

A close-up photograph of two young children. The child in the foreground is looking intently at an open book they are holding. The child in the background is looking towards the camera. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay in the center where the title is placed.

The Notion of
Parental Involvement and Education Burkina Faso
- The influence of class related cultural factors -

3316092

Angelique Pronk

Juni 2010

Utrecht University - Christian Relief and Development Organization

Masters program Social Education and Youth Policy

Supervisor: Prof. dr. M. de Haan

The Notion of Parental Involvement and Education Burkina Faso - The influence of class related cultural factors -



Christian Relief and Development Organization
Organisation Chrétienne de Secours et de Développement
Burkina Faso



Universiteit Utrecht

3316092

Angelique Pronk

Juni 2010

Utrecht University - Christian Relief and Development Organization

Masters program Socialization, Education and Youth Policy

Supervisor: Prof. dr. M. de Haan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis is the final result of five years of study. It is impossible to thank everyone who has been involved. Nevertheless, I want to thank a number of people without whom it would not have been possible to bring this study to a successful end. First, I would like to thank my parents for their unconditional support. My brothers, for their humour and the faith they always had in me. My friends, who did not mind to listen to my stories over and over again and gave me courage when I did not feel like writing. Moreover, this thesis would never have become what it is today without the help and useful critics of my supervisor Prof. dr. M. de Haan and, for that, I am thankful to her. Foremost, I would like to thank Marije for all the help she gave me writing my thesis and the wonderful moments we had together in Ouagadougou; we were a good team.

These acknowledgements would not be complete if I did not mention the people who ensured the four months I could stay in Ouagadougou. First, I would like to thank mr. Robert Bagnan and dr. Rogier van 't Rood for facilitating the internship. A special thank goes to Robert Bagnan for his enthusiasm and the wonderful cooperation we had at C.RE.D.O. and to Pastor Sanogo for the untouchable trust he had in us finishing our studies. I would like to thank Anne, who made me feel at home the first few days and who was always willing to help and listen to my stories. Furthermore, my colleagues at C.RE.D.O.; Philip, Igor and Adwenthoumda. I would like to thank them for the great lunches together, the stories we shared, the discussions we had and the love you guys shared with me for your country Burkina Faso. Especially, I would like to thank Adwenthoumda for his unforgettable assistance in setting up the research and collecting the data. Moreover, I will never forget the African performances and the invitations for social events so we got inside the Mossi culture; Barka, billy fou!¹

Actually, I would like to thank everyone who over the past five years has contributed to my development, has aroused my curiosity and who has supported me to overcome all challenges. My thesis is the provisional result.

¹ Translation: Thanks, take care! A frequently used sentence in the Mossi culture, in their language: Mooré.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated parental involvement in the sponsorship schools of the Christian Relief and Development Organization in Burkina Faso. It was examined how parental involvement in Burkina Faso could be related to western standards of parental involvement set by Epstein (1984). Research showed that parental involvement leads to higher educational success for children. Factors that were expected to relate to parental involvement were school policies, responsible actors in the education of the child and the functions parents allocated to education. Central to the study was the relation between class related cultural factors and parental involvement. Focus group interviews were held in nine schools with parents (n =152) with a child in sponsorship by the Christian Relief and Development Organization – abbreviated as C.R.E.D.O - , teachers and headmasters (n = 55).

Results of qualitative analysis revealed that parents put a high value on education. Both collectivistic and individualistic functions of school appeared. Although individualistic functions were mentioned, in the end they turned out to be collectivistic goals. It could be suggested, that because of the transition period, parental involvement on western standards cannot be expected. Collective thoughts appeared within the responsible actors in education as well. Parents are responsible at home and teachers at school. The child gets responsibility itself as well, because of illiteracy of parents, but is not an active agent. Since Burkina Faso is in a period of transition (Lewis, 2001) both Western and non-western features appeared.

Barriers that were often mentioned for showing parental involvement were shortages in economic, social and institutional capital. Parents lacked in economic resources, had different patterns of family life and lacked knowledge about education as an institute. Moreover parents were often illiterate. Despite this, parental involvement did exist in a different form. Parents gave their children the opportunity to do homework, showed interest in studies, did buy copybooks, searched help from outside to help and came to school when necessary. Although, parents said they came to school, teachers stated that parents have to come to school more often. It appeared that parents only came to school when it concerns problems.

It can be stated that class related cultural factors influence parental involvement. Parents have less institutional, economical and social capital which explains differences in parental involvement between Western and non-Western countries. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that it is not a fact of not wanting to participate, but a fact of how to participate. All barriers for parents should be considered and educational partnerships need time to develop.

CONTENT

Introduction	2
Theoretical Background	3
Definition of parental involvement	4
Factors that relate to parental involvement	7
Methods	10
Research group	10
Measurement instruments	11
Procedure	12
Analysis.	14
Results	16
Results parents	18
Results teachers	26
Discussion and Conclusion	28
Conclusion I	28
Conclusion II	29
Suggestions for C.R.E.D.O	31
Limitations and Implications	33
References	35

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education has been extensively researched. It is acknowledged as a significant factor in school development and school success of children in primary schools (Epstein, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Comer, 1984; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski & Apostoleris, 1997; Geourgiou, 1997; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). However, the definition of parental involvement in Western and non-Western countries differs. There are several significant factors that relate to educational partnerships between parents and school. The aim of this study is to explicate if western levels of parental involvement set by Epstein (1984) can be linked to parental involvement in Burkina Faso. The target group of parents comes from different villages and cities all over Burkina Faso.

Since the introduction of Education for All in 1990 primary education is a widespread phenomenon in Africa (UNESCO, 2000). Although Burkina Faso is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, a large part of the government budget is invested in education (UNDP, 2009). Despite these efforts there are no significant changes in the education process. NGO's are trying to bridge the educational gap in Burkina Faso. One of these NGO's is the Christian Relief and Development Organization [abbreviated as C.RE.D.O.].

C.RE.D.O. helps to increase the educational level in Burkina Faso with the "Projet de Parrainage". This is one out of twelve programs C.RE.D.O has developed. The particular aim of this sponsorship program is to give children from disadvantaged families a chance at education. The sponsorship program was established in 1992 and currently there are over 4000 sponsored children in education (Ziba, 2006).

Evaluation of the sponsorship program by van 't Rood (2007) shows that the parental involvement of these sponsored children is relatively low, since educational partnerships between parents and the school have not been established. To ensure the sustainability of the sponsorship program, van 't Rood (2007) recommended to set up a participatory approach. Harting and Klompenhouwer (2009) secure these findings in their research. They interviewed parents and teachers into parental involvement at schools which hold children with a sponsorship from C.RE.D.O. It appears that several practical factors, such as poverty, food shortage, illiteracy, a lack of information and other daytime activities, contribute to the lower level of parental involvement in Burkina Faso. Since, it shortens the time for parental involvement. Parents were found to be aware why involvement is important, but did not know how to participate. Teachers in contrast acknowledged that parents view education as less important in the child's life (Harting & Klompenhouwer, 2009).

It is a simple representation to address lower parental involvement to apathy or as a lack of interest in education. It is important to note that parental involvement is not just remarked by the value parents give to education, but in which ways they are able to express several types of involvement as well (Lareau, 2000). Therefore, class-related cultural factors will be considered as a central subject in this study. The current research will examine what parental involvement is according to parents in Burkina Faso. Furthermore, it will be investigated which goals and functions parents allocate to school and how these functions are related to parental involvement. Similarly, the responsible actors according to parents in education will be investigated and these findings will be subsequently related to parental involvement. Equally, it will be examined if the school policy actively tries to involve parents, by providing invitations and information about how to become involved.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

DEFINITION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

There are many reasons for developing school and family partnerships. Research on family environments for nearly a quarter century shows that children have advantages when their parents support and encourage school activities. Parental involvement improves school programs and school climate, provides family services and support, increase parental skills and leadership, connects families with each other in the school and in the community and helps teachers with their work (Epstein, 1995). However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to promote children's success in school and in later life (Epstein, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Comer, 1984; Grolnick et al., 1997; Geourgiou, 1997).

In this research, parental involvement will be defined as: "The dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain" (Grolnick et al, 1997; pp. 241). These domains can hold diverse activities; as helping with homework, attendance at events or conferences, participation in a school council or volunteer work (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). However, real partnership encounters reciprocity, so it is better to speak in terms of educational partnerships (Booijink, 2007). Epstein (1995) is the founder of educational partnerships and designed the most comprehensive model of parental involvement. This model views shared responsibility between schools and families as "a set of overlapping spheres of influence" (Epstein, 1995; pp. 214) that direct the communication between parents, students, and teachers (Epstein, 1995).

LEVELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BY EPSTEIN

Epstein (1995) defines six levels of involvement opportunities for parents and schools. These are: assisting parents with child-rearing skills (I), communicating with families (II), providing school volunteer opportunities (III), involving parents in home-based learning (IV), involving parents in school decision making (V) and involving parents in school-community collaborations (VI). These different levels will be successively discussed.

Type I described parenting and child-rearing skills to prepare children for school. This is the basic obligation of parents, which refers to responsibility for children's health and safety. The aim is to help all families to establish a home environment that support school learning and behaviour. Programs can assist with health, nutrition home visits and other services. Parents should have self-confidence in parenting, should be conscious of their challenges in parenting and feel support from school and other parents (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

Type II forms the basic responsibility of schools to enhance communication from school to home about the program and children's development. Furthermore this includes the form and frequency of communication to inform parents. Next to that there should be home to school communication by parents about challenges and progress at home. To assist families there could be language translators, a regular schedule of useful notices and clear information about course programs and school policies. The goal is to monitor and be aware of the child's progress and to respond effectively to problems (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

Type III refers to parent volunteering; to organize and recruit parents for help and support. Parents can assist teachers, administrators or children in the school. In addition, it refers to parents who come to school to support and watch performances or other events. This can be achieved by school and classroom volunteer programs, meetings, class parents or other activities to improve school programs. Objective is to understand the job of the teacher, increasing the comfort in school and to transfer school activities at home. Parents can get awareness that they are welcomed and valued at school and gain specific skills of volunteer work (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

Type IV involves parents in learning activities at home. It is about child initiated demands for help and mainly to transfer ideas from teacher to parents, to monitor children. Ideas about how to help students at home with their homework, planning and other curriculum related activities should be provided. Parents should be aware of the child as a learner and by that appreciate skills of teachers (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

Type V is about decision making. By including parents in school decision making, they can develop leader skills. This can be reached by establishing parent organizations, parent committees or advisory councils. The result should be that parents feel ownership of school and are aware of school-, district-, and state policies. Moreover parents should be conscious about their parental voices in school decisions. They have input that effects the child's situation (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

Type VI is about collaborating with the community. Resources and services from the community need to be identified to strengthen school programs, family practices and student development. Information on community-, health-, cultural-, recreational- and social support should be provided so parents get knowledge of local resources. Children and their parents can enhance their skills and talents or obtain necessary services (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

INDICATIONS WHY LEVELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DIFFER IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Although parental involvement is positively related to school success, many parents are not as involved as teachers would like (Lareau, 2000). The assumption is that when children feel

encouraged by both school and home, they make an effort to achieve more school success. Whilst there is a clear expectation for parents to become involved in schools, and to take a greater part in their children's education to reach school success, there is still a lack of involvement (Epstein and Sanders, 2005; Epstein, 1995). As said it is important to note that there should be occasions for parents to express their involvement (Lareau, 2000). It's not about whether to become involved, but rather how to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

In Africa, schooling is a recent topic if we compare it to more western societies. Only in 1990 the convention on the rights of the child was established. The objective of this convention was Education for All (EFA); an international initiative to provide education for every citizen in every society (UNESCO, 2000). Consequently in Africa education is in its early stage; parents are less educated, therefore no level of parental involvement on Western standards can be expected (Lareau, 2000).

The Western culture often is associated with values as individualization and independency, unlike non-Western cultures where collectivism and dependency are valued (Eldering, 2006). Individualistic societies are characterized by autonomy and individual achievement, where collective societies idealize development by interdependence with the family (Bugental & Grusec, 2006). The purpose of education according to collectivistic societies is to acquire the traditions and norms of that culture in order to function as a respected in group member. (Allik, Realso, 2004). Research from Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch and Hernandez (2003) shows differences in the parents' and teachers' role in education. The parents' role in education in collectivistic societies is primarily to raise children and the teachers' role is to teach and foster moral development. Where in individualistic societies the role of parents is to raise children and to teach and teachers are there to teach (Greenfield, Quiroz & Raeff, 2000). Nevertheless, no culture or society is absolutely individualistic or collectivistic; there are differences within each culture how members embrace the culture's core principles (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fissch & Hernandez, 2003).

These cultural models influence the mindset of parents. Parents have culturally inspired ideas of socialization and this influences parenting behaviour indirectly. In Burkina Faso, parents live in more collectivistic cultures and have different forms of cultural capital; in other words other class related cultural factors. These cultural factors could explain differences in parental involvement between Western and non-Western countries (Elbers, 2002). A lot of underdeveloped countries are in a transition period, and in between collectivistic and individualistic societies (Lewis, 2001). It could be stated that behaviours of parents are related to class related cultural factors. Different factors are included here; economical, social and institutionalized factors (Lareau, 1987). A lack in economical resources - occupation and income

- and social factors - like patterns of family life, gender relations and social status - are related to parental involvement. Values that parents assign to these factors shape the priority for parents to encourage their children to go to school and to show parental involvement; in hope for better life than the parents have had themselves (Lareau, 1987). Moreover, institutionalized factors - academic qualifications and institutional recognition - are important for showing parental involvement (Lareau, 1987). Parents are often lacking in knowledge, so they see no role for themselves in the educational preparations of their children. Research showed that parents in non-western cultures feel primarily responsible for the livelihood of their children (Eldering, 2006). For developing a shared responsibility, socially constructed and historical variables need to be taken into account (Lareau, 2000). There should be awareness of the deep-seated institutional and individual histories in developing good partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2005). The history of colonialism has left a mark on generations in developing countries. Rural people are habituated to be passive objects in development, rather than being active agents (Michener, 1998). In general, class related cultural factors on economical, social and intellectual areas need to be considered. Cultural practices of societies need to be interpreted considering the cultural mindset of that society (Bugental & Gruses, 2006). However, individuals in diverse cultures interpret cultural models in a different way (Killen & Wainryb, 2000).

FACTORS THAT RELATE TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

FUNCTIONS/VALUE OF SCHOOL

The universal characteristic of education is of organized socialization. Socialization concerns internalizing and learning the culture of the society. Organized socialization has two distinct functions: qualification and identification. Qualification refers to knowledge, communication skills, decision making skills and other specific skills for various social positions: as a parent or citizen (Drooglever Fortuijn, 2003). The identification function relates to the non-cognitive aspects of society, that stimulates identification within a particular social system and ensure its own position within it (Drooglever Fortuijn, 2003). Different educational goals have been formulated:

1. Identification
2. Qualification
3. Cultural Development
4. Social Development
5. Emotional Development
6. Becoming a loyal citizen

However, as with parental involvement, beliefs about the functions of schools differ within cultures. Class-related cultural factors influence children's performance, by shaping educational

motivation and goals. The social class model refers to the theory of the 'culture of poverty'. The culture of poverty theory suggests that poor people remain poor because of feelings of helplessness, dependency and marginality. Therefore, they have a unique value system (Lewis, 1996). The culture of poverty attributes the lower level of parental involvement in schooling to the lower value which parents place on education (Lareau, 1987).

Development of intelligence in non-western settings is often seen as knowing how to behave according to conventional moral and social values (Eldering, 2006). The emphasis is on external structure and discipline and for children to show respectful and conforming behavior (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). Moreover, schools use particular linguistic structures, authority patterns and curricula. Not all non-western parents are familiar with these social arrangements. According to Bourdieu (in Lareau, 1987) cultural resources should be facilitating for children's adjustment for schooling and academic achievement. Cultural resources could be converted into 'cultural capital'. However, all parents share the desire for their children's educational success; socialization leads them to construct different pathways for accomplishing that success (Lareau, 1987). Parents have different thoughts about how to develop as a child, than barely through education. Parental beliefs relate to their functions of school (Lareau, 1987).

On one hand it can be said that parents put a low value on education because of the culture of poverty. On the other hand it can be stated that in hope for a better life parents encourage children to go to school (Lareau, 1987). Parents' cultural resources –economically, socially and intellectually – are a foundation where upon parents can show differences in functions on education.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND REACTIONS TO THAT

The most significant predictors of parental involvement are specific school programs and teacher practices that support and guide parental involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1989). Research shows that school practices to inform and involve parents, are more important for involvement, than any other factor (Epstein & Dauber, 1989). School is an important source of information and support for parents to socialize and educate their children. A lack of involvement may appear from educational differences between parents and teachers or from the school's lack of an active attitude (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

School policies make a significant difference whether or not parents become involved and feel informed about their children's education. Parents are more involved at school and home when they perceive that the school encourages parental involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1989). Specific invitations of schools and occasions are essential to enhance parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Teachers get higher ratings if they regularly involve parents in education (Epstein & Dauber, 1989). These results take place mostly because

schools include parents in range of different roles and in doing so, they increase communication and trust among parents.

Most parents in most countries are eager to become involved in their children's education, but they need to know that they are welcomed and respected by the school. To parents, partnerships with schools require respect and responsiveness to the families' needs and goals. Schools should give families information and support they need to experience competent and comfortable feelings before they become involved school activities (Epstein & Sanders (2002)).

CONCLUSION

This theoretical overview attempts to show what parental involvement is, according to scientific western literature. In general it could be said that Burkina Faso is in a transition period; in between a collectivistic and individualistic society, which relates to parental involvement. This study will investigate whether western standards of parental involvement can be related to levels of parental involvement found in Burkina Faso. To answer this question sub questions are formed:

1. Who are responsible actors in the education of the child?
2. What is parental involvement in Burkina Faso?
3. What are functions of school? How does the view on the functions of school relate with parental involvement?
4. What is the view from parents on efforts of school to involve them? How does this view relate to parental involvement?
5. What is the view from teachers on the efforts of schools to involve parents? How does this view relate to parental involvement?

Central to the study is the relation between cultural capital and parental involvement. Besides, differences between parents in rural or urban areas will be examined and the group interaction process and dynamics during the focus group interview will be investigated.

METHOD

Focus group interview were used during the current research on parental involvement. This enacts that parents, teachers and headmasters were interviewed in groups. Interviews were conducted with respondents throughout February and March 2010 at nine schools spread over Burkina Faso, West-Africa. Focus group interviews were used, because this was the fastest and most efficient way to gather data from multiple participants in short time (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009; Sim, 1998). Besides, parents in Burkina Faso live in more collectivistic societies and it is expected that these parents are not used to individualistic interviewing. Using group interviews, participants may feel empowered by a sense of group membership and thereby be more spontaneous, which may increase the sharing of information (Sim, 1998). Nevertheless, some weaknesses need to be identified. First, the presence of a group influences participants in what they say and how they say it in certain subjects (Morgan, 1996). Therefore, it was ensured that all participants had the opportunity to answer and a supportive atmosphere was ought to be established. In addition, interviews were analyzed on the individual level; group interactions and dynamics were identified. Secondly, because of using small focus groups, results cannot be generalized (Morgan, 1996). However, focus group interviews are open to all sources of information, so new theoretical theories can be established.

RESEARCH GROUP

In order to obtain information about parental involvement, information was needed from parents and teachers concerning their practices on participation around the child and the school environment. The sponsorship project of C.RE.D.O. supports an amount of eighteen primary schools throughout Burkina Faso. Schools were selected based on location, so that half of the schools found to be in more rural (outside city centre) areas and half of them in more urban (inside city centre) areas. Making this distinction, differences between rural and urban areas on the view of parental involvement, functions of school and school policies could be determined.

Focus group interviews were held with parents of children who are in the sponsorship project. When choosing group interviews it was recommended to invite between eight and twelve participants (Sim, 1998; McLafferty, 2004); enough to guarantee diversity and so that participants still feel comfortable to share their opinion (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). Furthermore it was approved to choose a homogeneous sample of participants, because the composition of the group affects the degree of compliance in opinions (Sim, 1998; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). In each school the headmaster was requested to identify a sample of ten parents, involved in the sponsorship program, who were randomly invited for the

meeting. Homogeneity was expected, because C.RE.D.O. ought to choose schools for sponsorships in disadvantaged areas, which decreases the risk on differences in wealth, background and educational level. The number of parents that actually attended the meeting differed to a great extent; from 9 parents up to 45 parents. The number of parents attending the meeting in rural or urban areas did not differ significantly. In total 152 parents were interviewed in groups of which 77 were male and 75 were female.

In addition, teachers were interviewed in focus groups. Teachers were interviewed to verify and complete the answers of parents. At the same time, teachers had a total different view on parental involvement, so it was interesting to determine differences and agreements between the two groups. All teachers from the schools were invited to participate in the focus group interview. These totals differed from 3 up to 11 teachers, including the headmaster. In total an amount of 55 teachers were interviewed. Table 1 shows an overview of the entire research group.

Table 1. Overview of Research Group

Name of school	Total number of parents	M	V	Teachers and headmaster	Inside city centre	Outside city centre
Betsaleel	9	4	5	4	X	
Evangelique de Banakaledaga	45	35	10	7		X
Raoul Follereau	15	6	9	4	X	
Evangelique de Salbisgo	9	4	5	4		X
Evangelique de Réo	9	6	3	3		X
Evangelique de Leo	17	4	13	8	X	
Wendlasida	18	7	11	11		X
Evangelique de Yako	13	6	7	7		X
Geswende	17	5	12	7	X	
Total	152	77	75	55	4	5

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

Due to the fact that there was no standard questionnaire available for parents and teachers, questions were based on literature research and afterwards through consideration of the C.RE.D.O. staff. This precautionary measure was taken to point the questions in a way that parents and teachers would understand and questions were culturally adjusted; a direct manner of asking question could be perceived as impolite by participants. Moreover, this preventive measure was used to increase the instrumental validity of the research questions.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS

The interview consisted of three main themes: functions of school, definition of parental involvement and efforts of schools to improve parental involvement. First of all parents were asked about the function of primary education. Besides, parents could give their value to education and enlighten their opinion why it's important that children attend primary school. An important part of the questions was dedicated to find out which persons were responsible for everything what happens around the child at school.

A second subject was about how parents could support their child during primary school. Parents were asked for a definition of parental involvement and about how they support the child at school and at home. The aim of these questions was to find out if there were differences between the definition of parents in Burkina Faso and the definition and levels of parental involvement set by western literature. A different question was addressed to parents about how they could help their children even though they are illiterate.

The last part of the questions focused on the efforts of schools to involve parents in the primary education of children. The aim was to investigate whether or not the low participation level of parents could be due to school management. Questions were concentrated on the amount of invitations from schools and in which ways schools were trying to increase parental involvement. Furthermore it was asked if the school was open to parents and whether or not teachers actually listen to parents. At last it was examined to what extent parental associations play a role regarding participation of parents.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

Teachers were interviewed to verify answers of the parents. The questions focused especially on teachers' view on school policy and their efforts to involve parents. Teachers were asked what they do to stimulate parental involvement. Asked was if they invited parents or organized conferences to inform parents. Next to that it was asked if parents did attend school to ask for their child and what parents could do more to help teachers.

PROCEDURE

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The interviews with both parents and teachers were semi-structured and lasted for about one hour. Before starting the interviews, a pilot interview was conducted. Parents and teachers at one school were interviewed to assess if the questions were intended to lead to the desired answers. Modifies that were made in the questions for the final research were negligible; therefore both pilot interviews could be added to the results. The final research questions were carried out in eight other schools. All interviews were audio taped, but field notes were also

taken as much as possible. The audiotape was primarily used to verify and validate answers given.

The interviews started after introducing the researcher, the subject and the goal of the research. For parents the interviews questions were conducted in French, Dioula or Mooré - local languages - and translated into English. Teachers were interviewed in French and these were translated into English. Most of the interviews took place in the open air and some of them in classrooms. The interviews were held by two interviewers and led by an employee of C.RE.D.O., who managed to speak French, English and the local languages. The second interviewer masters the French language as well and made contributions when necessary. The extensive translations made, could have influenced parents' and teachers' original answers, but it is expected that the majority of the answers have been received. Especially because there were two translators present. Through involving an employee of C.RE.D.O., the asymmetrical power relation between the Western researchers and the participants was ought to be diminished. Furthermore, this imbalance was decreased by socializing informally with the participants and using words from the local language Mooré when welcoming and thanking participants.

PARENTS

A problem coming with group interviewing is the under quotation of alternative viewpoints from less articulated parents within the group. The consequence is that these dissenting opinions will not be heard and parents misleadingly concur with the established view (Sim, 1998). To minimize these consequences, it was ensured that all parents had the opportunity to participate and to answer the research questions. Special attention was given to the establishment of a supportive atmosphere that supported parents to share their views (McLafferty, 2004). It was preferable that headmasters were not attending the interview with parents, because they might influence and shape the answers of parents. Because men often started answering, women were individually designating to answer the question. Moreover less confident people were encouraged to share their viewpoints. Taking the total of participants of the interviews in consideration an average of 75 percent of all present men talked during the interview. In contrary to women, where only 65 percent took the word during the interview.

TEACHERS

Teachers were interviewed in smaller groups which made it easier to give all teachers the opportunity to participate in the interview. Furthermore, special attention was given to establish a supportive atmosphere. Because men, especially the headmasters, shared their opinions more often, women were individually designated to answer questions. Though this measure was taken, only 35 percent of the female teachers took the word. In four schools the female teachers

were too shy to share their opinion even though they were individually asked. If we keep those four schools out, 60 percent of all female teachers shared their opinion. From all male teachers attending the interview 80 percent shared their opinion. If a headmaster was attending the interview he took 40 percent of speaking time available.

ANALYSIS

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The focus group interviews of both teachers and parents were analyzed separately. The method used for analyzing focus group interviews is called 'constant comparison' (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). This part of the analysis implies that all interviews in their totality were compared to each other. First, interviews were transcribed in English and afterwards coded and grouped into themes. The qualitative data program used for this analysis was MAXQDA 2007. This program systematically codes data to make consequently qualitative comparisons (Boeije, 2004). First of all, answers on each research question were classified into different themes. Afterwards the appearance of a particular theme was counted and related themes were categorized in one code. Using these codes, it was possible to determine the majority position of parents and teachers in the interview. To ensure that fragments of the interviews were analyzed within their context, it was necessary to switch between the fragments and the entire interview. To illustrate answers of parents and teachers characteristic passages and quotes were used. Although the interviews of parents and teachers were analyzed separately, a comparison was made afterwards to identify consistent or contradictory answers between these groups of respondents. With this comparison, different views were taken into account to guarantee more reliability on the answers of parents and to enhance the trustiness of obtained information.

PARENTS

Though a consensus in data might be indicative for group dynamics, it provides little information on individual views. Next to constant comparison was chosen for a 'micro-interlocutor analyses' on the focus group interviews of parents (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). This method expands the data by looking at interviews on the individual level. The proportion of members that gave dissenting opinions was reported (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). This method is particularly interesting because it was not sure if the researched group was homogeneous. Furthermore a diagram was used to make comparisons in opinions between men and women to see if differences occurred. Only striking differences were noted in the result findings. At last group interactions and dynamics were

analyzed. Since no videotape was made, a global overview of group interactions was based on audiotapes and transcriptions of interviews. It was assessed how an opinion was constructed. It was looked up if responses were complementary and a joint opinion emerged or that opinions differed and whether or not a discussion arose (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). Using this method all results were placed in a more meaningful context, since differences between individual parents were analyzed and situated into the comparisons over the complete interview (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009).

RESULTS

SEQUENCE AND DYNAMICS OF INTERVIEW

PARENTS

Concerning the interviews with parents, some interesting differences were retrieved between men and women. It seemed that women living in more urban areas were better represented in the interviews than women in rural areas. However, in urban areas women were always in majority to men. From all talking parents in urban areas 60 percent were women and these women took 60 percent of all time available talking. In more rural areas 40 percent of the talking parents were women and they took 30 percent of all time available talking. In rural areas the opinion of men seemed to be overrepresented in the interviews. Next to this it appeared that the amount of parents participating in the interview influenced the amount of people talking. At three interviews where nine parents participated, all parents shared their opinion. At the interview taken at Banakaladega where 45 parents showed up, only 20 percent shared their view. When more participants attended the interview, a decrease in people sharing their opinion became visible.

Regarding the construction of the interviews, it emerged that men as well as women started to answer the interview questions. Since more men shared their opinion during the interviews, within the sequence of the interview men had more turns to give their opinion. Therefore, men answered more in a row, where women intervened sometimes. Although, a few times it appeared that women shared their opinion in a row as well.

It was observable that no discussion took place during the interview. Concerning the function of education, parents gave additional responses or shared a new function of education. Because a lot of different functions were called and parents only gave complementary answers, no common view emerged at the end. The question who was responsible for the child gave the most different opinions. Parents didn't choose to discuss - they didn't even said they disagree - but gave their own opinion afterwards. When parents did disagree during the interview, they mentioned a total different view or started their sentence with "But". In two interviews parents articulated a joint opinion. They all agreed with the last opinion given. In four other interviews all kind of different opinions emerged and in the end no specific agreement or disagreement was noticed. In three interviews a collective opinion was not expressively formed, but at the end, when asked for complementary opinions, no parents reacted, so it could be assumed they agreed with the previous settled opinions. It could be stated that there was a more open ended nature.

It seems that parents in Burkina Faso are not used to discuss; parents silently agree with the before mentioned view or add something new. However, parents are not afraid of sharing a

different view. In the end a lot of different arguments emerged. Since no consensus could be determined, all different arguments were analyzed and accumulated. In the following section the most prevalent views will be highlighted, using characteristic statements.

TEACHERS

Concerning teachers, no differences were retrieved between schools in urban or rural areas. Here, the amount of male teachers attending the interview influenced the amount female teachers who shared their opinion. In about 80 percent of the schools male teachers were in majority relative to female teachers, which makes the opinion of male teachers overrepresented in the interviews. In the other 20 percent, where female teachers were in majority, female teachers shared their opinion more often.

RESULTS PARENTS

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS IN EDUCATION

The first sub question concerned the responsible actors around the education of the child. From what parents reported, three groups of persons emerged; teachers, parents and the child itself. The most frequent response was parents calling themselves as being the most responsible person in the education of the child. In all interviews, opinions were established in a different way. In four schools the first opinion was that the teachers and parents together were responsible. Although, the role of parents got extra attention. In two of these interviews the child also was mentioned to be responsible. In the following three schools parents first started talking about the teacher, then the parents got involved and the child was called. Only men accused teachers alone of being responsible. One exceptional answer was mentioned by a father from Betsaleel who accused teachers of bad teaching methods, which resulted in bad results. Parents reacted that not everything could be appointed to the teacher. The last two interviews gave the first responsibility to the child. At one of these schools - Evangelique de Yako - the parents, teacher and child together were called responsible in which everybody agreed, though the role of the parents was most important. At the last school - Geswende - there was a lot of disagreement among parents. First, parents mentioned the child was too little to be responsible, subsequently parents were mentioned as being responsible, but they were illiterates; which made the teacher in the end responsible, but the teacher cannot do it on his own. No joint opinion emerged here.

Only in two schools, Betsaleel and Evangelique de Yako - one settled in an urban area and one school in a rural area - there was one father and one mother who both mentioned the three groups of persons at the same time responsible. Although, in more than 65 percent of the interviews, all three groups were mentioned, but no responses occurred where parents stated

that all three together were responsible concerning the primary education of the child. From what all the parents have mentioned, it could be concluded that most of them agree that both the teacher and the parent play their role in the education of their child. As reported by parents, they considered themselves to be responsible at home and the teacher to be responsible at school. At the majority of the schools, parents perceived the child itself as being responsible as well. They stated that the child is responsible for his own future and should master to do homework himself, because of illiteracy of parents. One father at Geswende explained: " [...] If a child comes back home with copybooks, we cannot check if he worked hard or not. We cannot read anything. It is difficult to help the child".

RELATION BETWEEN RESPONSIBLE ACTORS IN EDUCATION AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents mentioned three groups of responsible persons in education. The results showed that in Burkina Faso we cannot speak of a shared responsibility. Parents see themselves as the most responsible person at home, but teachers are responsible at school. The child is not yet seen as an active agent in transferring information. It is an exception when parents call the three groups together responsible. This makes it reasonable that not all levels of parental involvement appear in Burkina Faso. Since the role of the parent is at home and the responsibility of the teacher is to teach at school (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fish and Hernandez, 2003); the primary role of parents seems to be in the home environment and learning activities at home. Parents and teachers seem to have their own areas where they influence children. There are no overlapping areas of influence (Epstein, 1995). It is not likely that there are parents in decision making positions or actively involved in volunteering. Lareau (1987) showed that parents, who were not sure of their own educational capabilities, depend more on the teacher to educate their children. Schools have ownership here and parents are not conscious of their voices and the influence they can have on their children's education. Furthermore, in western literature the child is seen as an active agent and transmitter of information. Children in Burkina Faso are less seen as active agents which also could relate to the amount of involvement parents show.

FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL

The second sub question, examined which functions parents allocate to school. Functions expected were qualification, growing into a good citizen and helping parents later in life. All functions that parents mentioned in Burkina Faso will subsequently be discussed. It is apparent that parents only mentioned end functions of school and collective functions of school seem to be overrepresented.

QUALIFICATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Parents in all researched schools sponsored by C.RE.D.O., valued education as important for their child. They acknowledged the importance of education for acquiring knowledge and skills. According to parents, acquiring skills in reading and writing French is the main function of education. This point was equally often mentioned by men and women. The majority of the parents mentioned reading to be more important than writing. A father at Evangelique de Raoul illustrated this as follows: "If you are not educated you are a blind man. An example is by receiving a letter. You do not understand what is in it or you should give it to somebody else to read it for you"

Another major reason parents have put forward is acquiring knowledge in general and practical things as social skills. Parents mentioned that children not only need knowledge, but moral and social values that are characteristic for their culture as well. In this way they can enhance their identification with the culture of the community. Besides, in two schools parents describe expressively that knowledge in languages, history and culture is important for communicating with other cultures and for understanding each other.

PREVENT ILLITERACY

The answers parents gave concerning the function of schooling are linked to the fact that they themselves are illiterate. In six schools there is at least one parent who said that parents themselves were in darkness and ignorance because of illiteracy. Out of these six schools, four schools were situated in rural areas. Parents suffered from being illiterate and they do not want their children to be like that: "As parents we are still in darkness. Now the light is shining. There is light now for children to become good children in the future. The light is knowledge". This reaction is followed by the answer that children should be open-minded: "[...] We want their eyes to be opened. To let them become somebody in the future. If a child does not go to school their eyes are hidden". Parents want to prevent their children from the suffering they experienced by sending them to school. Parents suffer because they cannot read and write; their eyes are hidden and they label this as darkness. Because of going to school children get knowledge; they know how to read and write. With this knowledge their eyes will be opened for a lot of sources of information where parents do not have access to.

FUTURE LIFE

Responsible adult

From what parents indicated it could be concluded that education is valued for becoming a responsible adult later in life. In all interviews parents addressed education to an improved future and more success in future life. Parents primarily believed that later in life the child has to

become a responsible, good adult; to be somebody in the future. But they stated that children need social knowledge as well. In four schools parents mention that children should learn how to behave and that they should acquire social skills. One father at Wendlasida added to this “[...] If the child becomes a great personality, the whole community and even the whole world will benefit from this”.

Find a job

What parents believed as being an important objective by attending primary school is finding a job in the future. In six out of nine schools parents addressed more education to the fact that these children will find a job in future life easier. There were no differences between parents in rural or urban areas. A mother at Betsaleel explained: “Children should become good people in the future. With a diploma they can help to enhance the development of themselves and the society”. Out of the other three schools where parents did not mention finding a job specifically, they did indicate that children with primary education could enhance the development of society and have a more guaranteed future.

Help parents

In the majority of answers given, parents saw education as a more guaranteed future for themselves as well. An explanation was that by attending primary education, children can help their parents out of economics. Parents primarily think that children can take care of them when getting older and help them with practical things as reading letters. As one father at Geswende said about his own education: “[...] Education is there to save myself and to save and help other people”. And another father at Evangelique de Yako added to this “If a child knows how to read and write he can help parents in trading and agriculture. If other countries are more developed than it is because of knowing education is important”.

RELATION BETWEEN FUNCTION OF SCHOOL AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Education is highly valued by parents in Burkina Faso. Parents do not want their children to be in darkness and ignorance as they are themselves. Their children had to go forward and take care of their parents later on. For this reason, it could be suggested that showing parental involvement is important.

Parents mentioned functions that we see in the Western context, like qualification, identification, finding a job and becoming a good person. However, these goals were directly associated with collectivistic thoughts. Parents mentioned that by having a good job, knowledge

and by becoming a good person the whole community will benefit and other people can be saved. Both individualistic and collectivistic goals seemed to overlap each other. Besides, parents mentioned goals like helping parents later in life and preventing illiteracy which are characteristic for collective societies. It was apparent that the function of school is focused upon collectivistic goals of the society. Collective societies idealize development by interdependence with family and community (Bugental & Grusec, 2006). Since Burkina Faso is in a period of transition (Lewis, 2001) both Western and non-western features appeared. This could be related to the amount of parental involvement parents' show. A suggestion is that since not only western functions of education appeared - but also functions specific to the Burkina Faso culture - not all western levels of parental involvement appear.

LEVELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT SET BY EPSTEIN

In this part the results of two sub questions will be described. The first question concerns the definition of parental involvement in Burkina Faso. The six levels of parental involvement by Epstein (1984) and in which way they appear in Burkina Faso, will be discussed subsequently. In these six levels, two levels especially refer to the efforts of schools to involve parents; Type II: Communication between school and parents and Type III: Parent volunteering. The results on these two types of parental involvement will be used to describe the relation between the efforts of schools to involve parents and parental involvement.

DEFINITION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents were asked for their definition of parental involvement; different views among parents emerged. According to a father at Evangelique de Leo "it is already nice that you accept that your child goes to school [...]". On the other hand a father at Evangelique de Yako explained: "There are many levels of participation in which parents can assist their children [...]". He cited that parents should show children the importance of schooling. Besides major differences, there were a lot of agreements among parents about parental involvement. Parents did not mention a real definition of parental involvement. They did mention different sources of parental involvement they showed. These forms of parental involvement will be discussed subsequently and placed into the scheme of involvement set by Epstein (1990; 1995).

TYPE 1: HOME ENVIRONMENT

Type one of parental involvement according to Epstein (1990; 1995) was about the basic obligations of parents to establish a home environment that supports education. In the majority of the schools, parents mentioned that they created good home conditions for their children to

study. Considering these home conditions, parents mentioned enough food, buying lamps to study at night, tables, chairs, a blackboard and school supplies. In the schools where parents did not mention the home environment exclusively, they did mention that parents should take care of their children at home.

Parents believed it was important children had the opportunity to do their homework. As one illiterate father explained: "It is difficult to follow your child if you have not been to school yourself. The only thing you can do is to give them time to do their homework and see if they really do something". The opportunity to do homework is called by 80 percent of parents living in rural areas, where only 50 percent of the parents in urban areas mention this. Parents mentioned different ways of giving the child the opportunity to do homework: give them time to do homework or to learn before an exam, buying books, checking if the child really did something, not giving the child too many activities at home, ask for homework when the child comes home and saying the child should open copybooks and study. Besides these investments, parents reported that paying fees and be sure the child is at school on time, are forms of parental involvement.

TYPE II: COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PARENTS

At six schools parents get invited for conferences. These conferences take place at the beginning, middle or end of the year. One father at Salbisgo stated: "It is good to have meetings. Even in your own household it is necessary to meet now and then to discuss. The headmaster is a kind of father for us. He looks after our children". In fact, at one school there even was a reception at the end of the year where they invited authorities from the village.

For parents there were two different ways of coming to school: making an appointment with the teacher or just stop by spontaneously. At all the schools, parents admitted they came to schools when necessary. It was apparent that parents only came to school when there was a problem regarding the child's results or behaviour. A quoted explanation by a mother at Geswende: "You do not call somebody if there is nothing. There is always a reason for calling someone". However, at all the schools, parents acknowledged that they came to school spontaneously; to see how their child is doing, to ask for advice or information or just to meet the teacher. Parents at three schools admitted that this was not a regular phenomenon. One father at Evangelique de Yako said that parents should come by more regularly: "When results are good it is rare to call the parents. Parents should not wait for the teacher to call them. The teacher would be surprised by parents walking by". It emerged that parents do not often get invited by teachers and when teachers do invite, women tend to come to school more than men.

There were different reasons for parents to come to school. The first reason was concerning problems; regarding school fees or the child itself, like bad results or bad behavior.

At meetings the teachers listened and gave advice to the parents how to improve results or behaviour. Teachers also gave advice regarding the efforts of parents themselves. Parents should follow the child closely, encourage the child, and show interest in the studies. A second reason for coming to school is for information about the curricula or to inform about how the child is behaving during the lesson. Fourthly, parents came to school to check the results of the children. At all schools parents said they came to school or to get invited to talk about the results of the child. At three schools parents expressively said that teachers and parents have to work together for the success and the future of the child.

TYPE III: PARENT VOLUNTEERING

As mentioned before, all parents said they came to school. Although, not one parent said that performances or events take place. Parents did mention that when they came to school, they felt welcome. At all schools parents agreed that the school is open to them and that teachers were willing to receive parents. Besides, parents acknowledged that teachers really listened to their stories. Moreover, parents explained that it is not possible to come to school anytime. They added to this that you can show up during breaks or after school. Another option is to make an appointment with the teacher. Parents mainly agreed that it was possible to come during the lessons, but they did not encourage this, because it was disturbing for the teacher. As one father at Evangelique de Yako explained: "Sometimes, if you come before 10am, the teacher will receive you. But it is better to wait. Teachers sometimes feel obliged to meet the parents and then disturb the class".

TYPE IV: LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Parents at all schools mentioned they followed their child at home. The following quote illustrates how a father at Evangelique de Salbisgo thought about this "If you do not follow your child, you cannot help him or her. By sending them to school, you make parents responsible". Parents mentioned different examples of how they followed their child: making sure the child went to school, look after their grades, homework and well-being and check if they go forward in their education. At all schools situated in urban areas parents said they checked homework of children, in contrary to only two schools - 40 percent - settled in rural areas, where parents mentioned this. Parents mentioned again illiteracy as a barrier. The most frequent solution to this problem was to search help from outside. Parents mentioned older brothers and sisters, family members or neighbors to help the child succeed in case of illiteracy. Moreover, at five schools parents said it is really important to encourage the child to study at home. At four of these schools parents even said they force or oblige their child to do homework. Another often mentioned supporting technique is showing interest in the studies of their children. As one mother at Geswende illustrated: "What I already do is taking the copybook. The child feels the

mother is interested. There are many blind women here -illiterates-, but you should show interest in the child's work". At seven schools parents mentioned the option to take a private teacher who can help the child. However, all parents stated that they do not have means to hire a private teacher, which makes this difficult to realize.

Only at four schools parents acknowledged to give advice to their children about education. At two of these schools parents mentioned it was difficult to take care of the children at home, because they themselves did not went to school and do not know anything about the curriculum.

TYPE V: DECISION MAKING POSITIONS

At all researched schools there were parent associations. In fact, at the majority of the schools there was a mother organization as well. Nevertheless, it seemed that these organizations were not involved in school decisions. When asking what the association did, parents mentioned: sweeping the compound, repairing tables and chairs and cleaning the classrooms. Moreover, at five schools parents mentioned that the association organized meetings. However, in many schools the tasks of the parent associations were not clear to parents. On father at Evangelique de Wendlasida said the following about this: "There is an association. But it's not really working. Myself, I am the president. We call the parents for a meeting and one third is showing up. But the actual problem is that the committee itself does not show up. There is nobody there [...]". Furthermore this father was the only one who said that his committee had to make decisions. However, this was not possible, because people did not see the importance of the meeting and because of that did not show up.

TYPE VI: COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Although parents indicated to search help from outside for the studies of their children, there was no further collaborating with the community. At only one school there was a meeting at the end of the year where important persons in the village were invited as well. Some schools organize meetings to inform parents on hygiene and to support the children at home. But a real collaboration with the community – services and resources - is not visible yet.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, it can be stated that the first type of parental involvement is the most developed. Although parents do not have a lot of economical resources, they try to take care of the home environment. Parents give their children at least the opportunity to do homework. Nevertheless, it is hard for parents to help children directly with their homework, because of illiteracy. Next to that, parents show interest in the studies of children, show education is important and

encourage them to study. Concerning the communication between home and school, it seems that invitations are not regularly and even when getting invited parents do not show up. It is apparent, that parents only come to school when there are problems and do not stop by spontaneously frequently. Nevertheless, parents do feel welcome and get the advice they need, when necessary.

When parents do come to school and volunteer, it concerns repairing or cleaning activities. Parents are not active in decision making positions and parent organizations do not seem to organize a lot of meetings. Their role is unclear. Besides, collaboration with the community seems to be a bridge too far. As types of involvement require more knowledge, the involvement of parents decreases. Involvement seems to lie in indirect material help at school and home, coming to school when there is a problem and stimulating conversations with children.

RELATION BETWEEN THE EFFORTS OF SCHOOLS TO INVOLVE PARENTS AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Especially levels II and III of parental involvement are related to the efforts of schools to involve parents. Parents mentioned that involvement was important. Nevertheless, it was not clear if parents were conscious that their involvement had a positive influence on the education of their children. Parents acknowledged that they got invited by teachers and that conferences take place. Nevertheless, parents only get invited or come to school when there is a problem; it is not regular to come to school without a reason. It appeared that parents did not see the necessity to come to school when the child is doing well. Consequently, in Burkina Faso there are less invitations and demands from school, but parents also do not react on these invitations. Less invitations and demands appear to relate directly to the amount of parental involvement. Although parents said they did come to school now and then, some parents already indicated this was not often the case. However, when they came to school, they agreed that teachers listened to them and gave advice when necessary; schools in Burkina Faso seem to be responsive to parents. However, it is not clear if parents know what happens inside the school. Here illiteracy and less knowledge in the curriculum of school seems to influence parental involvement directly. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) showed that parents should first understand how education is organized and afterwards consider in which ways they can help.

It could be suggested that the invitations and demands from teachers in Burkina Faso, differs from Western literature and that less school practices relate with less parental involvement. For parents it is harder to show interest and involvement when teachers do not invite parents. It seems that there is a vicious circle where parents say not to get invited and teachers say they do not organize meetings or invite parents because parents do not show up. A

bright spot is that when parents get invited they feel welcome and teachers do give them the advice and information they need.

RESULTS TEACHERS

EFFORTS OF SCHOOLS TO INVOLVE PARENTS

The last sub questions concerned school practices, according to teachers and headmasters. At all schools headmasters and teachers acknowledge they invited parents to come to school for an appointment. Parents get invited to share information or to discuss problems in behavior, absenteeism and results. At four schools, teachers stated that they invited parents, but subsequently parents do not show up. One teacher at Evangelique de Salbisgo explained: “They shouldn’t only pay school fees and quit after. Parents should come to school from time to time. They should see if the child is working hard enough”.

At the majority of the schools the headmaster and teacher admitted they organize conferences to inform parents. These meetings are mostly to sensitize parents about the training of children and to remind them to follow their children at home. Within these conferences teachers explained, that parents should not give too many activities to their children, send them to school well fed, take care of the hygiene and clothes of children and buy a lamp for them to study at night. Teachers agreed that they should work together with parents for the success of the child.

When asking what parents can do more, at the majority of the schools teachers mentioned, that parents have to come to school themselves more often and follow their children more at home. According to teachers, it is rare to see parents come to school without a particular reason. Therefore, the headmaster at Evangelique de Raoul revealed a solution “Every semester we have a booklet where parents should put their signature and bring this to school themselves afterwards. Then we also can talk about the marks and eventually problems together. At four schools teachers would like that parents come to school more often. At three schools teachers explained that parents should follow their children at home as well. The headmaster of Geswende illustrated this: “Parents have the idea that if they send their children to school, that is enough. But it is not like that!”. Teachers at three other schools acknowledge that parents should take more preparations before sending their children to school. Parents should take care of hygiene, clothes and enough food. At three schools teachers say, that it is especially women who are coming to meetings. As the headmaster of Evangelique de Raoul explained: “When you call mothers, they are immediately there. But fathers say they do not have time”.

RELATION BETWEEN EFFORTS OF SCHOOLS TO INVOLVE PARENTS AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Teachers acknowledged that they invited parents and that conferences take place. Nevertheless, teachers only invite parents when there is a problem. Coming to school as a parent is not a regular phenomenon; when invited a lot of parents do not show up; teachers would like to see more parents come to school. Teachers mentioned that parents could do more to help teachers. Teachers acknowledged parents should be more sensitized about parental involvement and should put more efforts in the home environment. Parents should make more preparations before sending their children to school and keep following their children at home. It is necessary that parents are aware that they are of critical importance in the education of their children (Finders and Lewis, 2002).

The demands and invitations set by teachers in Burkina Faso seem to be lower, than in western literature. This could be related to the amount of parental involvement parents can show; for parents it is harder to show interest and involvement when teachers do not invite them. Here, the vicious circle where teachers say parents do not show up when invited and parents say not to get invited appeared as well.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to provide insight on parental involvement in underdeveloped countries. It was examined how parental involvement in Burkina Faso could be related to western standards of parental involvement set by Epstein (1984). These levels of involvement focused on assisting children at home, communication between home and school, volunteer opportunities, decision making positions and collaboration with the community. Research was conducted to find out whether or not cultural determined factors have an influence on parental involvement. Several sub questions on functions of school, responsible actors in education and efforts of schools to involve parents, were used to retrieve if parental involvement on western standards could be found.

The results showed that parental involvement does appear in Burkina Faso. Especially the home environment is well developed. There is one apparent difference between rural and urban areas. In urban areas more parents mentioned to give their children the opportunity to do homework. In addition, more parents in urban areas admitted they checked the homework of children. It could be suggested that children in rural areas are obliged to assist their parents with activities and therefore receive less time to do homework.

Parental involvement goes together with traditional beliefs parents have about gender patterns as well (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). Results in Burkina show that mothers are more involved with the education of their children than fathers. However, during the interviews fathers took more speaking time. The distribution of power in Burkina Faso is gender linked and fathers seem to have the more authorial position. Women are put in their traditional roles of caretaker and were thus responsible for education. In Burkina Faso it appeared that women tend to come more to school than men. In addition, mothers took care of basic needs and the home environment. Fathers generally took care of income and encourage children to study.

CONCLUSION I: COLLECTIVISTIC THOUGHTS DOMINATE AND INFLUENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In both the function of school and in the responsible actors of school collective thoughts dominated the answers of parents. Parents mentioned individualistic functions of education but these were immediately linked to collective functions. Parents mentioned that with a good job, knowledge and by becoming a good person the whole community will benefit and other people can be saved. Moreover, parents mentioned goals like helping parents later in life and preventing illiteracy which are characteristic for collective societies. All functions mentioned are

instrumental benefits for the society. Since collective thoughts dominate, it appears that parental involvement on individualistic western levels cannot be expected and do not appear in the same form as in individualistic societies.

Parents see themselves as the most responsible person at home, but teachers are responsible at school. We cannot speak of real partnerships where reciprocity is visible. Since the role of the parent is at home and the responsibility of the teacher is to teach at school (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fish and Hernandez, 2003), the primary role of parents seems to be in the home environment and learning activities at home. Parents and teachers seem to have their own areas where they influence children. There are no overlapping areas of influence (Epstein, 1995). Therefore, there are fewer parents in decision making positions or actively involved in volunteering. Schools have ownership here and parents are not conscious of their voices and the influence they can have on their children's education.

Furthermore, in western literature the child is seen as an active agent and transmitter of information. Children in Burkina Faso are less seen as active agents which also relates to the amount of involvement parents show. The child is not yet seen as an active agent in transferring information.

CONCLUSION II: DESPITE DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONALIZED, ECONOMICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS, WHICH STRUCTURALLY INFLUENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, THERE ARE FORMS OF INVOLVEMENT VISIBLE.

The cultural practices of parental involvement that appeared in Burkina Faso need to be interpreted considering the cultural mindset of parents (Bugental & Gruses, 2006). It was expected that class related cultural factors have an influence on parental involvement (Lareau, 2002). In Burkina Faso it appeared that parents did lack economical, social and institutionalized resources which could relate to the amount of parental involvement. However, the results retrieved that parents do value education; their resources lead them to different pathways to realize that success (Lareau, 1987). It is not that parents do not want to show parental involvement; they have fewer access to resources than parents in the developed world. As cited by Finders and Lewis (2002) "Instead of assuming that absence means non caring, educators must understand the barriers that hinder some parents from participating in their child's education" (Finders & Lewis, 2002; pp. 50).

Parents in Burkina Faso are shortened in institutionalized cultural capital. Parents are lacking in academic qualifications, institutional recognition and there is a barrier because of illiteracy. Parents do not have knowledge on what happens inside school and they do not have educational skills; therefore they cannot help their children in a traditional direct way. Furthermore, parental involvement in Burkina Faso is connected to the economical and social

resources that parents have in the society as well (Lareau, 1987). Therefore, parents cannot help their child directly with learning activities. On the other hand, they do take care of the home environment - despite a shortage in economical resources - and give children the opportunity to do their homework.

Parents in Burkina Faso have structural restrictions to show parental involvement, since they are lacking knowledge in the organization of education. Since they did not attend school themselves, they lack knowledge in general; they do not seem to understand the necessity of involvement. Parents first should understand how education is organized and afterwards consider in which ways they can help. Communication between home and school is absent and direct involvement is harder to show. It appears that invitations from teachers are not sent out regularly and even when invited, parents do not show up. It is apparent that parents only come to school when there are problems and do not stop by spontaneously frequently. Social patterns of family life and a lack of institutional knowledge appear as well.

Parents are not active in decision making positions and parent organizations do not seem to organize a lot of meetings. Their role is unclear. However, parents do come to school to show interest. Although parent associations do not organize meetings, they do invest in the school. Their activities are more practical, because of lacking in institutionalized knowledge. When parents do come to school and volunteer, it concerns repairing or cleaning activities.

Parents do put a high value on education, but it is difficult to get them involved in learning activities. For parents in Burkina Faso paying school fees and taking care of food, hygiene and materials are already forms of involvement, since that is the only way they can help their children. Other levels of involvement cannot be shown, because a lot of parents do not seem to know how to get involved in the school system and do not have the means and knowledge to help their children. It is obvious, that parents are committed to the education of their children, but there are structural constraints that prevent parents from showing other forms of parental involvement. It is evident, that it is not about whether or not to become involved, but rather how to become involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR C.R.E.D.O.

There are several levels of involvement where C.R.E.D.O. can invest to increase parental involvement. Concerning the efforts of schools to involve parents, the vicious circle that teachers and parents experience should be broken down. Teachers should invite parents and parents should be made aware of the importance of showing up. A practical idea is from Evangelique de Raoul, where they present a booklet to parents every semester. Parents are obliged to put their signature and bring the booklet to school themselves. In this way teachers have the opportunity to see parents and talk to parents about the results and problems of children.

Furthermore, parents should be aware of how important parental involvement is for their children's school success. The results on the efforts of schools to involve parents show that parents mentioned that they believe it is important, but they only come to school concerning problems. Parents should be made conscious of the fact that coming to school is essential and they should be stimulated to have regular contact with the teacher. As Michener (1998) revealed, people in underdeveloped countries are habituated to be more passive objects in development. Parents should be made conscious and be empowered to become active agents in their children's education. It could be recommended to at least organize meetings to make parents more conscious of parental involvement. First, this could be organized by teachers and after some time parents can take over this job. It is important to note parents are responsible themselves, for the success of their children and they should not put too much pressure on teachers. C.R.E.D.O. should make schedules for all schools where teachers have to organize conferences or meetings for parents. Parents should be made aware that taking care of food, hygiene, school fees, clothes and not putting too many activities on children are primary forms all parents can show. C.R.E.D.O. could make parents conscious that these forms of parental involvement are important for children and empower parents to show these.

When looking at responsible actors in parental involvement, there are no overlapping spheres of influences (Booijink, 2007; Epstein, 1995). A missing link is the child as an active actor. Children are the link between home and school. Children could be made aware by teachers that they themselves have an influence on the involvement of their parents.

The simplest solution to the lack of parental involvement is to wait for the next generation which obtained diplomas. It is important to understand that relationships between parents and school change over time, because of transformations in cultural capital (Lareau, 1987). Research shows that changing raising- and educational patterns over time will produce new patterns of parental involvement in children's education (Epstein & Sanders, 2005). All parents called illiteracy as a problem for showing parental involvement. Furthermore, parents

lack material resources, knowledge and means. It could be stated that when parents were educated, parental involvement was made easier, because parents really can help their children directly with their knowledge. The expectation is that these parents have better job prospects, which could take away the lack of material resources and means. However, the prerequisite is that these children are well educated and have more school success than their own parents. If this generation is well educated, they know what is inside school. It will be easier for them to understand how parental involvement leads to success of their children in education. Furthermore this new generation could show forms of direct parental involvement at home. Nevertheless, all new practices and changes made, should consider the special needs and barriers of explicit groups of parents (Geourgiou, 1997).

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A few limitations need to be taken into account considering the findings of this study. Firstly, it should be noted that the researched group of parents and teachers was not a-select chosen. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the entire population of parents in underdeveloped countries. Furthermore, using focus group interviews, differences between certain views in groups were determined, but nothing could be said on the strength of these differences. Consequently, research using different methods is needed to involve families, teachers and the community in education. Case studies, histories, surveys and evaluations of particular practices are needed to fully understand how to establish a shared responsibility in an underdeveloped country. Furthermore, focus group interviews could be replaced by individual interviews to go deeper on the subject of parental involvement. When doing future research, it is recommended to use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Moreover, it could be interesting to interview children. Future research could investigate whether or not children play a role in parental involvement and if they can be seen as active or passive agents in parental involvement.

Secondly, a number of focus interview groups of parents were too big. In consequence only a few parents spoke up and not all opinions of parents were heard. Future researches are advised to take a maximum of ten parents, so that all participants can share their opinion. Moreover, it could be that the parents who attended the interview were already the most active parents which could explain why they considered their present involvement to be more positive than other key informants did. Even though we have to keep these limitations in mind, they are not a real threat to the outcomes and validity of the study. The research revealed that parents and teachers frequently mentioned the same barriers concerning parental involvement. Consequently the outcomes of the interviews can be considered as valuable information for the present study.

Qualitative studies do have advantages, since they are open to all source of information. In this way new theoretical theories can be established. Interviews are open to new ideas and participants can share their thoughts and feelings; deeper insights will be documented. People are able to build upon another's response and thus come up with new ideas that they would not have had in a one-on-one interview. Moreover, focus group interviews are particularly suitable for participants with low levels of literacy. However, future research should show whether this study is representative and whether results can be generalized to the entire population of Burkina Faso and other underdeveloped countries.

Finally, this study has practical implications as well. If primary schools want to improve educational partnerships with parents, they should inform parents about what is happening inside school and with the curriculum. Furthermore, it is recommended to invest in material resources for helping parents at home as well. However, it is hard for parents to assist their children at home when they do not have the language or reading acquisitions they need. All recommendations called are essential, because they could increase the school success of children in the underdeveloped world. Moreover, this study highlights the need for more extensive research on cultural capital in parental involvement.

REFERENCES

- Allik, J., & Realo, A. (2004). Individualism-Collectivism and Social Capital. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 35, 1, pp. 29-49.
- Booijink, M. (2007). *Terug naar de basis. Communicatie tussen leerkrachten en ouders in het primair onderwijs*. Leiden: Universiteit Leiden.
- Bugental, D., & Grusec, J. (2006). Socialization processes. In W. Damon & R. Lerner, *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 6, 3 (pp. 366-428). San Francisco: Wiley
- Comer, J.P. (1984). Home-school relationships as they effect the academic success of children. *Education and Urban Society*, 16, 3, pp. 323-337.
- Cotton, K., & Wikeland, K.R. (1989). *Parent Involvement in Education*. School Improvement Research Series, no. 6, North West Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Crozier, G. (2001). The Deracialisation of Parental Involvement. *Race, ethnicity and education*, 4, 4, pp. 329-341.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991). Parents in the Schools: a Process of Empowerment. *American Journal of Education*, 1, pp. 20-46.
- Drooglever Fortuijn, E. (2003). *Onderwijsbeleid: Maatschappelijke Functies en Strategische Keuzen*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Elbers, E. (2002). *Interculturele Pedagogiek: Een verkenning*. Utrecht: FSW.
- Eldering, L. (2006). *Cultuur en opvoeding: Interculturele pedagogiek vanuit ecologisch perspectief*. Rotterdam: Lemniscaat.
- Epstein, J.L. (1984). School policy and parent involvement: Research results. *Educational Horizons*, 62, 2, pp. 70-72.
- Epstein (1990). *School and Family Connections: Theory, Research and Implications for integrating sociologies of education and family*. In: *Families in Community Settings: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. New York: The Haworth Press, pp. 99-110.
- Epstein, J.L. (1995). *School-family-community partnerships: caring for the children we share*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, pp. 701-712.
- Epstein, J.L. & Sanders, M.G. (2005). *School-family-community partnerships and educational change: International perspectives*. *Extended Educational Change*, pp. 202-224.
- Epstein, J.L. & Dauber, S.L. (1989). *Parent Attitudes and Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-city Elementary and Middle Schools*. U.S. Department of Education. Maryland: VSP Industries.

- Finders, M., & Lewis, C. (2002). Why some parents don't come to school. *Educational leadership*, 14, pp. 50-55.
- Georgiou, S.N. (1997). Parental involvement: definitions and outcomes. *Social Psychology of Education*, 1, 189-209.
- Greenfield, P.M., Quiroz, B., & Raeff, C. (2000). Cross-cultural Harmony in the Social Construction of the Child. In S. Harkness, & C. Raeffs (Eds.), *Variability in the social construction of the child: New directions for child and adolescents developments* (pp. 93-108). San Fransisco: Jossey Bass
- Grolnick, W.S., Benjet, C., Kurowski, C.O. & Apostoleris, N.H. (1997). Predictors of parental involvement in children's schooling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 3, pp. 538-548.
- Harting, M. & Klompenhouwer, J. (2009). *Parental involvement in a Child Education Project in Burkina Faso*. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht.
- Hoover-Demsey, K.V. & Sandler, H.M. (1995). Parental Involvement in Children's Education: Why does it make a Difference? *Teacher College Records*, 97, 2, pp. 310-331.
- Kendall, N. (2007). Parental and Community Participation in Improving Educational Quality in Africa: Current Practices and Future Possibilities. *International Review of Education*, 53, pp. 701-708.
- Killen, M., & Wainryb, C. (2000). Independence and interdependence in diverse cultural contexts. In S. Harkness, C. Raeff & C.M. Super (Eds.), *Variability in the social construction of the child: New directions for child and Adolescent Development* (pp. 5-21). Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Lamont, M., & Lareau, A. (1988). Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments. *Sociological Theory*, 6, 2, pp. 153-168.
- Lareau, A. (1987). Social Class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital. *Sociology of Education*, 60, 73-85.
- Lareau, A. (2000). *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Involvement Intervention in Elementary Education*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Lewis, O. (1996). *The culture of poverty* in G. Gmelch and W. Zenner, eds. *Urban Life*. Illinois: Waveland Press
- Lewis, P.M. (2001). Political Transition and the Dilemma of Civil Society in Africa. *Journal of International Affairs*, 46, pp. 31-54.
- McLafferty, I. (2004). Focus Group interviews as a Data Collecting Strategy. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 48, 2, pp. 187-194.
- Michener, V.J. (1998). The Participatory Approach: Contradiction and Co-option in Burkina Faso. *World Development*, 26, 12, 2105-2118.

- Morgan, D.L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual review of sociology*, 22, pp. 129-152.
- Morgan V., Valerie, J., Fraser, G., Grace, A., Seamus, B., Dunn, S., & Cairns, E. (1993). A New Order of Co-operation and Involvement? Relationships between Parents and Teachers in the Integrated Schools. *Educational Review*, 45, 1, pp. 43-52.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Dickinson, W.B., Leech, N.L., and Zoran, A.G. (2009). Toward more Rigor in Focus Group Research: a new Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Focus Group Data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8, 3, pp. 58-72.
- Sim, J. (1998). Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data: Issues raised by the Focus Group. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 28, 2, pp. 345-352.
- Stewart, D.W., Shamdasani, P.N., & Rook, D.W. (2007). *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Trumbull, E., Rothstein-Fisch, C., & Hernandez, E. (2003). Parent involvement in schooling: According to whose values? *School Community Journal*, 13, 45 - 72.
- United Nation Development Program - UNDP (2009). *Human Development Report 2009: Burkina Faso*. Accessed on 13 January 2010 through:
http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_BFA.html
- Unesco (2000). *Education for All 2000 assessment: Global synthesis*. Paris: International Consultative Forum on Education for All.
- Van 't Rood, R. (2007). *Projet de Parrainage – Rapport d’Evaluation*. C.RE.D.O.
- Zellman, G.L. & Waterman, J.M. (1998). Understanding the Impact of Parent school Involvement on children’s Educational Outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research*, 91, pp. 370-380.
- Ziba, S.A.D.Y. (2006). *Projet de Parrainage*. C.RE.D.O.