Their identity in the data was protected in my feedback to the participants and in the research reports (see section 3.7 of chapter 3). The inquiry was such that each phase was evaluated at the next to build on it for the next focus. The participants were

briefed on the outcome of the exercise after the third session of the PTG meeting verbally in the session and in a written report which was sent to participants on request.

The actual planning phase started during the first meeting held on 5th December 2015. The questions that had bothered my thoughts for a long time before I initiated this study had been:

- (i) What would I want to learn about organizational challenges in improving parental involvement from the perspectives of parents and teachers on the various aspects of the school?
- (ii) Based on the responses of parents and teachers, in what areas should there be intervention and what is the type of change strategy required, in order to address the challenge of involvement and hence enhance and sustain parent-teacher involvement in the school?

In order to answer these questions, I generated the context of the study, which is: “Initiate changes and develop effective ways of managing the challenges of parental involvement in the school in order to promote and sustain a higher level of teacher-parental involvement practices”. The AR questions considered in the course of this PTG meeting were based on the context of the study and are related to participants’ best parental involvement experiences, values and wishes, including areas in which they felt that the school management was deficient in improving involvement. The participants discussed and built an understanding of the organizational and parental challenges with regard to parental involvement in Yandutse College, based on their best experiences of parental involvement in the school, but not oblivious of potential barriers. The teachers were essentially concerned with identifying the challenges faced by the school in managing issues of parental involvement as well as the effective ways of managing the identified

challenges of parental involvement. Parents on the other hand were chiefly enthused about the challenges they faced in their involvement in the education of their children. Thus the PTGs were instrumental in dealing with the twin problems of identifying the organizational as well as parental challenges relating to parental involvement.

Parents were encouraged to recall instances when they felt most involved and excited in their children's education and what made it such an exciting experience, and on the part of the teacher, they were encouraged to recall the challenges encountered by the school management in the process. They deliberated on values, such as what they value deeply as a parent or as a teacher, the family, the Yandutse College management activities and the impact on parental involvement practices in the school. They were asked to relive their experiences by telling their stories about what excited them to be parents or teachers in Yandutse College, and challenges they have to grapple with in engaging in their children's school lives. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2001, p.15), the three main elements of AR are 'a good story, rigorous reflection and an extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory from reflection on the story.' Considering the outcome of their deliberations, the participants brainstormed on how and what they wish for as best parental involvement practices (both parents and teachers were involved in this) that could be achieved in Yandutse College. On the part of the teachers, they brainstormed on what the organizational challenges were with respect to parental involvement. Information derived from data in this phase of the AR led to the next stage (acting) of the AR process. At the end of this first meeting, the participants agreed and the next meeting day was fixed for 19th December 2015.

As earlier mentioned, the planning stage in the AR cycle also deals with identifying possible interventions that could be used to bring about changes or improvements related to the

area of interest. The Second Meeting (19th December 2015) provided the platform for this aspect of the AR cycle. The meeting started at 12noon after another frustrating long wait for the arrival of participants. Essentially, it was styled the ‘Think’ stage, and was expected to provide the opportunity for participants to create shared images for a preferred future for Yandutse College, based on what was identified during the earlier meeting. The participants were encouraged to view our actions as capable of collectively helping us to form a vision related to what we are inquiring about and to provide various means of intervention by the school management. The participants believed that having a shared vision of a desired future situation helps to reach that desired positive end.

From the discussion, I was able to determine:

- Ideas that could help the school know the areas of intervention
- How the ideas that emerged from the expressed visions underscore existing strengths
- Whether the areas of intervention were realistic and how achievable they were
- Whether the change envisaged depend on outsiders’ input

The participants were then encouraged to write (this was optional and none of the participants choose this) or narrate a story that vividly describes when they perceive the group was at its best in terms of parental involvement. They were also to imagine being several years in the future after the group must have achieved most of its dreams and to write or tell the story about what they consider were the factors that contributed to making the group perform so well as to result in Yandutse College becoming a better and effectively managed place and a model of improved parental involvement activities. The story should also capture their vision of

sustainability and maintenance of high involvement values by the teachers and parents. From the data collected, an attempt was made to explore the group at its future best, connect the group's resources and dreams and to determine our readiness to move on to designing a future that will achieve them. The meeting ended joyfully and the next meeting was fixed for 16th January 2016 in consideration of the festive season.

The third and final PTG meeting held on 16th January 2016. The meeting started late as usual and this time there were fewer participants in attendance but the number eventually grew to our usual 20 participants. We reviewed the outcome of our think phase and the participants were asked to envision the future state of parental involvement in the school, in which issues of parental involvement are effectively managed, while appreciating an ideal school climate that we can propose in this act stage. During this stage, the group was encouraged to:

- Work with the issues from their visions to suggest actions and needed systems and processes that will help lead to the desired future.
- Review data generated during the 'think' stage, plan how we can begin to make changes in management needed to help us realize our dreams of an effective and improved school management, including involvement of teachers and parents in the students' educational lives.

Accomplishing the foregoing objectives, one of the first things I did was to sort out strategies suggested into short-range, medium-range, and long-range goals and objectives. These were collated in my journal. Based on these, I drew conclusions, designed and consolidated our thinking into a unified monitoring plan of the proposed actions. The meeting ended on a very encouraging note. Parents were happy to have participated and hoped that their contribution

would go a long way to improving the parental involvement practices not only in our school but also in all the schools in our community. The teachers were enthusiastic about their participation in identifying the organizational challenges faced in improving parental involvement as well as the mechanisms for improved and effective management to deal with the identified challenges. The data collected were rich enough for the research to proceed to the next stage in the study, namely data analysis.

4.3 Action research cycle two: Acting

The second stage in the AR cycle (acting), involves implementing the set of interventions. In this study, this means identifying the effective ways of managing the challenges of parental involvement in the school, and the actual management of the implemented intervention (the second objective). The kind of intervention in Yandutse College was based on the organizational challenges identified, with a view to changing the way the school hitherto managed specific areas of parental involvement. Thus a change process was initiated in order to deal with the organizational challenges, and thus to bring about improved parental involvement. The specific areas of organizational challenges in improving parental involvement are presented and discussed in chapter five. The changes that were made in the organization (Yandutse College) are in line with the recommendations by Branch (2002) on how to achieve Lewin's model of organizational change, namely: (1) changing the individual workers in the organization; (2) changing the various structures and systems of the organization; and (3) changing the organizational climate or interpersonal style. This can be said to be in line also with Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) that changes should be made across three categories: (i) Language and discourse (i.e. what is said in the situation); (ii) Activities and practices (i.e. what is done in the

situation); and (iii) Social relationships and organization (i.e. who does and says what to whom). The changes implemented relate to the timing of PTA meetings, response by parents to invitations, relationship between parents and teachers, mechanisms for communicating with stakeholders, decision roles for parents, and diversity among parents and teachers. Details of the organizational changes that were made in order to address the issue of parental involvement are presented in the next chapter.

4.4 Action research cycle three: Observing

The third stage (observing) entails evaluating the implemented strategies which in the study deals with monitoring the management strategies deployed. In line with identified organizational challenges, observations were made across a wide range of organizational activities relating to parent-teacher involvement including, timing of PTA meetings, response to invitations, relationship between parents and teachers, communicating with stakeholders, decision roles for parents, and diversity among parents and teachers.

‘Observing’ took place for a period of one year in the first instance. This was to assess whether the type of management practice in place after the intervention was sufficient to deal with the original problem, and if not, the need for a revised plan in line with the AR cycle. The observation carried out in the one year yielded valuable results. It was found that virtually all the areas that needed change and for which change had been initiated had been substantially successful, although there was room for continuous improvement. For this reason, the type of research that was originally intended, namely bringing about an effective management capable of improving parental involvement in a school, should not be pursued further, as the desired impact had been achieved, not without challenges though, and what however still became desirable is to

improve on the successes recorded and to sustain them. Results of the observations made are presented in chapter five and further discussed in chapter six.

4.5 Action research cycle four: Reflecting

In this AR cycle (reflecting), information is collected to ascertain whether or not the intervention is successful and to implement other strategies if the area of concern has not been improved. In this study, this entails providing a framework to enhance and sustain parents-teachers involvement (the third objective).

4.5.1 Reflections on action research cycle one

The PTGs conducted in cycle one of the AR support the conclusions of the literature on organizational challenges in the context of parental involvement. In addition, they support the view that in defining what the organizational challenge is, the task of the manager involves analysis of the current state of affairs, the culture and performance of the organization, clarification of the vision, Identification of relevant stakeholders; and clarification of expected behaviours and the development of an action plan. It also supports the literature which considers that change management strategies must be put in place if change should be achieved. In line with the AR principles, the results of action research cycle one were considered on the basis of the problem addressed. This I did in collaboration with participants at the PTGs, leading to the establishment of a fixed learning set. Findings from the qualitative research in cycle one brought up valuable insights into the development of ideas that could help the organization know the areas of intervention. This is very important for schools thinking about whether the strategy developed is a suitable one for them in an effort to address low parental involvement. Action research cycle one has delivered important insights into the process of how organizations

identify its challenges within the school context (research question 1) and what management tools are required to ensure that a planned change is successful (research question 2).

4.5.2 Reflections on action research cycles two and three

For AR cycles two and three, reflection took place during formal meetings and discussions with parents and teacher on how the change initiated address the organizational challenges and whether the results are useful for Yandutse College in improving parental involvement. The data collected in cycle one of the AR support the conclusions in the literature that there are factors necessary for a successful organizational change. It also lends credence to the evidence in the literature that effective parental involvement should be an integral part of school management, and that managing organizational challenges (in this context, parental involvement) involves the deployment of key management tools. It also highlighted the organizational/management aspects of parental involvement in the educational management literature.

The results and a discussion of the results are presented in chapters 5 and 6. Consequently, what is done here is a short reflection on cycle two of the AR. The method used was a suitable approach to apply for data collection. Utilising a focus-group and questionnaire has delivered valuable findings about how the organizational challenges identified in cycle one are used to implement changes to the organization. In addition, the action research project has generated context-specific findings and contributed to the current view on organizational challenges within the context of parental involvement, and which are relevant to this thesis.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The aim of the study was to identify and develop effective ways of managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in a private school in Kano, Nigeria. As part of the qualitative research design, the PTG meetings were used to generate data for the AR cycle. This chapter takes a close look at how the AR approach was applied. Thus, a cycle of four AR stages were discussed, namely Planning, Acting, Observing and Reflecting.

AR application to eliciting responses from parents and teachers in the PTG meetings necessitated further exploration of the thesis aim. This phase of the research thus provided the leverage to further investigate organizational challenges that were identified and to implement a change strategy. To this end, results of the AR application are presented in the next chapter, in line with the qualitative methods earlier discussed in chapter three.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study that seeks to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement, initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges and consequently provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. The chapter is structured (see table 5.1) based on the initial literature review and relevance of issues resulting from the PTGs and TQ.

Table 5.1: Research questions and related chapters in result section

Research question	Relevant section
What are the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school?	Section 5.2
What changes can be initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school?	Section 5.3
What framework can be provided for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school?	Section 5.4

Section 5.2 is structured according to the challenges identified and which arose during the PTGs. This chapter answers research question number 1, which is about identifying the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school. It is linked to the theoretical framework (defreezing) and AR cycle one (planning).

Section 5.3 is mainly relevant for the underlying practical organizational challenges of Yandutse College and how to implement a change strategy in the organization (the school),

which is affected by low parental involvement. Here, I was mainly concerned with initiating changes to address the challenges identified, and to evaluate the implemented changes. Thus the areas in which intervention was needed are identified and the change strategies initiated are presented. This chapter answers research question number 2, which is about initiating changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school. It is linked to the theoretical framework (moving) and AR cycles two and three (acting and observing).

Section 5.4 deals with sustaining a framework for successful change, which in the context of this study means collecting information to ascertain whether or not the intervention is successful and if there is need to implement other strategies in light of the area of concern (parental involvement). If no further action was required, it would be desirable to prevent the organization from sliding back into the situation before the implemented changes. The chapter therefore answers research question number 3, which is about providing a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school and is linked to the theoretical framework (refreezing) and AR cycle four (reflecting). How the themes (which structure this chapter) were generated is presented and described in table 5.2. Because qualitative analysis guidelines are not rules, I was flexible when fitting the research questions and data, in line with the suggestion by Patton (1990).

In presenting the responses from the respondents, I noticed that some of the quotations are rather long. To help the reader know the key points to take from each quote, I have italicized the important points. Moreover, as earlier mentioned (c.f. section 3.6) there was need to ensure validity and trustworthiness (*thick description*) by presenting detailed account of the research context and perspectives of participants in their own words.

Table 5.2: How themes were generated for the Study

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising myself with the data	Transcribing the PTG data and reading and re-reading the TQ data. My ideas, including identification of possible patterns were shaped as I read through. Here also, I took notes of initial ideas. By transcribing, I was able to get familiarised with the data (Riessman, 1993) and as an interpretative act, meanings are created, rather than being just a mechanical one where spoken sounds are put on paper (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999).
2. Generating initial codes	I coded interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set (PTG and TQ), and collated data found relevant to each code. I approached the data with specific questions in mind that I wanted to code around. However, full and equal attention was given to each data item, while ensuring that all actual data extracts were coded when working systematically through the entire data set. I coded manually by initially identify the codes, and then matching them up with data extracts that demonstrate that code. Thus in this phase, I organised my data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). Importantly, I also coded accounts which depart from the central story in the analysis.
3. Searching for the themes	I collated the codes into potential themes and gathered all data relevant to each potential theme, recognising that here is where the interpretative analysis of the data occurs, and in relation to making arguments about the phenomenon being investigated (Boyatzis, 1998). I considered how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme, using tables. I also thought about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes, bearing in mind that some initial codes may go on to form main themes, form sub-themes or discarded. For some set of codes that do not appear to fit into the main themes, I created a code temporarily (I called it sundry) to accommodate them.
4. Reviewing the themes	I generated a 'thematic map' of the analysis, guided by the study questions and after checking that the themes work with regard to the entire data set and coded extracts. In this phase, I reviewed and refined the themes at two levels. The first involves reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts by reading all the collated extracts for each theme, and considering whether they appear to form a coherent pattern.

	<p>Satisfied that I had a candidate ‘thematic map’, I next moved to the second level by reviewing and refining the themes in relation to the entire data set. Here I considered both the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, as well as whether my candidate thematic map precisely reflected the meanings indicated in the entire data set based on the theoretical and analytic approach used in the study. When I re-read the entire data, I found that some of the themes did not work in relation to the data set. Therefore I coded additional data within themes which I missed in earlier coding stages, since re-coding from the data set is an on-going organic process. When I was satisfied that I could not go any further and that my refinements could not add anything significant, I stopped. At the end of this phase, I had a good idea of what the different themes were, how they fit together, and what they tell about the data generally.</p>
5. Defining and naming themes	<p>In the on-going analysis, I improve the specifics of each theme, while generating clearly defined names for each theme. Here I defined and further refined the themes to be presented for analysis by identifying the core of what each theme was about and determining what aspect of the data captured each theme.</p>
6. Writing the report	<p>Here, I have selected vivid, compelling extracts which are analysed in this chapter, with deference to the research question and literature.</p>

5.2 Organizational Challenges in improving Parental Involvement

5.2.1 The timing of PTA meetings

PTA meetings are viewed in the literature as one avenue through which parental involvement can be expressed and enhanced. However, the timing of the meeting was identified as very important towards making the basis for the meeting realizable and particularly for ensuring high response rate by parents. The timing of the PTA meetings by the school was identified as a key organizational challenge.

As expressed by one of the participants:

'The timing of PTA meeting usually coincides with some of my activities as a parent. Because of the academic calendar of schools, I find myself having to decide which of the PTA meetings to attend, as I have my children in different schools. Curiously enough, I often receive invitations for the meetings at the same time, as though there were a conspiracy, so to speak, by schools to hold PTA meetings concurrently.' (PTG 3)

Another participant (a teacher) was of the view that it was conventional to hold PTA meetings by schools towards the end of a term, since parents were already abreast with the pattern and that no complaints had yet got to the school about the timing. The finding that participation of parents in PTA meetings might have something to do with the timing of the meetings was held was quite revealing.

Eight out of the ten parents agreed that the nature of family structure was probably responsible for the low turnout of parents in PTA meetings. One of the parents expressed his feelings this way:

'You know the nature of households in this part of the country. Many of us are polygamous, and have many children. Mothers are usually protective of their children and are in some sort of covert competition with other wives in the house. I have noticed that my wives would prefer to have their children in a school different from the one that the other wife's children attend. Due to the common academic calendar, I find that I have to struggle real hard to meet up with the obligations of PTA meetings called by the different schools that my children attend. There was a time I had to attend all three PTA meetings on the same day. I cannot say I had contributed anything meaningful to any of them, as all I needed

to do was simply to be seen to respond to the invitations and nothing more.’ (PTG 6)

5.2.2 Getting parents to respond to invitations

One area that was identified as challenging to the organization (school) was getting parents to respond to invitation by the school. Majority of the parents (nine out of ten) agreed that quick response to invitation by the school was not particularly their strong point. One parent expressed his views in the following way:

‘I must say that I am very slow to responding to the school’s invitation, unless it has to do with a very urgent need such as when I receive a call that my child is ill or has encountered some mishap. There is no doubt that personally I have to improve on this, although I am not in a position to say that it applies to all parents. In any case, I want to believe that the school is not helping matters even in this regard. *I recall having to receive notices of PTA meetings a day or two before the event. Due to pressure of work and activities competing for one’s time, I even sometime forget altogether.* If there is a mechanism to remind parents says on a continuous basis few days to the event, perhaps this will help.’ (PTG 9)

In an attempt to find out the possible causes of the identified lukewarm attitude by parents to school invitation, different reasons were found. Seven of the teachers said that many parents tend to show apathy towards the education of their children. The nature of such apathy ranges from not minding to bring their children to school punctually, not showing enough worry when children who are not able to pay their school fees on time are excluded from classroom participation until payment is made. This reason, according to the teachers was probably

responsible for the general low turnout in PTA meetings and fora where students' achievement were discussed, as well as parents not very enthusiastic about timely collection of their children's examination results at the end of the term.

Although five out of the ten parents viewed the reason given by the teachers for the slow response to invitations extended to parents by the school as plausible, the others differed in their opinion. Instead, they considered the pressure faced by parents in the home as responsible for the observed low parental involvement with respect to the response rate. Consequently, home pressure to meet basic needs was a dominant thread in the responses by parents. Six out of the ten participating parents complained of inadequate time to allocate between their children's academic activities and meeting the pressing needs of food, clothing and shelter, and hence pressure to meet basic needs posed a major challenge. One of the parents put it in this way:

'Things have become so difficult that sometimes, you wished you never had to give birth to the number of children you have. Things were not as bad as this in the olden days. Giving more attention to my children's educational activities means less time is devoted to look for means of livelihood. For some of us who have to do paid jobs, we have to wake up as early as 5 am, get the children ready for school and rush to work. This is stressful and has had its toll on how much attention I have been able to give to my children in the recent years.' (PTG 6)

Parents expressed the view that teachers did not sufficiently appreciate the difficulty involved in having to allocate their time between work and home, which affects the time they give to the educational activities of their children. Closely linked to the issue of home pressure

conflict is the time constraint that makes it difficult for parents to have more involvement in school. One of the parents explained that:

‘Sometimes, the school schedule conflicts with that of parents who have to discharge official assignments. Even when we intend to honour invitations, official schedules may make it impossible to do so.’ (PTG 10)

Majority of the teachers (eight out of ten) appreciated the fact that the pressure of work experienced by parents may be a major challenge militating against parental involvement with respect to the rate at which parents responded to invitations. Three of the teachers said on several occasions, some parents have had to come to them to explain why they could not meet certain obligations required of them by the school. A teacher expressed his feeling this way:

‘Parents are increasingly put under pressure. We all know the difficulty of the economy, which has tended to worsen in the last few years. The downward trend in the economy in the country is a case in point. I noticed that even those parents who used to pay the fees of their children as soon as the school resumes no longer do so, not to talk about those who are not financially buoyant. For parents who have to get by and provide for their family, it is understandable that less and less attention is given to their children’s educational activities.’ (PTG 11)

5.2.3 Improving the relationship between parents and teachers

Another organizational challenge identified in improving parental involvement in the school was how to improve the relationship between parents and teachers. The literature is explicit about the imperative of good parent-teacher relationship. Consequently, it was the

general view that promoting parental involvement is partly anchored on striking the right synergy between teachers and parents. Less than half of the participating teachers (twelve out of twenty seven) reported that they had a cordial relationship with parents. While six of the teachers said they had not interacted with parents, nine of them considered many parents difficult to handle, while eight of the teachers reported that the relationship between teachers and parents was not cordial.

The parents also had their concerns with respect to their relationship with teachers. One of them was of the view that:

‘My personal experience with the teachers in this college cannot be said to be cordial. It appears to me that the teachers think parents are less important when it comes to school affairs. Some of them are always in a hurry when addressing us. Except to report cases of misbehavior of our children and wards, they do not engage parents on the core areas of the students’ academic performance. I would expect to have a personal feedback from the teachers on the academic performance of my child. I know the report sheets or cards are delivered at the end of a term, but this is not enough. That is why I am hardly motivated to attend some of the meetings called by the college, except it is absolutely necessary. We would expect the school management to do more in this area.’ (PTG 4)

5.2.4 Communicating with stakeholders

Effective communication by the school to all stakeholders is a critical factor towards improving parental involvement. Stakeholders in the context of the school include parents, teachers and the wider community. All the participating parents agreed that an effective communication between parents and teachers create the climate for maximum realization of

students' potential. At the moment, the main means of communication with parents are written letters and information passed by school to children to be conveyed to their parents. Majority of the parents (nine out of ten) expressed dissatisfaction with the method of communication from the school. One parent expressed his view in the following words:

‘While it is expedient that parents are communicated on time about school events, the method used is critical, in this age of information and communications technology. *For many of us who are always on the lookout to find ways of catering for their children's needs, it is important that fast means of reaching parents are used.* I do believe that there are several quick methods of getting information across to stakeholders these days. If the school can consider utilizing them, I am sure the problem with respect to communication will be completely resolved. The age of formal letter writing which is to be delivered by hand is fast becoming obsolete’ (PTG 9)

Many parents considered that teachers tended not to care about how effective communication can be vital to the school/teacher interface. Another parent expressed the sentiment thus:

‘It is not just about calling for parent-teachers association meetings alone that matters. *Parents' perception about how they are seen by teachers is as important as the physical connection, which a formal setting provides.* I know of places where school proprietors go as much as visiting homes of parents to see how parents are faring. This gives some sort of psychological boost to parents. In addition, it gives a good impression about the concern of school in the academic development of the child.’ (PTG 10)

Closely linked to the organizational challenge of using effective means of communicating with stakeholders is the problem of language used for communication. Part of the concerns was language barrier, as some parents (five out of ten) were of the opinion that a good number of them find it difficult to communicate their feelings in English instead of the predominant language of the community, which is Hausa. This makes the usual means of communication (using letters) from school to parents rather ineffective. One parent made the following comment:

'Many parents do not speak English, and do not bother to know what information relating to their children is sent by school. Even when they visit the school, they have to be helped to translate their feelings. In the absence of translators, it is often difficult to communicate with some of the teachers who do not speak Hausa, the dominant language in this part of the country. It would be desirable if the school can get the services of a translator for parents who are not literate. Or better still, it will be desirable that teachers in the school learn the local language to bridge the communication gap' (PTG 8).

Another parent put the situation quite differently thus:

'As an individual, I have often been frustrated by the attitude of many of the staff here. I think they mistake the ability to speak English as synonymous with low intelligence. This can be very frustrating. The important thing about communication is that both parties can understand what each other is saying. Merely thinking that someone who cannot speak English cannot contribute meaningfully to the progress of the school is to my mind, the worst form of

reasoning. This attitude by the staff of this school has to change. *There is nothing wrong with adopting an alternative language, say Hausa or Arabic in communicating with stakeholders.* This is not to say that English is not important, but we all need to understand that what is best for understanding is more important for communication.’ (PTG 5)

Many of the teachers (sixteen out of twenty) considered language barrier as a contributing factor to the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement, and this partly explained the nature of the communication experienced in the school. It was noted that some parents tended to avoid teachers who do not speak Hausa (the local language) when there were issues that needed to be brought to the attention of the school. A teacher expressed his frustration in the following manner:

‘When I was first employed, I knew that to get along with as many parents as possible, I needed to learn the Hausa language fast. I did not waste time in employing a private teacher to teach me the language. That initial investment really paid off. Those parents who would rather avoid me in the past began to come literally in droves and even helped to encourage me and engaged me in spoken Hausa. *It occurred to me that if all teachers could learn the local language, a major problem of communication would be solved.*’ (PTG 19)

5.2.5 Providing decision roles for parents

In the course of the PTGs, it was identified that parents do not have clear-cut roles assigned to them by the school. This tends to weaken the amount of input that they can make in the school’s operations. A parent expressed his view in the following words:

‘Often, I do not know what exactly is expected as my role as defined by the school. We need parental involvement to be well articulated and defined. As it is now, the school does not have a policy on parental involvement. I personally feel that what I would like to get involved in may not be in tandem with the expectations of the school.’ (PTG 2)

Some teachers (four out of ten) agreed with the participating parents that the school’s view of what should constitute decision roles for parents is not clear and well-articulated. Due to this, it is often found that parents’ efforts in the school lives of their children are not adequately recognized, and in some cases could appear to be in conflict with the goals of teachers. One of the participating teachers expressed the following feelings:

‘To be honest, I have often wondered what exactly the role of parents should be in specific contexts. If it has to do only with what goes on within the school, I think it is misplaced. Remember that the education of the child starts from the home and that the school complements what parents or guardians do at home. The current role assignment by the school for parents appears to be narrow and it needs to change if we as stakeholders must benefit from the parents-teachers synergy. The parents are quite correct to say they are often confused as to what specific role they must play, aside the conventional roles of making sure their children or ward come to school regularly, make prompt payment of school fees and the like. These roles need to be much more school-based and parents ought very much to be involved in the school context, say in being active members of governing boards or any similar arrangement to make their relevance much more felt.’ (PTG 14)

5.2.6 Diversity among parents and teachers

Majority of the participants agreed that a major constraint in the school is the problem of dealing with people from different backgrounds. The parents expressed concerns over the disagreements that often ended most of the earlier PTA meetings and in other fora organized by the school. One of the parents had this to say:

‘There is no doubt that the question of differences, be it ethnic, religious, social or even political, is at the heart at the problems of this school. I remember that in some previous meetings, disagreements often ensued about major matters. I am aware that due to the many backgrounds that we come from, this sort of differences should be expected. The major worry however, is that the school has not been able to deal with it. Most times, we just gloss over some of the disagreements and this would be the end of it. This has been discouraging to many parents, depending on how a particular issue was perceived.’ (PTG 8)

Agreeing with the above view, a participating mother expressed the challenge in another way:

‘We parents who have their children in this College often notice that some matters led to sharp arguments in the past, which often ended in disagreement. For example, I remember that one contentious issue in the past was related to what day to fix for a meeting. For instance, at one time, it was suggested that a meeting should be fixed on a Friday. Some parents were against it on the grounds that it infringed on their rights to worship. The same was true when Sunday was suggested, and some parents disagreed with it on the grounds that it was not in their interest to attend due to religious commitments. All of these things tend to undermine the progress of the school and particularly on parental

involvement, so that parents would tend to consider the agenda of a meeting and how much it directly concerns their religious beliefs before making up their minds to attend or not, not minding that overall, the issues to be addressed were more or less on the development and progress of the child' (PTG 4).

The issue of diversity within the school was stressed by eight out of the ten participating teachers. A teacher articulated his views this way:

'It will be pretentious to say that the diversity among teachers in the school has not stood in the way of some of the progress we need to make. I agree that differences should not always be a problem. In most cases, it is an advantage. However, it has been challenging to the school. For the Principal, he sometimes had to resolve thorny issues either due to the cultural background of the teachers, religious beliefs or gender.' (PTG 24).

The view of another teacher was apt:

'Diversity among parents and teachers is a major challenge. If we must improve parental and teacher involvement, the school must find a way to manage it. My understanding is that the diversity management must take account of parental differences in educational levels, socioeconomic status, religion, culture, language and the like.' (PTG 21)

Another teacher was of the view that the diversity that exists between parents and between teachers also reflected in the kind of relationships that exists between teachers and parents. According to him:

‘While parents and teachers each have their own problems with diversity, this has tended to spill over into the relationship between teachers and parents. It is not in contention that many of the parents here have witnessed what happens in the school on several occasions. Personally, I have seen that the teachers with whom I have the most relationships are those that either come from my own part of the country or profess the same faith. Some parents have openly complained about this in past meetings and nothing seems to have been done seriously by the school management about it.’ (PTG 16)

5.2.7 Summary of findings

The PTGs meetings conducted as part of the first action research cycle have shown that parental involvement is a serious issue and that it is particularly low. The results support the extant literature in terms of the challenges faced by schools with respect to parental involvement. Responses on such areas as the timing of PTA meetings, getting parents to respond to invitations, improving the relationship between parents and teachers, communicating with stakeholders, providing decision roles for parents and diversity among parents and teachers, are from the point of view of the participants, an indication of ineffective management. In other words, it was felt that those areas needed the attention of the school. Consequently, these organizational challenges called for the need for change. This is because organizations (schools) place emphasis on high parental involvement, including relationships between the school and all stakeholders (teachers, parents and the community).

From the PTGs meetings conducted, the question was not whether the school management had existing parental involvement mechanism but that it was ineffective. Thus, it is clear that there were deficiencies in the areas of organizational/management aspects of parental

involvement including planning, organizing, implementing, delegating, coordinating and controlling, as these are critical towards effectively managing the identified areas of challenges. Addressing these factors is therefore significant for the long-term success of the school.

5.3 Changes initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school

Having identified the organizational challenges faced by the school, all the participants were enthusiastic about being part of the change process to be initiated in order to deal with them, and thus to bring about improved parental involvement. Here, I was concerned with the organizational aspects of the challenges identified, initiation and management of changes as well as evaluating the implemented strategies. This stage in the action research cycle is in keeping with the argument that for change to be effective, it must take place at the group level, must be a participative and collaborative process involving all of those concerned (Bargal et al., 1992; French and Bell, 1984; Lewin, 1947b).

Findings from the PTGs data indicate that the organization (school) needs to effectively manage the following areas, if the objective of improved parental involvement is to be achieved:

- The timing of PTA meetings
- Parental response to invitations
- Relationship between parents and teachers
- Communication with stakeholders
- The decision roles assigned to parents
- Diversity among parents and teachers

The foregoing areas were important in determining the kind of intervention or change to be initiated. The specific changes initiated in terms of the identified areas and with focus on the related AR cycle are next presented.

5.3.1 Organizational Changes Initiated

As mentioned in chapter 4, Branch (2002) provided three ways to achieve Lewin's model of organizational change (see section 4.3). The three-pronged strategies were used to initiate the change in Yandutse College and explained as follows.

5.3.1.1 Changes initiated in the individual workers in the organization

The concept of the individual worker in this study goes beyond the staff of the school and extends to all stakeholders in the school, i.e. parents, teachers and school administrators.

Managing the timing of PTA meetings

The school has adopted the establishment of priorities for PTA meetings. A careful examination of previous PTA agenda disclosed that some of the items were not of priority and that they were merely mechanical and that the items on the agenda needed to reflect only the essentials. The implication is that hitherto, the school faced the challenges of achieving less vital goals at the expense of vital ones. In the light of this, the school has adopted the ABC analysis involving categorising priorities in the following order:

Category A - Tasks that are perceived as being urgent and important

Category B - Tasks that are important but not urgent

Category C - Tasks that are neither urgent nor important

The school decided to give priority attention to goals listed as A and B. Since the adoption of this time management technique of PTA meetings, we have noticed improved parental involvement from 35% to 83%, by way of PTA attendance.

Managing Parental response to invitations

Part of the initiatives by the school to improve the response rate by parents was to provide transport facilities to parents during PTA meetings, due to the location of the school. This is in keeping with the observation by Van Zyl (2013) who noted that parents' homes and workplaces are sometimes situated far from schools, making it difficult for many parents to attend to meetings due to problems of transport. This is further compounded by parents' financial constraints. The decision by the school to provide transport services for parents during PTA meeting is in keeping with the empirical example in Florida where one school addressed transportation problems by providing buses to bring families to school meetings, in addition to providing dinner and prizes to those who attended (Molland, 2004).

It is known that many parents are faced with logistical constraints such as childcare and transportation (Geenen, Powers, and Lopez-Vasquez, 2001). Due to this, the school constructed a first aid facility that is well equipped to deal with medical cases before further formal hospital treatments are done. This has achieved two benefits for the school. First, I noticed a rapid increase in the number of school enrolment and the rate of response to payment of fees by parents saw an astronomical rise, a clear indication that this approach to managing organizational challenges was yielding the desired results.

Training and development

As part of the strategies to improve teachers' involvement, the school management has put in place some measures of training and development for teachers. First is the approval of management for staff to go on further academic qualification with financial support of the management. Second, the management has introduced e-learning platforms within the school, where experts are hired to train teachers on relevant areas like curriculum development, parental and community partnership strategies and the like. In some cases, some of the staffs have been sponsored to attend local and international training programmes. In addition, it is now a policy of the school to have teachers who were trained to train others. Within a year, the school has been able to impart training and develop most of the teachers. Importantly, the school management has linked the training and development of staff with performance and career planning processes, and through this, has created a high degree of self-confidence among them leading to the success of the change process.

5.3.1.2 Changes initiated in various structures and systems of the organization

Motivation

This was particularly instructive in my attempt to improve teachers' involvement and to manage the parental involvement architecture. Thus I followed the views expressed by Kim and Mauborgne (2003), which are: (i) engagement, i.e., involving the teachers in the processes, (ii) explanation, which enables the teachers to understand and build trust in the school management, and (iii) expectation clarity, in which behaviors that were wished and rewards/penalties were clearly set. It was also necessary to have all the teachers clearly understand the purpose of the change and the need for commitment. In this context, I was guided by the three stages as analyzed by Jashapara (2004), namely (i) compliance (ii) identification, (iii) internalization.

The knowledge gained from the findings in the PTGs and teachers' questionnaire informed my new strategy of involving the teachers at all stages of the change management process, in line with the observation by Moran and Brightman (2001) that people want the early involvement and dialogue because it provides an opportunity to express their fears and hopes and to contribute their ideas to the proposed changes.

Due to the responses by teachers on the need for reward and recognition, as a motivating factor, the school management has put in place a reward and recognition scheme. Specifically, extra-work and weekend bonuses were introduced. What was noticed thereafter was a sharp rise in the level of commitment to duty and performance as measured by the time taken to prepare student report sheets, punctuality and attendance at PTA meetings. Thus there has been higher employee satisfaction and commitment, as pointed out in the literature (Jashapara, 2004). Another form of reward introduced by the school was giving official cars to the Principal and Vice-Principal, car loans to deserving staff and office facilities. A surprising thing I learnt using these strategies was that even some staff who initially were indifferent to the proposed change in the school later turned into active supporters and suggested ways in which the school would be better managed to get results. This is supported by the literature linking increased employee satisfaction and commitment to reward (Beardwell, Holden and Claydon, 2004).

Administrative support

To aid internal mechanisms towards managing the change in the school, the management has deployed information systems. As noted by Guimaraes and Armstrong (1998), change is often strongly related to technology and generally to the effectiveness of the information systems (IS) used. A review of the literature indicates that information systems are part of mainstream

modern change management strategies (Kotter, 1996; Hiatt, 2006). Specifically, the school has deployed IS in the staff appraisal process which has enabled actions and assisted the school management towards informed decisions. The use of IS for staff appraisal has acted as a catalyst for change, as it forces staff to become better and made them find new ways of working. This finding is consistent with the literature (Hammer and Champy, 1993).

Managing the decision roles assigned to parents

The measure adopted by the school to manage the decision roles assigned to parents was to define the role of parents in areas of PTA meetings, advocacy and mobilization of parents during important school events. This measure partly reflects the model of parental involvement in terms of advocacy as advanced by Wolfendale (1983). A handbook (*Yandutse Parental Guide*) was printed and distributed to all parents, with a view to raising their level of awareness about parental involvement, while spelling out in specific terms what their roles and duties are. The handbook was printed in English and Hausa languages to accommodate the diversity found among parents.

One noticeable change was the rate of parental attendance in meetings and events organised by the school, as well as improved participation in volunteering activities such as voluntary donations for school development, volunteering in career talks, excursions and mentoring roles. Many parents expressed delight at the handbook, as parents were no longer in doubt as to what roles they should perform. Another measure adopted was to ask for the views of parents on proposed changes in the school (such as new curricula, adjustment in school fees and student excursions) before implementation. A 5-member parent sub-committee was established to represent parents in staff meetings and to deliberate on matters to be discussed in the formal

meeting, after which their views and suggestions would form part of the final decision made. These measures led to significant drop in the time spent at PTA meetings, improved attendance by parents and consequently on the effectiveness in the management of the roles assigned by the school to parents. PTA meetings and other events organised by the school thus became one of common purpose, partnership and exchange of ideas rather than a power struggle between the school management and parents.

Parent involvement coordinators

The school has employed parent involvement coordinators to complement the roles of the teachers, while the Principal heads the team. Their task is to lead and coordinate parental involvement activities and programmes within the school as well as to conduct workshops for parents. In this way, obstacles between the home and school were reduced. This is in line with the view of Epstein (2009) who viewed parental involvement coordinators as encouraging more parents to become involved in a variety of aspects of the school, while their conduct of workshops for parents provides the avenue to inform them of the school curriculum, while reminding them about the central role they play in their children's education.

5.3.1.3 Changes initiated in the organizational climate

Managing the relationship between parents and teachers

What the school did was to recognize that the principal needs to be trained beyond the level of basic management in order to be able to facilitate parental involvement. Consequently, management training programmes were organized for the principal and teachers of the college. Some of the interesting areas dealt with in the training programme were the need to provide an

environment which is conducive for parent involvement at school, and to discourage a situation where teachers communicate with educationally disadvantaged parents only when their children were involved in some kind of trouble. It was noted in the PTG meetings that this sort of school environment only created a negative attitude towards the school in the minds of parents, and which in turn was one of the reasons responsible for the low parent involvement hitherto experienced. We found this approach very helpful, in that within a short time, there was a marked improvement in parent-teacher relationship and the turnout in meetings rose sharply.

Another area identified during the training programme organised for the staff was the need to develop a set of formal school rules which needed to be written and offered to parents, to eschew any ambiguity as to what the roles of parents are in the entire school system. Hitherto, the school did not think of this as a viable avenue for raising parental awareness about their involvement. This is consistent with the view expressed in the literature by Aaronson, Carter and Howell (1995) who maintained that many schools that claim to welcome parent participation fail to provide an environment which is conducive for parent involvement at school. The increased rate of parental involvement experienced after formal rules were written in both English and the Hausa language and circulated to parents, is in line with previous reports by Chavkin and Williams (1993) indicating that while a positive relationship exists between the number of written school policies encouraging parent involvement and increased parent activities at school district level, only very few schools have written policies that promote parent involvement.

Managing communication with stakeholders

Part of the strategies deployed to effectively manage communication between the parents and the school was to produce captivating welcoming signposts using different ethnic languages

in addition to English, and placed at strategic locations in the school. Surprisingly, it was noticed that the number of turnout at the PTA meeting immediately following this strategy doubled. One of the parents jokingly remarked that the need to communicate and welcome parents using a language understood by them, was indicative of the recognition of their worth and backgrounds, it had endeared the school to their hearts.

Managing the diversity among parents and teachers

Among parents

It was agreed that what could be done was to recognize the diversity by the school management and reflect it in such matters as correspondence and scheduling of meetings. Thus, the school was expected to provide some good atmosphere that recognizes the diversity among parents. Having an effective communication that reflects the diversity among parents was another measure adopted by the school. The need to provide written communication in several languages to ensure the greatest access to the parent community has been stressed in the literature, although professionals should make efforts to understand the uniqueness of each family based on their own reality within their cultural setting, since knowledge regarding a culture is not sufficient (Kasahara and Turnbull, 2005).

Another measure adopted by the school was to create bilingual hotlines to announce upcoming events concerning the school. This approach was borne out of the suggestion that bilingual hotline provides a creative way of enhancing communication with culturally diverse families regarding upcoming events (Ramirez, 2001).

Among staff

The strategy used by the school to address the challenge of diversity among staff was to engage the services of a hiring agency for recruitment. Through the hiring agency, the school will be able to have a diverse workforce. An important thing I learnt is the need to manage the cultural environment at the work place, with its associated competitive and moral advantages. In a nutshell, diversity is a necessity if an organization is to achieve ultimate success. This fact of organizational life has been stressed to be important for theory and practice in organizational behavior (De-Dreu and Homan, 2004). This is particularly critical in today's work environment, where organizations recognize that they must have a diverse workforce, and where the principles of diversity to achieve growth and longevity are embraced by each member.

Through work force diversity, the school has been able to engender the bringing together of ideas from which all members of staff benefit. In addition, the quality of decision making has improved significantly, as greater clarity is sought during meetings when the school management interacts with staffs who are different on a number of characteristics.

5.3.2 Observing the implemented strategies

In line with the AR cycle, the observations of the changes initiated are presented together with my reflections.

5.3.2.1 Observing the changes initiated in the individual workers in the organization

The most important thing I observed in initiating changes in the school was that generally changes are not easy to implement. Even when the teachers and parents saw the need for change, actually getting to do things differently was not instant. Getting to reinforce the conviction that

the change to be initiated and implemented was the best in the circumstance became very critical. For example, it was a difficult thing by the teachers to get used to the employment of new staff because the feeling was that it was job-threatening.

Managing the timing of the PTA meetings was found a very important area of the school management which had hitherto been neglected. It was some sort of surprise to find that parents needed as much motivation as teachers for them to be actively involved in school affairs as they concern their children and wards. I could find a strong correlation between the timing of PTA meetings and other school events and the parental response to invitations. Initially, many parents felt the effects of the changes would be ephemeral. It was on recognizing this that issues of appointing parent involvement coordinators and getting vehicles to convey parents to and from meetings were initiated. Of particular concern to teachers was training and development, which many saw as an opportunity for self-development and career progression. I found that some of the teachers considered the change in that aspect as even more important than increment in pay.

5.3.2.2 Observing the changes initiated in various structures and systems of the organization

For motivation, I found as earlier mentioned, that teachers were more interested in what could advance their personal and career advancement. However, of note is that right motivation, defined in terms of the teachers' desires is important to ensure compliance, identification and internalization. Another observation relates to the role of continuous flow of information and the use of dialogue in the change management process. I was able to gauge the fears and hopes of teachers and parents when dialogue was used and it enabled them to freely contribute their ideas especially in areas where improvements were desired.

The use of extra-work and weekend bonuses introduced were not largely successful. Although there was a sharp rise in the level of commitment to duty and performance after its introduction, many teachers still preferred to go for weekends or only work during the period unless there was the urgent need such as during examination periods and general students' continuous assessments. Another area of challenge however is the use of information systems by teachers, many of whom find it difficult to adapt to other modes of delivering classes other than white board. Introducing smart boards has been made difficult as routine survey carried out within the school indicated that teachers were not positively disposed to using any other mode. A further investigation showed that it was primarily due to the nature of electricity in the county. On second thoughts, the school management had to shelve the idea of smart boards due to the enormous costs to be incurred if the private generating set would be used to power all the classes. Just like teachers, parents were also not positively disposed to the idea for similar concerns, as they feared that this might lead to the increase in student fees, a situation that most of them would not be positively disposed to.

The *Yandutse Parental Guide* was instrumental in reawakening parents' consciousness about the priority placed by the school on parental involvement. By printing the handbook in English and Hausa languages, it helped accommodate the diversity among parents. As suggested by some of the parents, the 5-member parent sub-committee established to represent parents in staff meetings and to deliberate on matters to be discussed in the formal meeting was helpful to the school when drawing up PTA agenda. The school, through this, was able to ascertain the roles that parent would not find reluctant to play once assigned by the school, thereby helping parents and teachers discuss a common purpose and evolve more harmonious relationships.

Parents have begun to see the parent involvement coordinators as key to understanding their roles better in the entire school system. Noteworthy is the enthusiasm that they have shown in workshops which are conducted to deal with prevailing issues where parental commitments are required.

5.3.2.3 Observing the changes initiated in the organizational climate

I was to find out that the organizational climate is one of the most important aspects viewed by both parents and teachers with respect to the relationship between them. Training on management given to staff was particularly helpful, as hitherto teachers merely considered their jobs as consisting only of delivering classes, without bothering about how their relationship with parents could potentially translate to students' outcomes. I was pleasantly surprised that managing how parents and teachers view one another could be as serious to the extent that it had adversely impacted turnouts at meetings, parents' response to invitations and even teacher attrition. That low parental involvement was earlier found (Ahiome, 2013) could be attributed to this particular area of organizational climate.

Managing communication with stakeholders was a thorny area, considering that the school used to communicate to staff, students and teachers in English Language. With the finding that use of alternative means of communication was imperative, we started with non-verbal communication modes, with the conviction that man can be driven by the imagination. I found that it became relatively easier to gain the attention and confidence of parents when captivating welcoming signposts in different ethnic languages were deployed at strategic locations in the school.

Diversity perhaps is the most difficult thing to manage in a multi-ethnic environment. My experience in managing this is that it is very difficult to eliminate perception among people of

different cultures, religions and languages. This is further exacerbated by individual family uniqueness. Although the school has created bilingual hotline to enhance communication with culturally diverse families regarding upcoming events, it is still an ongoing process. It never appears to have an end. Managing diversity will continue to require new efforts, new insights and new approaches because of the many turns that diversity can take. Luckily for the school at the moment, the combined use of other communication outlets, the motivations put in place to encourage parental involvement, and the use of an external hiring agency for recruitment has significantly helped to mitigate the extent of ill-will in the past and continues to help promote the recognition of human diversity and the need for mutual respect.

5.3.3 Summary of findings

The changes initiated as part of the second action research cycle have shown that three major areas of the organization that require ‘observing’ are: (1) the changes initiated in the individual workers in the organization; (2) the changes initiated in various structures and systems of the organization; and (3) the changes initiated in the organizational climate. It was found that on the whole, initiating and implementing change can be a difficult task, but that success can be achieved if the right strategy is put in place. Based on these, proposing a framework along these organizational areas is important for attaining parent-teachers involvement in the school.

5.4 Framework for Enhancing and sustaining Parents-Teachers Involvement in the School

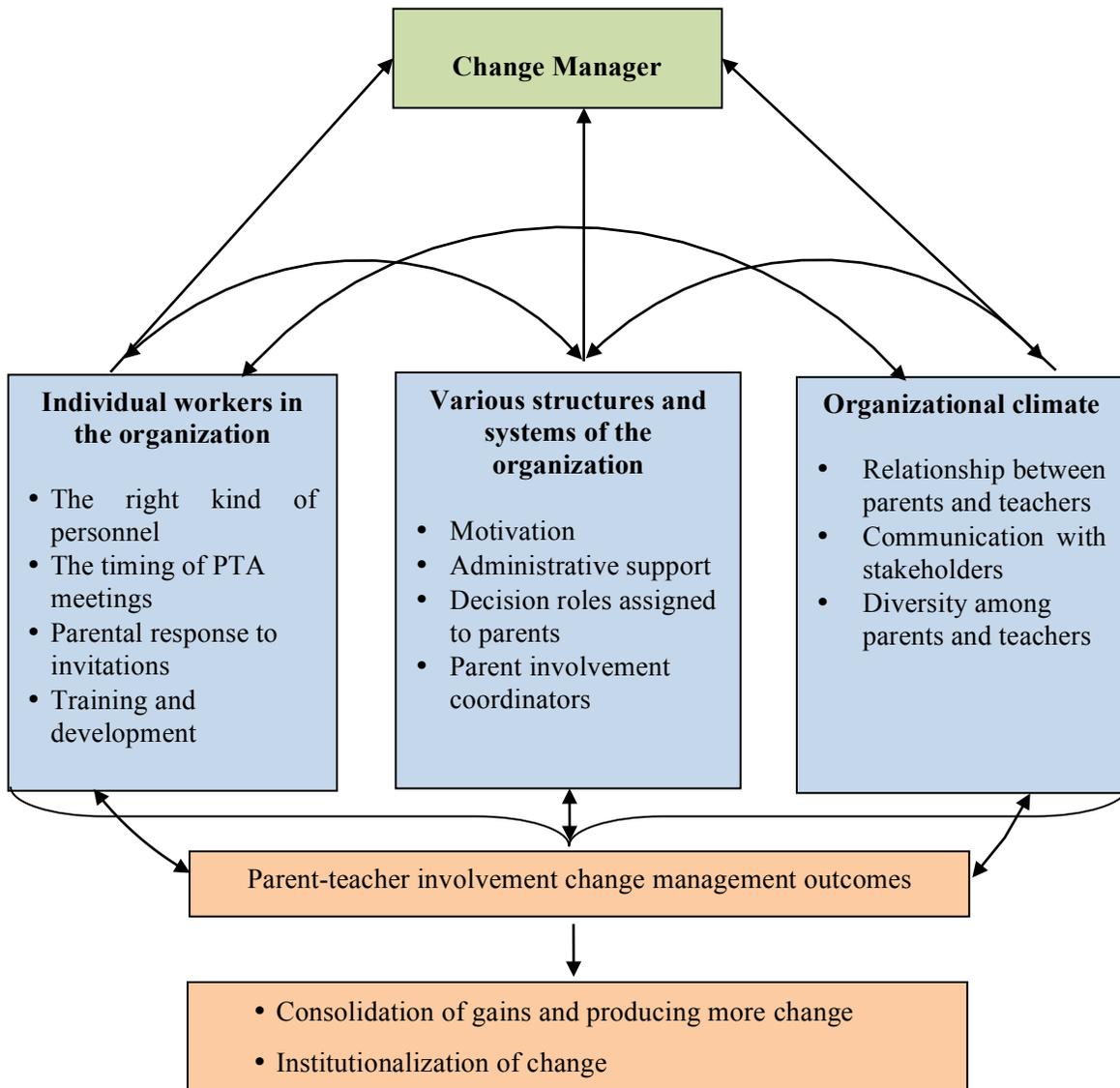
The changes initiated as part of the second action research cycle have indicated the areas in which parents-teachers involvement in the school can be enhanced and sustained, after having

implemented the first (planning) and second (moving) stages in the AR cycle. In this section, I propose a framework to initiate change and effectively manage organizational challenges identified in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school. I have presented the framework in figure 5.1.

Prominent in figure 5.1 is the role of the change manager who should be the change agent or insider researcher, or, as it is in this study the Director/CEO. It is important that the change manager be in a position to place planned initiatives in consultation with all internal stakeholders (Dunphy, 1996), bring different employees' interests into harmony with the common vision (Lawrence, Dyck, Maitlis and Mauws, 2006) and communicate the vision in a way that all employees are able to see the basis for change and give their support (Handy, 1996).

The most important role of the change manager is to initiate the process of the organizational challenges of parental involvement. He is responsible for choosing the change agents/managers, who cut across all levels of the organization, and as a leader, has the 'ability, in a formally assigned hierarchical role, to influence a group to achieve organizational goals' (O'Reilly, et. al., 2010). Such a change manager must possess expertise that combines managerial judgment (diagnostic skills, judgmental capability and behavioural flexibility) and core competences (goal setting, role specification, communication, negotiation and managing upwards) (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992).

Fig. 5.1: Parents-Teachers Involvement Management Framework



The change manager, with the active cooperation of other agents should manage the three core areas of change, namely changes in individual workers in the organization, changes in structures and systems of the organization, and changes in the organizational climate. Each of the areas in which effective management is required is shown in figure 5.1. Each of these three key areas is further broken down into mutually reinforcing management tasks (the areas are bulleted

in figure 5.1). It however needs to be noted that in initiating and implementing the changes, there are no specific steps, procedures or rules to be followed. This would depend on particular circumstances. The arrows linking the three broad areas of change are instructive, in that they indicate that each of the areas are not mutually exclusive but that they can both enforce and reinforce one another, depending on the skills and ability of the change manager, including change outcomes as they arise. Thus, how the change process will evolve, and how successful, cannot be determined in advance with precision. In the light of this, the framework takes account of the changing circumstances and environment.

Very important is that the parent-teacher involvement change management outcomes are the goals of the changes initiated, implemented and managed. The core of these outcomes is improved parental involvement. As displayed in figure 5.1, the successful planned change, through the change manager as the core and other active personnel assembled in the process, should be able to combine human and non-human resources to crystallise into improved parent-teacher involvement. It is important that any failure experienced in the course of managing the changes would call for a fresh round of initiatives (which may require more data collection or new approaches in management). This is indicated by the arrows linking the parent-teacher involvement change management outcomes to the three core areas of change. Consistent with the change management paradigm, successful changes initiated and managed and the resulting outcomes are consolidated and institutionalized. Because change is dynamic, it will be vital to continuously look for ways of improving the success(es) achieved. In this way, more changes can be made. Thus, these two aspects (i.e. consolidation of gains and producing more change; and institutionalization of change) as shown in the lower part of figure 5.1 are instructive.

5.4.1 Institutionalizing changes

That any new change should be grounded into the culture of the organization has been stressed in the change management literature. Kotter (1996, p.156) emphasizes that ‘culture changes only after you have successfully altered people's actions, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time, and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement.’

What was done at Yandutse College was to institutionalize the strategy that was effectively implemented, and thus made to permeate the normal day-to-day life of the organization. To achieve this, Pearce and Robinson (1985) identified three organizational elements which provide the fundamental, long-term means of institutionalizing the strategy in the organization, namely structural considerations, organizational leadership and culture. To implement the overall strategy in Yandutse College, the annual objectives, functional strategies and specific policies were utilized as means of communicating what every stakeholder must do. It is hoped that the institutionalisation of these changes will substantially change the managerial landscape of the college and entrench high management capacity to manage challenges arising from parent-teacher involvements.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the findings on identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in a private school in Kano, Nigerian using the AR methodology. The results shed light on the data generated from the PTGs and questionnaires, in relation to the research questions.

As part of AR cycle, the changes initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school were presented. Importantly, findings from the PTG and TQ

suggest that the factors that motivate teachers and parents need to be addressed by the school management, if the proposed change initiated to improve parent-teachers involvement is to be achieved. A dominant view expressed by parents and teachers was that there was a need for change in the school management with respect to how to improve parental involvement, including willingness of school management, teachers and the entire school system to form the key success factors to engage with parents.

A major lesson learnt from the PTG meetings and the responses from the TQ is that parental involvement was an issue that all the participants considered important, including changing aspects of the school management. Also highlighted was the need to move the school from where it was to where it ought to be and that the role of all stakeholders including parents, teachers and the school management was vital.

In the next chapter, the results are discussed.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at the presentation of a conclusive discussion, based on findings of the previous chapter. The discussions are twofold. They are related to the data obtained during the PTG meetings and the questionnaire administered to teachers. The discussions are anchored on the research questions and general objectives detailed in chapter one of the thesis.

Importantly, the findings in Chapter Five are linked to the literature, the details of which are presented in Chapters Two. In order to strengthen the discussions presented, the findings are theoretically expanded upon in this chapter. In discussing the findings, I start by informing what we already know, followed by how the findings helped the school to do differently from what it was already doing. In this regard, some sets of recommendations are made. Finally, this is followed by what I have learnt as a researcher as part of the action research effort. Importantly, I argue why the proposed actions are relevant or appropriate responses to the organizational issues or challenges.

6.2 First research question: What are the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school?

6.2.1 The timing of PTA meetings

Appropriate timing for meetings was found to be of critical importance and therefore a challenge in improving parental involvement in the school. Many parents complained about the timing of PTA meetings, which often coincided with some of their parental responsibilities. A

key issue in this regard was how the schools' academic calendar was designed, which made virtually all schools in Kano State to schedule PTA meetings almost concurrently, making it impossible for parents to attend all meetings at the same time. Importantly, the issue of polygamous home in which children from different mothers tended to go to different school actively supported by their mother made it difficult for fathers to attend PTA meetings scheduled at the same time by the different schools.

From a managerial perspective, time is a major challenge and critical and therefore needs to be effectively managed. Time is an organizational problem in the context of the school in which the aim is to improve the level of parental involvement. For example, modern education is increasingly becoming complex and this tends to discourage teachers who may be disposed to parental involvement. In Yandutse College, for instance, teachers devoted their time to a variety of school activities such as teaching, assessing a relatively large number of students as well as participating in extra-curricular activities. This hardly gave them the required time to devote to encouraging parents to be involved. This is consistent with the views expressed by Shartrand et al. (1997) and Baker (2000), who argued that the problem is not usually that teachers are not disposed to parental involvement, but that the increasing complexity of modern education requires more use of their time, and that this is particularly the case when little or no support is given to them by school administrators.

From the foregoing, managing time by school administrators and encouraging teachers in that direction becomes part of planning mechanism. In schools, part of the problems faced by teachers is how to effectively deploy the available time in order not only to teach but also to actively participate in encouraging parental involvement. In the same vein, the school management is faced with the task of ensuring that teachers are able to combine their primary

roles of imparting knowledge as well as being active in the wider task of ensuring increased parental involvement. The challenge for the school therefore is how to utilize the available time in order to meet not only the demands of the students but enable teachers improve their current level of involvement. Because time can be organized, a key feature of time management is planning while a fundamental challenge in effective time management is remembering the difference between “urgent” and “important” (Scott, 2002). This organizational task of managing the time of PTA meetings is even made more difficult, given that many parents in Nigeria have to do several jobs to keep their families. However, by prioritizing the topics on the agenda of PTA meetings, the time spent at PTA meetings could be reduced to the barest minimum. While the school may be able to manage its time with a view to improving parental involvement, there is no guarantee to get parents to promptly respond to school demands arising from parental involvement. This is in line with what has been reported by Eccles and Harold (1993) and Greenleaf (2000).

For the school therefore, the organizational challenge was how to focus attention on time management, in such a manner to allow a balance between the primary assignment of the school (that of imparting knowledge) and improving the level of parental involvement. Planning school activities thus necessitates the development of a framework of time management in order to effectively raise parental involvement. In the context of the school, this essentially means assessing priorities in order to make the best use of time to make the school deliver on its core mandate while bringing about increased parental involvement.

6.2.2 Getting parents to respond to invitations

Majority of the participants were of the view that the school did not have a viable mechanism for making response rate faster when the school invited parents. One of the reasons

advanced is the increased pressure on the time of parents who found it very challenging managing the home front, workplace and at the same time being actively involved with their children's academic activities.

There was a slight difference between teachers and parents as to what was responsible for the low response rate by parents when invited by the school. While the overwhelming view by teachers is that many parents tend to show apathy towards the education of their children, ranging from not minding to bring their children to school punctually, not showing enough worry when children who are not able to pay their school fees on time are excluded from classroom participation until payment is made and the like; parents on the other hand gave reasons for their low involvement as induced by pressure to meet basic, inadequate time to allocate between their children's academic activities and meeting the pressing needs of food, clothing and shelter, in addition to school schedule which conflicted with parents' official assignments.

The organizational challenge from the foregoing is related to what the school should do in order to get more parents to respond to invitations, taking note of the several constraints that they face, including the several preoccupations exemplified by the rise in the daily distractions and demands of daily life. However, a major organizational issue in getting parents to respond to invitations is that of non-clarity in the role that they should play in their child's education. This has been stressed by Shartrand et al. (1997). This makes it problematic for teachers to determine in clear terms what parental involvement entails, and where the role may be defined, there may not be commitment on the part of teachers to ensure that parental involvement is gained. The lack of specific roles has been reported by Epstein and Becker (1982) while Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) reported high degree of non-commitment on the part of teachers. Non-assignment of specific roles to parents and lack of commitment by teachers are organizational challenges in

the school. They are particularly instructive, given that it can give rise to feelings of alienation by parents as documented by Mannathoko and Mangope (2013).

6.2.3 Improving the relationship between parents and teachers

Every experienced school administrator (CEO/manager) knows the value of the relationship with both teachers and parents (employees and customers) and what it brings to making the school an effectively managed organization. Many organizations have a strategic focus, which in a school context, begins when it developed its Vision and Mission statements, what the organization is trying to achieve in terms of its relationship between parents and its teachers are broadly sketched out. It is here also that the tone and context for how these relationships are to be managed within the school is set.

My personal experience is that a school can face the challenge of low teachers' and students' retention if it is unable to manage relationship with parents and teachers. Poor management of relationship in schools is a recipe for teacher and student attrition (the latter due to parents' dissatisfaction). Effective management of relations, which demands strategic decision-making, is therefore required in order to deliver real and lasting competitive advantage in a private school that operates in a dynamic environment.

The organisational issue in relationship management in the context of parental involvement is how to manage the frosty relationships that sometime exist between the school and parents. This could be due to several factors such as difficulties experienced by parents in reaching the school as reported by Harris and Goodall (2008) and poor school climate leading to parents being frustrated, as documented by Williams, Williams and Ullman (2002). As earlier reported (see section 2.4.1.5), my experience at Yandutse College is cultural dichotomy

accentuated by ethnicity and religious beliefs that can help explain the behavior of teachers and parents toward each other. This dichotomy had hindered cohesive relationships and consequently parental involvement. One organizational approach recommended is that teachers should be trained to facilitate better working relationships with parents (Kraft and Rogers, 2015).

A key organizational aspect in managing the relationship between parents and teachers in the school was related to communication. Consequently, dealing with how communication took place between parents and teachers was found to be at the crux of their relationship. This is by no means surprising. The problem of communication and its associated challenges is well documented. For example, it has been noted that the problems of parents who lack confidence or feel inadequate when communicating with teachers in a language other than their home language, hinder them from active involvement with schools (Van Zyl, 2013).

Part of the findings in the PTG is that many parents cannot communicate in English due to their illiteracy, which directly impacts their parental involvement. Illiteracy has been implicated in the literature as a challenge to parental involvement. Thus, the finding that parents at Yandutse College sometimes did not know how to go about involvement is supported by several empirical findings. This is especially important considering that in the literature, surveyed parents wanted to be treated with respect and as equals when communicating with educators. Davis (1996) found that many parents suffer from low self-esteem and others did not experience success in school themselves and therefore lack the knowledge and confidence to help their children. These findings are in line with Lee and Bowen (2006) who found that cultural norms, insufficient financial resources, and lack of educational attainment are barriers to parental involvement in school.

6.2.4 Communicating with stakeholders

Many parents were found to be dissatisfied with the method of communication from the school. The frustrations expressed included lateness in communicating school events, which usually came in the form of letter writing delivered by hand, the problem of language used for communication, and the attitude of many of the staff who mistake the ability to speak English as synonymous with low intelligence. Language barrier was considered a key impediment to parental involvement.

In the context of the school, communication is an organizational challenge where school administrators are unable to bring about clear and smooth flow of communication. Because people understand and interpret messages differently due to different interferences, ineffective communication can create teacher dissatisfaction, which can negatively impact parental involvement. For the school, managing communication can be challenging because unlike other inputs, it requires skillful handling of thoughts, feelings and emotions of stakeholders.

Another important finding from the PTG meetings related to the challenge of inadequate communication between parents and teachers. Many participants were of the view that the methods used by school for communication to parents, made it difficult to elicit the best possible involvement. Parents complained about the use of written letters and information passed by word of mouth by children and originating from the school to parents. The use of alternative, modern, fast and efficient media was identified as key to improved communication by the school to all stakeholders as more effective and capable of reducing the communication challenge being faced.

Parents and teachers agreed that there was need to improve communication to enhance parental involvement in schools. The school has often used the students to deliver information

and communicating to their parents regarding school programmes. The strategies identified (as presented in the findings in chapter five) are:

- (i) Enhancing stronger communication lines between parents and school officials.
- (ii) Disseminating information about the school goals and policies in terms of students' expectation and assessment procedures.
- (iii) Using active emails and telephone lines that are accessible 24 hours.
- (iv) Prompt gathering of opinions from parents, students, and teachers, on their perceptions about school operations, using a suggestion box in the hall, newsletter, periodic questionnaires and annual satisfaction survey.
- (v) Keeping parents adequately informed about the child's academic progress.
- (vi) Deploying other languages, aside English when communicating with parents.

In the light of change management, the need for communication is stressed in the literature. According to Armenakis and Harris (2002), consistent change message needs to be persuasively communicated in order to bring about readiness for re-organization. Moreover, due to the likely resistance to change, communication to all parties is needed to counter resistance to change (Jurisch et al., 2014; AbuKhader, 2015).

Directly linked to the challenge of communication, as found in the study, was language barrier. At the PTG meetings, both parents and teachers kept returning to the issue of language barrier. Some of the teachers expressed frustration at the difficulty experienced in relating important aspects of children's academic life to their parents. Diversity of language in the school setting may be a source of constraint for parents if it is not adequately managed. One of the

views in the literature relates to the need for improved teacher/parent communication (Kraft and Rogers, 2015).

6.2.5 Providing decision roles for parents

An important area highlighted by parents is that there were no clear-cut roles assigned to them by the school, leading to reduced involvement in the school's operations. This view was reinforced by teachers who complained that the school did not have decision roles for parents that were clear and well articulated. This was responsible for why the teachers found it difficult to recognize the role of parents and in some cases in the conflict of goals. Thus, the organizational challenge was to provide decision roles for parents. The literature indicates that one way of enhancing parental involvement is for the school to provide decision roles for parents. Thus, an individual's beliefs and expectations shape his or her behaviours and guide them within specific contexts.

Therefore, the organizational issue was parental role construction, which is crucial to parents' involvement. What this implies is that parents will decide to be involved when they understand that collaboration with the school is also a part of their parental responsibility. When parents do not know what the school expects of them, it tends to weaken their resolve to actively participate in school affairs. In this study, about 56% of the parents during the PTG meetings felt that the expectation of the school was at variance with that of parents, as there was no deliberate attempt to articulate in specific terms what they were expected to do. It behooves the school management to deal with this organizational issue.

From the foregoing, deciding the specific roles for parents is an important organizational function in the context of the school, in order to improve parental involvement. Epstein (2001)

emphasizes the importance of decision-making, in addition to parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and parents/school collaboration with the community as critical to student outcomes. The role of decision-making by parents through PTAs is reported in Onderi and Makori (2013) and Lin (2010).

6.2.6 Diversity among parents and teachers

Diversity among parents and teachers was identified as a key challenge in parental involvement in the school. A major concern was that due to the differences in socio-economic backgrounds, religion, language, culture and ethnicity, disagreements sometime arose in PTA meetings and in other fora organized by the school. The implication was that the positions taken in previous PTA meetings by teachers and parents partly reflected their entrenched religious, political, social, economic and cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

The organizational aspect of good diversity management is one that focuses on maximizing the strength of diversity climate (i.e. respect for diverse views, fair treatment and visible management commitment to diversity and problem solving), while minimizing the costs (miscommunication among diverse members of the organization, use of language that purposely excludes people from certain groups, difficulty in building group cohesion due to members following different values and exclusion of organization members from networks). If this is achieved, the school can enhance its processes and improve parental involvement.

6.3 Second research question: What changes can be initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school?

6.3.1 Changes initiated in the individual workers in the organization

6.3.1.1 Acquiring the right kind of personnel

Kotter (1996) noted that part of any change effort involves identifying the key persons and this should be done in the early stages of the process. For change to be successful, there is the need to identify roles and who should play them. One thing that was paramount to me from the beginning was that each organization presents its own peculiarity. Guided by this, it was clear that getting the right personnel (teachers and other employees) with the requisite skill would be desirable. It was therefore an organizational challenge to get the right personnel, considering that resistance towards new approaches and systems could be resisted (Bennebroek-Gravenhorst and Veld, 2004). It was also an aspect of organizational change to consider the potential resistance that existing teachers would have for the proposed change and to effectively deal with it. This was necessary given that people would hardly accept change without some level of initial resistance in the form of fear, threat, guilt and disillusionment, depression and hostility, as documented in the literature (see Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

One of the things I learnt in the process was that all the employees in the school were quick to respond to motivation and incentives, while being positive about the benefits of what potential new employees would bring to the school. Moreover, I also learnt that change incentive systems should be consistent with the goals of change in order to prevent personnel from falling into an ambiguous situation, which can arise when the change goals direct people in one direction and the previous measurement and payment systems to another. This is in keeping with the literature on change management, in which planned changes require considering the human

element in the organization. It is important that at Yandutse, teachers embrace and accept changes in their current environment, and that new values, attitudes, norms and behaviors are defined which support new ways of implementing work. It would be easier for the right kind of personnel to be used to achieve the kind of change required at Yandutse College, that of teachers who will accept change.

There is however the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers in the school and this is not exclusive to Yandutse College but appears to be a major problem across Nigeria, even though schools continue to attract applicants. A major problem I faced is dealing with beginner teachers who often do not have the skill set needed for the quality and standard of the college. For experienced teachers, additional costs are often incurred in the form of incentives to get them to relocate, especially in the form of loan forgiveness, housing assistance and moving expenses. Employing a hiring agency to deal with recruitment did not however eliminate these costs but it was noticed that the quality of applicants and those who were eventually employed improved considerably, due to its notification and assignment policies, interview-team selection criteria, and applicant screening tools. However, to ensure that the applicants have a full understanding about the school, its mission, student expectations and standards and staff responsibilities, induction programmes with intensive mentoring components are organized for both experienced and beginner teachers. This has helped beginning teachers survive and thrive in their new environment while reducing teacher attrition by up to 75 percent.

6.3.1.2 Managing the timing of PTA meetings

If the proposed change to bring about improved parental involvement must succeed, managing the timing of veritable avenues for parental involvement is critical. Participants

emphasized the role that PTA meetings can play in the entire school system. It was agreed that no other mechanism could yet replace it and that the major challenge was how to manage the timing of the meetings. Majority of the PTG participants and respondents in the TQ considered the PTA meetings as crucial to strengthening parental involvement and that all that was required was to manage the timing of meetings with a view to improving attendance.

From the foregoing, a new approach for time management became imperative on the part of the school in order to strengthen the role of PTA meetings and to improve parental involvement. The role of the school was therefore planning and exercising conscious control over the time spent on specific activities of the school, by recognizing the type of activities on which time was expended. As the initiator of change at Yandutse College, and having identified that right timing was key to the proposed change, my role was to plan a specific course of action, fully appreciative and sensitive of other functions as highlighted by Noble (1999).

As earlier explained in chapter five of the thesis, the school adopted a number of measures such as:

- creating an environment that supports individual effectiveness, in a manner that gets things organized;
- effective delegation and where not possible, prioritise in order of importance;
- giving priority attention to only important issues.
- establishing priorities for PTA meetings by adopting the ABC analysis involving categorising priorities in the following order: Category A - Tasks that are perceived as being urgent and important; Category B - Tasks that are important but not urgent; and Category C - Tasks that are neither urgent nor important, while attention is given by the school to goals listed as A and B

One major lesson learnt in the course of managing the timing for PTA meetings was the difference between “urgent” and “important”. Some of the issues that I used to consider as urgent and on which valuable time was expended was found not to be important after all. Thus important things began to take priority as against urgent things, which were not necessarily important. In this way, the school was able to record higher PTA attendance rates.

The proposed actions in managing the timing of PTA meetings (see section 5.3.1.1) were relevant responses to the organizational challenge. By adopting the establishment of priorities for PTA meetings, the school was able to concentrate on important areas, including children’s academic progress, which, for many parents, should be the core of PTA meetings. Discussions on politics for example which some parents used to bring up for discussion at PTA meetings were no longer seen as a priority. As rightly observed by Humphreys and Crawford (2014), PTAs of schools have been turned into avenues for agitation where political maneuvering and pressure groups are formed and exploited and complaints have been documented on political interference in PTAs, including lack of transparency in the use of funds and neglect for the ordinary community member. Importantly also, by prioritising the issues to be discussed at PTA meetings, many parents have been discouraged from seeing their involvement only in terms of paying their children’s school fees, bringing the children to school and providing books and food. That this proposed action has led to desired results is demonstrated by the marked improvement in PTA attendance rate from 35% to 83%.

6.3.1.3 Managing parental response to invitations

Findings indicate that the school management observed that parental response to invitations was inadequate and needed to be improved. Majority of the parents suggested that the

school ought to embark on campaigns to raise the awareness of parents on issues that border on invitation. Based on the finding, the school evolved innovative approaches to the PTA meetings such as:

- Putting the child at the centre of the parent-teacher conversation in PTA meetings.
- Hosting of meetings outside the school premises, including encouraging the teachers to develop a clear purpose for the meeting, and identifying items that are to be discussed especially as they relate to the child's welfare and performance.
- Making teachers and school administrators carefully listen to parents' input, summarizing them and making out time to discuss with parents and get their input on planned implementation.
- Providing transport facilities to parents during PTA meetings.
- Constructing a well-equipped first aid facility.

That part of managing the response rate by parents was to provide transport facilities to them during PTA meetings, in addition to a well-equipped first aid facility is consistent with the literature. Van Zyl (2013) has noted that because many parents have their homes and workplaces located far from schools, and compounded by financial constraints, it is difficult for them to attend to meetings. Molland (2004) has reported that one school in Florida addressed transportation problems by providing buses to bring families to school meetings. Geenen, Powers and Lopez-Vasquez (2001) has also pointed out the logistical constraints faced by many parents including childcare and transportation. In addition, a previous investigation on in Nigeria found that the attitude of parents towards PTA meetings was poor (Amanchukwu, 2011), despite that PTA is a vital tool when improving the educational system at grassroots level (Jangira, Singh and Yadav, 1994).

The proposed actions in managing the parental response to invitations (see section 5.3.1.1) were relevant responses to the organizational challenge of low parental turnout for events. First, many parents are faced with problems of transport and are not quick to respond to their children's ill health due to poverty. Second, the school is located in a serene, low-density area, making it difficult for some parents to pay their transport fare to and from the school in order to attend PTA meetings. By providing transport facilities on PTA meeting days, and constructing a well equipped first aid facility, there was a remarkable rise in both school enrolment and the response of parents to calls for payment of fees and attendance at school events. In addition, many parents have expressed satisfaction with the medical facility at the school, as it has often been their only hope when their children become ill.

6.3.1.4 Training and development

A change initiative in a school aimed at improving effective management in order to bring about improved parental involvement necessitates that training and development for staff is undertaken. Training and development was found to be inadequate, considering that what was available was inadequate to drive the kind of school management needed to improve the level of parental involvement. The importance of training and development has been stressed in the change management literature. Kotter (1996) emphasized training and development as a critical part of any change project, if attainment of new skills and attitudes. It also engenders the right understanding and confidence among employees can be brought about. This in turn encourages active participation and continuous improvement in the change process. Another important aspect of training and development according to Jurisch et al. (2014) and AbuKhader (2015), is that it is helpful in countering resistance to change. Kraft and Rogers (2015) also emphasized the

importance of training and information to teachers as a way of enhancing their knowledge and to facilitate better working relationships with parents. That parents and teachers may not always have the requisite knowledge, training and information that could be useful for effective partnership between the two groups was observed by LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011), thus necessitating the need to train and develop teachers.

However, it is noted that some school administrators and teachers may not know how to involve parents, leading to the need to equip them with the requisite education and knowledge for involving parents (Greenwood and Hickman, 1991). Consequently, training and development provide a means of acquiring new knowledge in the form of skills, new ways of thinking and understanding, which are critical to the management of challenges in the ever-changing environment and importantly to support successful change management strategies. Teachers for example must have the skills and competencies to function effectively in the challenges posed in the new environment. Therefore, training is indispensable in a school where change is to be implemented as teachers and school administrators may be unable to benefit from the new systems if they do not have the requisite skills.

One of the very important things I learnt in the process of managing change is that training and development are critical towards active teacher participation, and that it is a very effective tool when a change message is to be communicated. As pointed out by Armenakis and Harris (2002), active participation includes enactive mastery (buildup of skills and knowledge), vicarious learning (observation and learning) and participation in decision making, which is effective in communicating change message because of its reliance on self-discovery. A lesson learnt from using training and development, as an approach to change management was that it empowered the teachers and parents. Although it was costly to organize training for both

teachers and parents, the payoff was obviously higher in the end. For teachers, it was a means of personal development as well as knowledge and skills enhancement. It also provided them a means of planning their own operations and working methods, coupled with enhanced power and responsibility. It was even more remarkable for parents as it increased their willingness to change, and their understanding of the basics of parental involvement.

The proposed actions in managing the level of teacher involvement through training and development (see section 5.3.1.1) were the appropriate responses to the challenge faced by the school on parental involvement. For instance, by approving that staff go for further academic qualification and supported financially by the school management, staff morale was boosted in ways that cannot be readily quantified. For instance, absenteeism has become a thing of the past, and teachers now voluntarily visit parents' homes to discuss the progress of their children, all of which has led to improved parental involvement. Another advantage of the action taken by the school management with respect to training and development is that it has leveraged the entire change culture in the school, as many teachers now see themselves as critical stakeholders. Before then, many of them thought of themselves as mere employees with no career prospects and long term plans. Importantly, teachers brought a high degree of self-confidence to bear in the discharge of their responsibilities.

6.3.2 Changes initiated in various structures and systems of the organization

6.3.2.1 Motivation

It was necessary to bring about changes in the way that motivation was previously considered and implemented at Yandutse College, if effectively managing the organizational challenge was to be achieved, in order to bring about improved parental involvement. Motivation involves a whole lot of initiatives geared towards getting the right response in a given

management process. Kim and Mauborgne (2003) were of the view that three things are critical, namely engagement, explanation and expectation clarity. To clearly understand the purpose of the change and the need for commitment, Jashapara (2004) emphasized the need for compliance, identification and internalization. Part of motivation is involving stakeholders at all stages of the change management process. Moran and Brightman (2001) believed that people want the early involvement and dialogue because it provides an opportunity to express their fears and hopes and to contribute their ideas to the proposed changes. The aim of all of this is to improve employee satisfaction and commitment (Jashapara, 2004), as increased employee satisfaction and commitment is linked to reward (Beardwell, Holden and Claydon, 2004).

The role of motivation has been stressed in the management literature. What is important in this regard is that there is the need to place motivation in contexts and that school managers must find new motivational factors, which are valued by teachers and other stakeholders in the school. What teachers also learned from the various meetings and responses is that there appeared to be some perception of unfairness in the reward system existing in the school. This is in accord with the observation reported by Kim and Mauborgne (2003) that employees will commit to a manager's decision even though they may not agree with it as long as they perceive that the process is fair. One way to improve commitment of teachers and other staff in the school is to introduce a motivation scheme that is perceived to be fair.

The actions taken with respect to motivation in the school (see section 5.3.1.2) as part of the changes initiated in various structures and systems of the organization were the relevant responses to the organizational challenges faced in improving parental involvement. Part of the motivation strategy was to involve all the teachers at all stages of the change management process. It provided them with the opportunity to express their fears and hopes. It also enabled

them to freely contribute their ideas to the proposed changes to the school. In this, I learnt that early engagement of teachers is a form of motivation, as it made it possible for them to be aware about the need to improve the current way the school managed challenges of parental involvement. The role of engagement, explanation and expectation clarity has been articulated in the literature (Kim and Mauborgne, 2003), all of which made it possible for teachers to comply with the suggested processes required for the change to take place, identify with my vision as the change agent and internalize the new culture after the change was successfully implemented. These stages, namely compliance, identification and internalization are critical to a successful change management strategy (Jashapara, 2004).

In addition, the reward and recognition scheme established by the school led to renewed vigour and commitment by all staff at Yandutse College. Extra-work and weekend allowances as forms of motivation/incentive helped improve staff attitude to work. For instance, student report sheets were prepared at much shorter time, there were fewer cases of absenteeism and above all, punctuality and attendance at PTA meetings generally improved. The official cars given to the Principal and Vice-Principal, car loans to deserving staff and the provision of office facilities spurred commitment to the change I proposed in the school. As documented in the literature (Beardwell, Holden and Claydon, 2004), employee satisfaction and commitment to reward are impacted positively by motivation.

6.3.2.2 Administrative support

Administrative support is imperative if a change in a school will bring about effective management for improved parental involvement. What I learnt is that the initiator of change needs the support and commitment from top management, which in the context of the school,

comprises the proprietor, the Principal, the Vice-Principal, the Librarian and Bursar. Leading by example and being seen to be serious and responsible were therefore central to the change proposed. I as Director/CEO and the initiator of the change was therefore in the position of the project owner. It was essential from the beginning that the top management of the school was familiar with the role expected of it in the transformation effort and consequently willing both to change itself as well as the school structures and procedures.

A key administrative support in the literature is the deployment of information systems. Guimaraes and Armstrong (1998) noted that change is often strongly related to technology and generally to the effectiveness of the information systems used. Kotter (1996) and Hiatt (2006) recognized that information systems are part of mainstream modern change management strategies, while Hammer and Champy (1993) noted that IS makes possible new and better ways of working. There is no doubt that administrative support is needed in a school where change is initiated to improve the management of identified challenges. This is even more so, given that teachers lack the requisite knowledge on how to involve parents, irrespective of how much school administrators want it (Decker et al., 2000; Shores, 1998). One good administrative support would be the provision of courses and professional experiences in pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers, which at presents is inadequate (Greenwood and Hickman, 1991; Katz and Bauch, 1999).

The accounting function in the school, for example, used to be manual and ample time was lost in preparing papers. The proposed and implemented change in terms of the deployment of information systems (IS) in preparing staff payrolls and staff appraisal made it possible for the school management to reach decisions earlier than it used to be. For instance, the use of IS for appraisal compelled the teachers to become innovative in reaching out to parents. This eventually

led to parents reporting to the school management of the enthusiasm with which teachers showed interest in discussing their children's academic progress and well as the encouragement to be more involved. Thus, this proposed change was relevant to the organizational issues of administrative support needed to compel staff to be seek better ways of reaching out to parents.

6.3.2.3 Managing the decision roles assigned to parents

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001), parents' engagement in their children's school lives is dependent on parental role construction. This view is similarly echoed by Epstein (2001) and Onderi and Makori (2013). Epstein et al. (2002), Manz, Fantuzzo and Power (2004) emphasized the need for schools and families to see decision making as a process of partnership and exchange of ideas aimed at mutual goals, and not as a power struggle.

In this study, it was found that teachers tended to be disappointed with the role that parents played because of the seemingly different understanding of what each party's role should be. Thus, there is the need for the school to enlist parents into decision making mechanism of the school, using such medium as the Parents-Teachers association.

The provision of what role to play in the school is not limited to parents because teachers as principal stakeholders need to know what specific roles the authorities of the school assign to them. All the parents and teachers agreed that the role of each stakeholder should be clear enough as to know who does what, where and when, how much and how often, as this will go a long way in determining the appropriate responsibility and authority to make decisions, solve problems and take action. In light of the change expected in the school with respect to improved parental involvement, the views expressed at the PTG meeting and the responses from the

teachers' questionnaire showed that maintaining an adequate understanding of roles in a period of change would be difficult.

The proposed actions regarding decision roles assigned to parents, namely role definition in PTA meetings and advocacy/mobilization of parents during school events (see section 5.3.1.2) were the relevant responses to the organisational issues of parental involvement. For instance, the *Yandutse Parental Guide*, which provides in clear terms and in different languages, the role of parents led to the removal of doubts in the minds of parents as to what their roles are. To this end, parents' participation in volunteering activities increased. By seeking the opinion of parents on important aspects of school activities before they are implemented, in addition to the formation of a 5-member parent sub-committee to represent parents in staff meetings, attendance by parents PTA meetings has improved significantly.

6.3.2.4 Parent involvement coordinators

As mentioned in chapter five (see section 5.3.1.2), the school has employed parent involvement coordinators. Epstein (2009) regarded parental involvement coordinators as encouraging more parents to become involved in a variety of aspects of the school, while their conduct of workshops for parents provides the avenue to inform them of the school curriculum and reminds them about the central role they play in their children's education. The role of the coordinators essentially is to help build positive parenting skills especially in the home. Homework can provide a strong link between school and home and enhance parental involvement at school in the process. This is in accordance with the literature which links parental involvement with their children's school experience (Khan, 1996). Eccles and Harold

(1993) reported that there was higher participation rate in the school when teachers ardently encouraged parents.

None of the participants in the study mentioned organizing workshops as part of avenues created by school for parental involvement. Workshops were therefore recognized as a means of fostering and honing parental skills. The proposed action in the appointment of parent involvement coordinators was a relevant response to managing organizational issue of low parental involvement. The coordinators have been important to informing parents of their roles and encouraging them to become involved. Many parents have expressed satisfaction about the workshops conducted for parents. In so doing, parent's involvement in the form of PTA meeting attendance and voluntary donations has improved.

6.3.3 Changes initiated in the organizational climate

Results in the TQ indicate that the school environment is crucial if parental involvement challenges were to be addressed. The literature shows that, although most parents would like to attend school-based programmes, they are often constrained by lack of time and as Khan (1996) posited, this could lead to children suffering in their school work. From the results in the PTG and TQ, school related factors such as the value placed on parents by the school, school's respect for parents' culture and religion, recognition and respect for the uniqueness of each family, the belief that family activities at school encourage participation, regular attendance at PTA meetings and provision of avenues for parental participation were found to be important factors affecting parental involvement. The role of the teacher in the entire change process in the school was emphasized at the PTG meetings. It was also recognized that for the change envisaged to be successful, there was the need for interaction in a structured or organized way, because resistance

to change is viewed as a socially constructed phenomenon generated and defined through interaction (Bennebroek-Gravenhorst and Veld, 2004).

The literature is rich in what could be done to prevent parental involvement barriers. One good way is to provide a welcoming climate where the school staff is respectful and responsive to parents, while encouraging respectful two-way communication between the school and home. Importantly, change message needs to be consistent and persuasively communicated if readiness for re-organization is to be brought about (Armenakis and Harris, 2002). A supporting school climate and environment is important if the effective management of parents-teachers involvement is to be enhanced. The change can be considered as a new way of doing business, and the school climate and environment is seen in this context as representing the structures, systems and procedures that may either facilitate or impede the development of the school. This has been observed and discussed in the literature (e.g. Kotter, 1996).

What I have learnt from the teachers' responses is that it is a mistake to focus only on the progress or growth of the school at the expense of the teachers. What is glaring therefore is that a balance is needed between teachers and the school as business.

6.3.3.1 Managing the relationship between parents and teachers

An important conclusion made with regards to the relationship between parents and teachers in the school is that the schedule of duties of the principal did not explicitly state what his role should be. Additionally, lack of managerial skills observed among several of the school administrators, might have been responsible for the nature of relationship between parents and teachers.

6.3.3.2 Managing communication with stakeholders

Communication with teachers, accessibility to principal and information given by school to parents on their children's progress are important factors that influence parental involvement and challenge management capacity. Therefore, the school authority needs to improve on the various media of communication with parents in order to effectively manage issues involving parental involvement.

The role of a variety of media outlets for communication has been recognized in the literature. In the field of education, there have been different experiments with technologies, the aim of which is to communicate in innovative and time-efficient ways. Integrating technology can help schools communicate quickly to a broad parent community (Ramirez, 2001). In the light of this, various strategies were used including:

- Daily one-minute voice mail message for parents and students to call at the end of each day.
- Use of voice-mail technology, which demonstrated enhanced communication in both quality and quantity for upper elementary-aged students.
- Use of a brief 10-minute video to welcome new families to the school including an introduction, tour of the school, portions of a "lesson in action," and an invitation to become involved.
- Use of progress videos, "picture report cards," and video illustrations of procedures to encourage maintenance and generalization of new skills at home.
- Use of internet technology to communicate to a parent community, including training teachers and students.

The importance of parent-school communication has been emphasized (e.g., Kraft and Rogers, 2015). Majority of the PTG participants had complained about the mechanisms for communication between school and parents. This probably accounted for the overwhelming need to strengthen the current level of relationship between teachers and parents, as majority of teachers eagerly looked to a future in which the relationship between teachers and parents would be enhanced, given their shared responsibility towards the children's academic progress. Many of the PTG participants stressed the importance of the teacher in fostering a strong sense of bond between the school and parents. Epstein (2001) gave prominence to the role of effective and successful communication, because it is helpful to parents in recognizing school programmes and policies, in monitoring the progress of children, and can aid them in responding to their children's problems.

Based on the findings and based on the literature, the school initiated specific changes to enhance communication with parents as follows:

- Introduction of phone calls, and/or e-mail messages as supporting reports on student performance prior to the traditional report card.
- Teachers are required to call the parents of each child in their class at the end of each month to discuss the academic progress of their children. This strategy was borne out of the empirical finding linking such periodic phone call interaction with the child's improvement.
- The use of "good news calls" to recognize the child for progress or a job well done as a way of promoting positive relations with parents.
- Use of initial positive phone calls to parents on issues which would require their input and contribution. For example, by making initial phone calls to parents using and

identified language best suited to them (e.g. Hausa, English, Igbo, Yoruba and the like), we found that raising development funds was made much easier.

6.3.3.3 Managing Diversity among parents and teachers

Among parents

It was obvious from the views expressed by parents and teachers that there was the urgent need to deal with the diversity among parents, in terms of language, culture, educational levels and the like, if the challenges faced by the school in improving parental improvement would be effectively managed. It was agreed that what could be done was to recognize the diversity by the school management and reflect it in such matters as correspondence and scheduling of meetings. Thus, the school was expected to provide a good atmosphere that recognizes the diversity among parents.

Having an effective communication that reflected the diversity among parents was another measure adopted by the school. The need to provide written communication in several languages to ensure the greatest access to the parent community has been stressed in the literature, although professionals should made efforts to understand the uniqueness of each family based on their own reality within their cultural setting, since knowledge regarding a culture is not sufficient (Kasahara and Turnbull, 2005). Part of the measures adopted by the school was to create bilingual hotlines to announce upcoming events concerning the school. This approach was borne out of the suggestion that bilingual hotline provides a creative way of enhancing communication with culturally diverse families regarding upcoming events (Ramirez, 2001).

Among staff

Many teachers expressed concern on the need to manage the diversity among staff within the school. One of the ways identified was in the manner that employment was done. Another way identified was to introduce inclusiveness in order to promote gender, ethnic, and religious balance, without sacrificing merit. This view was considered to be important in promoting a sense of equity among stakeholders in the school. It was evident from the findings that teachers in the school had tended to view events through the lens of their diversities.

There is great diversity in today's work environment. De-Dreu and Homan (2004) stressed the importance of this fact in both organizational life on one hand and for theory and practice in organizational behavior on the other hand.

Engaging the services of a hiring agency for recruitment was the appropriate action needed to deal with the organizational challenge of managing diversity among staff. The advantage that this brought was that first, the school is able to harness different ideas from teachers and other staff from different social, economic, political and religious backgrounds. The direct impact has been on the quality of decision making which has improved significantly.

6.4 Third research question: What framework can be provided for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school?

In section 5.4, I have proposed a parents-teachers involvement management framework. The framework was also shown diagrammatically in figure 5.1. This framework proposed is important for a number of reasons. First, there is no change management literature dealing exclusively with how to initiate a change to effectively manage organizational challenges of parental involvement in schools. Second, the vast amount of literature on parental involvement

used the Epstein (1995) framework, which does not explicitly address issues of organizational (school) management as a mechanism for parental involvement. Thus, while dealing with the issue of parental involvement, the Epstein (1995) framework says nothing about the management aspect of parental involvement. In the light of this, past studies dealt with mechanisms for improving parental involvement without considering management aspects in the context of organizational change. As mentioned in chapter two, a review of the literature indicates that while previous efforts addressed parental involvement in schools, none was done in the context of organizational or change management. Third, the framework proposed recognizes management aspects of parental involvement rather than parental involvement *per se* and investigated in the context of organizational change, using AR methodology, thus bringing to bear aspects of parental involvement, educational management and organizational change (change management). It needs to be noted that the framework deals with the management aspect of identified organizational challenges of parental involvement in the process of change. The thesis is thus unique and contributes to the change management literature in this aspect.

The framework proposed is essentially rooted in the results which I obtained in the thesis in the context of change management. From the beginning, the stakeholders (especially the teachers) were abreast about the need to bring about change and particularly to improve on parental involvement through better and more effective management. A major point raised by the teachers was that to enforce the change, the school must be able to respond to shifting demands from stakeholders by remaining flexible so that the new change strategies can be successfully executed. To this end, it was explained that the bases of the change were partly to:

- Improve the management of organizational challenges associated with parental involvement

- Improve teachers-parents' involvement
- Enhance staff productivity and effectiveness
- Improve the process by which the school wishes to move forward
- Change organizational (school) priorities.

From the foregoing, it was understood that the change involves the design and construction of new patterns, or the reconceptualization of old ones, and expectantly more productive actions possible (Kanter, 1992). It was also understood that for the change to be effective, observed systematic shortcomings and failures need to be addressed, necessitating the alteration of some aspects of the prevailing management culture, in line with the observation in the change literature (Schein, 2004). Here, I lean heavily on Branch (2002) on how to achieve Lewin's model of organizational change, namely: (1) changing the individual workers in the organization; (2) changing the various structures and systems of the organization; and (3) changing the organizational climate or interpersonal style. However, I have provided specific directions in these three areas, namely:

(1) Changes to Individual workers in the organization

- The right kind of personnel
- The timing of PTA meetings
- Parental response to invitations
- Training and development

(2) Changes to Various structures and systems of the organization

- Motivation

- Administrative support
- Decision roles assigned to parents
- Parent involvement coordinators

(3) Changes to Organizational climate

- Relationship between parents and teachers
- Communication with stakeholders
- Diversity among parents and teachers

The framework recognized the role of an insider change agent who in the context of the present study is the Director/CEO. It could also be the principal or teacher, although their ability to implement some changes may be constrained substantially as earlier explained. What is important according to Anderzén and Arnetz (2005) is that the change agent should be an effective manager who is able to see the interconnectivity in the organization, as well as institute a system of shared values, good communication, openness and engagement, which brings about consciousness of others on the need to constantly improve in both productivity and efficiency. Importantly, as managers, they would need qualities that help determine strategic directions and in solving business problems (Scheule and Sneed, 2001), and choosing the change agents/managers who cut across all levels of the organization, and as a leader be able to guide the group to achieve organizational goals (O'Reilly et. al., 2010), plan initiatives in consultation with stakeholders (Dunphy, 1996), harmonize different interests with the common vision (Lawrence, Dyck, Maitlis and Mauws, 2006) and above all communicate the vision in a way that generates support and cooperation by all employees (Handy, 1996).

The framework thus puts emphasis on organizational leadership. Buchanan and Boddy (1992) emphasized that the change agent should possess a high degree of competence and who may be regarded as a leader in the context of change management. According to them, the change agent should have two-dimensional expertise, which is a combination of managerial judgment and core competences. These competences are imperative if the three levels of change (changing the individual workers in the organization; changing the various structures and systems of the organization; and changing the organizational climate) to be initiated and implemented are to be achieved, and which have been extensively discussed in section 6.3.

6.4.1 Possible Limitations of the Proposed Framework

In reality, there may be possible limitations of the proposed framework. Three can be identified. First, is that the successful execution of the proposed framework is dependent on the ability of the school to respond to shifting demands from stakeholders by remaining flexible, a point that was raised by the teachers in the current study. Many schools (especially in countries where the institutional and legal frameworks are weak) may not possess the required flexibility.

Second, there is no guarantee that the three areas that require concurrent change can be implemented successfully in other settings, even when the directions are followed. Thus implementing the changes may require continual trade-offs until the desirable results are achieved. This however should not be much of a problem, given that the very nature of change management using action research is a spiral involving planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; 1988). Given a particular context, it may well be that the change agent starts from changing the organizational climate or interpersonal style before moving on to changing the various structures and systems of the organization, and finally changing the

individual workers in the organization. Thus, it may be challenging to follow a definite sequence in enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in a school.

Finally, finding an insider change agent who has the capacity and authority to initiate and successfully implement the change may be difficult, especially in the context of a school. Unlike in the present study, where I was able to initiate and implement the required change in my capacity as the Director/CEO of a private school, a principal or teacher for instance might find it difficult if not impossible to achieve a similar feat in the same setting not to talk of in a public school.

6.5 Lessons Learnt in Parents-Teachers Improvement Strategies by the School

An important lesson learnt from the process of bringing about improved parents-teachers involvement is that all aspects of an organization are critical. Although encouraging incentive and metrics systems are perhaps one of the most commonly discussed issues in terms of supporting environments, all aspects of the organization such as reports, compensation policies, and organizational structure are important to guide and encourage courses of action. I noticed at the initial stage of the change when not all aspects had been carried along that the expected results were not achieved. For instance when the focus was only on teachers and parents, I noticed that the human resource and accounting units tended to show some laxity in the discharge of their responsibilities. What was gathered in the course of interaction with the staff in those units was that the two units felt undermined in the entire new way of doing things. A meeting with the two units, with explanation on their relevance in the change envisaged and what their roles would be, brought about a more cohesive approach.

The lesson learnt in all of this was that incremental changes in one part of an organization do not necessarily result in the improvement of the whole, and that all aspects of the organization need to be carried along. The implication of this is that all aspects of the organization, including structures and information technology need to be strengthened. Very important in the entire change management process in the college is the role of communication. Essentially, communication was identified as key towards improving teacher involvement. The school in this context should be able to communicate its vision and values, as well as establish the methods for getting there. The role of effective communication in a change programme has been stressed in the literature. It is considered as one of the most important supportive dimensions when implementing change in any organization (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). In the context of the school, the objective of effective communication is to guide teachers to become more productive, to enhance successful team co-operation, to establish effective problem solving within the team context and to establish continuous teaching quality service delivery.

In light of the foregoing, the school has implemented several strategies to support the communication process, namely, the principal addressing staff members weekly, memorandums, staff meetings, meetings with the proprietor, training and development sessions. What was essentially responsible towards engaging competent teachers and other members of staff was that from the onset, I was able to communicate what the change would bring to the school, and what it was likely to cause to each person's roles and responsibilities. I found that when teachers were employed for example, existing ones were not threatened and were ready to support them. This finding seems to be supported by the argument of Anderzén and Arnetz (2005) that the success of a project is dependent on the an effective manager who can see the interconnectivity in the organization, establish a system of shared values, including good communication, openness and

engagement, which engender a consciousness to constantly improve in productivity and efficiency.

What I learnt in an attempt to communicate my desire for the school with respect to teachers-parents involvement is that there was the need to give the teachers and other employees in the school sufficient time to digest the planned change and to understand the fundamental meaning of it. I was initially mistaken to think that everyone in the school would understand the change exactly how I understood it. It became clear to me later that employees would hardly be expected to understand overnight what managers of change had taken months to contemplate and planned. Moreover, it was imperative that each teacher and other employee in the school clearly understood how each of them stood in the change envisaged. Kaufman (1992) stressed the need for communication to be more open, in order to build more trust between different parties involved in the change, and Kotter (1996) pointed out that the real power of setting goals, envisioning, and planning is not unleashed without communication. The idea here is that communication is never enough and that different means of communication must be used and often repeatedly in order to drive home the message of change and to carry all stakeholders along.

As part of the communication strategy introduced in the school, a new budgeting system was considered imperative for the change introduced and this has led to marked improvement in the way teachers discharge their responsibility. Each term, teachers and other staff are required to provide details of capital and recurrent items which they need to facilitate their responsibilities, and this is augmented with the school management budget and aggregated to give the budget for the period. The human resource unit of the school is also required to propose the staffing requirement for the year, while the accounting unit summarizes all items of expected revenues

and expenditure. Since the introduction of the new budgeting system, I have noticed tremendous change in staff punctuality, response to assignments given and meeting deadlines and improved interaction among staff and management on how best to accomplish tasks.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings earlier presented in chapter five of the thesis. The findings from data obtained from the PTG meetings and TQ were used to answer the research questions, with deference to the extant literature. Thus, the research questions were used to guide the discussion. Consequently, I have discussed the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school, the changes initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school, and the framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. Importantly, the possible limitations of the proposed framework have been highlighted.

Due to the objective of the study, which is to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in a private school in Kano Nigeria, I began by informing what is already known in terms of linking the specific findings to the literature, followed by a discussion of how the findings help the school to do things differently from what used to be, based on the strategies deployed. In the light of this, some recommendations are made. This is then followed by what I have learnt as a researcher as part of the action research effort. All of these are consistent with the AR framework. The lessons which I learnt in the different strategies adopted by the school in order to effectively manage the organizational challenges identified and thus to improve parental parents-teachers improvement are also discussed.

Based on the findings of the study and the changes experienced by the school after the deployment of strategies to effectively manage the identified challenges, in line with action research, a summary of the research findings and the conclusions are next presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to identify and effectively manage organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in a private school in Kano, Nigeria. Consequently, I sought answers to the following research questions:

- (i) What are the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school?
- (ii) What changes can be initiated to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement in the school?
- (iii) What framework can be provided for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school?

The problem in scope of this study is relevant to the author who is an education service provider and the Director/CEO of the organization where the study took place (c.f. section 1.2.1). I have explored the topic which has enabled me gain a better understanding of organizational challenges and effective management tools with regards to the level of parental involvement. I conducted this research on a school as an active manager. To this end, I designed an action research approach to take action on an issue concerning an organization while, at the same time, researching the problem in scope, in order to bring about change (c.f. section 3.3). I argued that action research is relevant to the present study which deals with organizational challenges (a real life problem) within its social context, the intention of which was to solve it by taking action in a

collaborative manner, following the cyclical process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting aspects of the AR cycle (c.f. sections 2.8.2 and 2.8.3).

The thesis is unique and contributes to the change management literature. By investigating management aspects of parental involvement rather than parental involvement *per se*, the current study differs from previous investigations. Moreover, I investigated the management of organizational challenges involving parental involvement in the context of organizational change, an area which has not been previously attempted. In this regard, I effectively combined the insights in the educational management and change management literatures, thereby adding to the body of knowledge on the methodological approaches to organizational studies. By using AR to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school (c.f. chapter 4), I was able to initiate changes which led to effective management of the challenges using a framework developed in the course of the study (c.f. sections 5.4 and 6.4). Consequently, the challenges of managing parental involvement have been overcome while enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school.

In light of the foregoing, this chapter presents the conclusions of the study. Recommendations are made on the basis of the findings. Areas for further study will be suggested.

7.2 Summary of Findings

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions are drawn:

- The study has identified organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school, which include the timing of meetings, parental response to invitations, relationship

between parents and teachers, communication with stakeholders, the decision roles assigned to parents and diversity among parents and teachers (c.f. sections 5.2 and 6.2).

- Three broad areas were vital in initiating changes to effectively manage organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school. First were changes initiated in the individual workers in the organization which address the acquisition of the right kind of personnel, the management of the timing of PTA meetings, managing parental response to invitations, and training and development. Second were changes initiated in various structures and systems of the organization, which address issues of motivation, administrative support, the management of the decision roles assigned to parents and the use of parent involvement coordinators. Last were the changes initiated in the organizational climate, which address such issues as the management of the relationship between parents and teachers, communication with stakeholders and the diversity among parents and teachers (c.f. sections 5.3 and 6.3).
- A framework was provided for managing parental involvement challenges in the school. This framework is rooted in the results obtained in the thesis. It emphasizes management aspects of parental involvement investigated in the context of organizational change, using AR methodology. It thus addresses the management aspect of identified organizational challenges of parental involvement in the process of change (c.f. sections 5.4 and 6.4).
- I have demonstrated that to enforce the change, the role of an insider change agent is critical and the framework that I have developed indicates that the organization must have the ability to respond to shifting demands by remaining flexible in order for the new change strategies to be successfully executed (c.f. sections 2.3). The bases of the change are to

improve the management of organizational challenges, promote parents-teachers' involvement, staff productivity and effectiveness as well as change organizational priorities.

- I also demonstrated that in the process of bringing about effective management in the context of parental involvement, all aspects of the organization such as reports, compensation policies, and organizational structure are essential to guide and encourage courses of action (c.f. section 5.4).
- Reflecting on my role as a change agent, I found that initiating changes in the school was difficult and that changes are not easy to implement, even when they are clearly understood (c.f. section 5.3.2). In this regard, continuous flow of information and the use of dialogue are critical in the change management process. In addition, motivation that tends to advance personal and career advancement of employees is more generally supported. The importance of the organizational climate was prominently mentioned as key to effectively managing organizational challenges and that organizational challenges could be significantly reduced if the right environment exists in the school (c.f. section 5.3.1.3). Expectedly, it was found that diversity is a difficult thing to manage in a multi-ethnic environment, and that while it can be effectively managed, my personal experience in managing this aspect in the course of the study is that it is very difficult to eliminate perception among people of different cultures, religions and languages (c.f. sections 5.2.6 and 6.3.3.3).

7.3 Recommendations

It is expected that the findings of this study could contribute to practical guidelines on identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement. To this end, it is vital to develop a plan of action with particular emphasis on the following:

7.3.1 For the School (Yandutse College)

- Inputs from parents and teachers should be sought when planning to initiate a change in school that will bring about the effective management of organizational challenges dealing with parental involvement.
- A useful way to go about having an effective management of organizational challenges in the school is to promote a discussion on the specific challenges found in the study with teachers and parents. In this way, teachers and parents will be in a position to appreciate the nature, type and complexity, which a particular challenge may pose, thereby making the strategy deployed easier to implement.
- The strategies put in place need to be continually and periodically adjusted in light of the change instituted and implemented. Strong and active support should be encouraged from teachers and parents in order to deepen the improved management and institutionalize it.
- An efficient communication pattern needs to be developed that makes it easy for parents and teachers to be engaged interactively, harnessing technologies that enhance the smooth flow of communication among the relevant parties involved.

7.3.2 For School Administrators

- Instruments for identifying the organizational challenges should be carefully decided. There is a need to explore such instruments as questionnaires, meetings (such as the PTG meetings and TQ in the present study), focus groups and interviews.
- Administrators interested in bringing about a change in schools should lay emphasis on three key areas, namely (i) changes that would affect the individual workers (ii) changes

that would affect various structures and systems; and (iii) changes that would affect the organizational climate (c.f. section 6.3).

- The school should create the right environment and ensure respect for the culture and religions of teachers and parents, recognize and respect the uniqueness of each family, and put in place effective communication mechanisms between the school and teachers on one hand and between the school and parents on the other hand.
- In managing school/organizational challenges, teachers should be motivated to have more fruitful and robust interaction with parents in terms of what is being taught, the course curriculum and the general expectation of the school from all students/children.
- To effectively manage organizational challenges in improving parental involvement, there should be advocacy for higher participation, as this would significantly reduce the tasks of implementing changes to be initiated, since one of the end results of such a change is improved parental involvement.

7.3.3 For the Ministry

- The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria should establish a unit which supervises a study of completed research on the management of organizational challenges involving parental involvement and efforts should be made to determine the transferability of the research findings in Nigerian private and public secondary schools.
- Comprehensive knowledge regarding managing organizational challenges of parental involvement should inform the initiation of a national policy on parental involvement in Nigeria.

7.4 Limitation of the study and Suggestions for Future Research

The major limitation of the study is that it was conducted on one private school. The planned change process involved teachers and parents in the school. Thus, the findings are specific to the particular case, in a specific location. Therefore, the interpretations arising from the study may not be applicable to other situations. This is to be expected in case study research, as argued in the literature. Because it is an AR study, the primary focus of the recommendations is the organization. However, there are legitimate recommendations for other schools in Nigeria. In the light of this, the following are suggested:

7.4.1 For the organization

- (i) The present study is limited to parents and teachers, without dealing with students and community perception/views on school management. There is a need to investigate how students and the wider community consider school management of parental involvement.
- (ii) Research on specific organizational challenges on parental involvement should be conducted, rather than issues that concern parental involvement as a whole. This will give a more detailed view of the specific organizational challenge of parental involvement, and help management improve the specific area. In this regard, each of the organizational challenges found in this study can be subjected to further and extensive investigation.

7.4.2 For Other Schools in Nigeria

- (i) The examination of organizational challenges could be replicated in other schools in Nigeria in order to identify whether or not organizational challenges are the same elsewhere.

- (ii) Further studies to identify organizational challenges in specific contexts (social, economic, religious, cultural and the like) in private schools is recommended, as the results could be helpful in fostering better management in schools, while improving parent-school relationships and providing mechanisms for policy formulation that improves school administration.
- (iii) This present study is the only known insider action research effort by a school practitioner (scholar practitioner) in at least Northern Nigeria; therefore it is recommended that school practitioners be encouraged to engage in insider action research to investigate not only organizational management of challenges of parental involvement in the school, but other areas that could be improved to bring about change that will enhance their schools' effectiveness.

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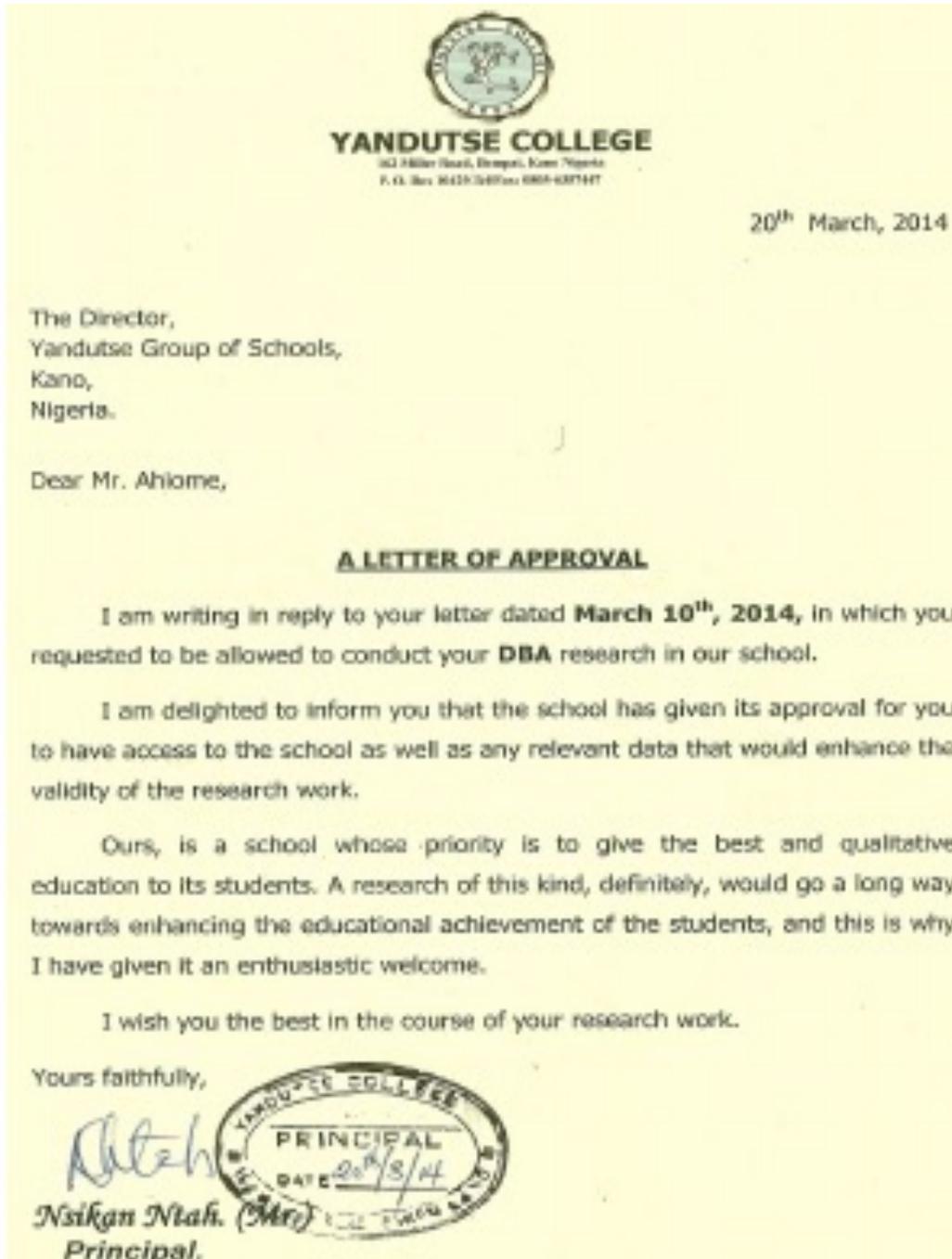
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER GRANTING PERMISSION



APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Title of Study: -

Identifying and Effectively Managing Organizational Challenges in Improving Parental Involvement in a Private School in Kano, Nigeria

Version Number and Date:- GA/PIS/04

14th November, 2015.

Invitation Paragraph

You are being invited to participate in a dialogue between some teachers and parents of our alumni students. The meeting will take place in our school-Yandutse College, Kano. At the dialogue sessions, we will try to identify the organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in the school, so that management can take appropriate steps towards dealing with them. The aim is to initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement and provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. Thus if the methods are deployed, it could help both the school and parents of present and future students to be better engaged in students school lives so as to help them to perform even better in their academic work.

Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why this exercise is necessary. I have carefully prepared the following information to help you understand the process and what it entails. I advise you to take a few minutes of your time to carefully read through. If there is anything that you do not understand or if you would like to have more information for better clarification, please feel free to ask me immediately. I wish to let you know that it is not compulsory for you to accept this invitation. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to participate.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The school and its teachers in collaboration with parents (fathers and mothers or guardians), play significant roles in the educational achievement, as well as the social and emotional development of students. If the level of such collaboration is low, the child's achievement could be adversely compromised. The aim for this collaborative inquiry by the participants is to lead them to develop methods that could be deployed to help the school to initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement and provide a framework for

enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. Managing the identified organizational challenges effectively will assist parents of present and future students to be better engaged in students' school lives.

Why you have been chosen to take part

Being a teacher in Yandutse College Kano, make you an important person in this project. You have a good knowledge of the input of the school management and teachers in the academic and general training of our students. You are also aware of school structures and programs and how parents were engaged in the school lives of students. Your experience and views therefore, will be helpful in this project.

I am therefore inviting willing teachers who have been working in Yandutse College between 2004 to 2012, to volunteer to take part in the dialogue sessions. The meetings will hold at the assembly hall of the senior section of the secondary school and the times will be communicated to you shortly.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in the dialogue sessions is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation and without incurring any disadvantage.

What will happen if I take part?

The meeting will be held in Yandutse College and it will take the form of a Parents-Teachers Group (PTG). In my leadership role as the Director of Yandutse Schools, I will be using the PTG as a platform not to find out what are the challenges faced by the school with respect to parental involvement, and what could be workable for us towards improving our collective efficiency and capacity building. Participation in these meetings is voluntary, but highly desirable. There will be 2 PTGs (one for females and one for males). The proceedings of the PTG meetings will be audio taped for data collection purposes.

There will be 3 sessions of PTG meetings not exceeding 2 hours (120 mins.) each. The sessions for each of the groups will be at 2 weeks interval or within convenient days to be mutually agreed by the participants at the first meeting of the groups. The PTG meetings are essentially between parents and teachers, who as a team will freely identify and discuss the challenges faced by the school, and teachers-parental involvement factors in Yandutse College. At the first meeting, the groups will identify the organizational challenges faced by the school, as well as identify negative and or positive issues affecting school-teacher-parental involvement efforts in Yandutse College. At the second meetings, the groups will brainstorm to suggest and develop workable methods that if implemented at school and at home, could enhance the school capacity to manage the identified challenges and thus enhance parental involvement. The third session will be continuation of the second session when participants will be engaged in fine-tuning the decisions taken or recommendations/suggestions made at previous meetings.

The proceedings of the *PTG* meetings will be audio recorded, and transcribed for data collection purpose. To ensure your anonymity, your names will be coded and not directly mentioned in any of the minutes of meetings. Similarly, the tapes will be destroyed immediately after they are transcribed. Be assured that your identity in the data, in my feedbacks to you and in the minutes of the meeting will be protected. Participants will be briefed on the outcome of the exercise after

the third session of the PTG meeting. A summary of the report of the PTG meetings will be made available to you to read through so as to be assured of your anonymity and the accuracy of the report.

Expenses and or Payments

Participation in this study is voluntary and without pay.

Are there dangers in taking part?

The dialogue is aimed at identifying and effectively managing organizational challenges in improving parental involvement in Yandutse College. Consequently, ways by which the school and the parents can collaborate more closely, so as to improve parental involvement and by extension the academic performance of our students will be identified.

In my capacity as the Director of the school, I am exploring my leadership role to find out what might be wrong with the way parental involvement issues are being managed at the moment, and importantly to collaborate with you to develop what can work for us and particularly how we can better manage any challenges that can be identified. Therefore, be rest assured that your participation or decline will have no adverse effect on you or your employment status with Yandutse College, rather, it will assist in the improvement of our school. There is therefore no risk or disadvantage to any one that participates in the PTG meetings. However, if for any reason you experience any discomfort, or perceive any disadvantage to you in the process, you should kindly make this known to me (Mr. George Ahioime) immediately on phone +234 8056357447.

Are there any benefits in taking part?

If we are able to achieve the aim of this project, the obvious and immediate benefit will be the effect of the improved management capacity to manage the organizational challenges which stand in the way of improved parental involvement. In this way, we hope to develop to improve collaboration between parents and the school, which could help to improve our students' academic performances. If the challenges that are likely to be identified are effectively managed and the methods that are likely to be developed implemented in Yandutse College, other schools in our community could adopt them to suit their local conditions and this could help to further enhance the level of parental involvement and by extension the quality education delivery in Kano State. The project could also improve your practice as a professional teacher.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If in the process of the sessions, you feel unhappy about something or if there arises any problem, please feel free to let me (Mr. George Ahioime) know by contacting me immediately and I will try to help.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

Relevant data will be collected through recorded proceedings of the *PTG* meetings. The data will be anonymised to protect your identity. In the same vein, the audiotapes will be destroyed immediately after they are transcribed to further ensure anonymity of participants.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Your viewpoints are crucial to the success of this project and as such they are highly valued. In view of this, the result of the study will be made available to you in written summary and at the

debriefing session, which will also take place after the third *PTG* meeting. However, be assured that you will not be identifiable from the documents, because your anonymity will be ensured and always protected.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

Please be informed that you can withdraw from participating in the study at any time without explanation. However, results up to the point of your withdrawal may be used if you have no objection to it. Otherwise, you may request if you wish that they be destroyed and no further use will be made of them.

Who should I contact if I have further questions?

If you have further questions, be free to contact me:

Mr. George Ahiome,

15 Yandutse Road,

P.O. Box 10429, Kano.

Tel. No: +2348056357447

APPENDIX C

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE



We are told that management is faced with several challenges in a fast changing world, especially in the light of growing competition, changing technology and above all globalization. In the context of the school, it is known that parental involvement contributes to the improvement in a child's performance. However, the school may be faced with certain challenges in an attempt to improve parental involvement, so that unless these challenges are identified and effectively managed, the objective of parental involvement may not be achieved. This school wide research project is intended to serve the needs of parents, teachers and the school in order to improve our students' academic performance ultimately. With this research, I hope to be able to identify organizational challenges, initiate changes in order to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement and provide a framework for enhancing and sustaining parents-teachers involvement in the school. Thus if the methods are deployed, it could help both the school and parents of present and future students to be better engaged in students school lives so as to help them to perform even better in their academic work.

I therefore need your help with your participation and input in this project, which is an important step towards improving parental involvement, our school programs as well as strategies. Kindly take a few minutes to read through and fill out this survey. The spaces provided are for you to express your views in your own words. After completion, you are requested to return the *TQ* within 14 days by dropping it through the drop box provided at the rear of the Administrative building of the senior section of the college. Please do not indicate your name on the *TQ*, because your identity and your responses must be kept confidential.

1) What or who motivated or inspired you to become a teacher

2) What in your view are the organizational challenges being faced by the school in improving parental involvement?

3) Describe your relationship with the parents in the school

4) What ways can the school develop to effectively manage the challenges of parental involvement?

5) What is your perception of the school environment?

6) Tell me about your experiences with parents when you share students' academic progress with them

7) In your opinion, what factors hinder parents' involvement in their child's school life?

8) What do you think are the involvement challenges faced by teachers in the school?

9) What do you think the management should do to enhance teachers' involvement in the school?

10) What do you think about the current staff mix in the school?

11) What are the problems faced in an attempt to enhance parents-teachers involvement in the school?

12) How in your opinion can parental involvement be enhanced in the school?

13) What framework do you think should be put in place by the school management in order to enhance parents-teachers involvement in the school?

14) What do you think are the problems facing teachers that could directly impact their level of involvement?

15) What is your view about school-parent and parent-school communication?

16) Describe the current nature of the school climate and environment

17) What in your view could be the problems faced by parents in their attempt to be involved in the academic life of their children or wards?

18) What can the school management do to enhance the relationship between teachers and parents?

19) In what areas do you think that parents should be more involved in the academic life of their children or wards?

20) Is there anything else that you would like to say about this research project?
