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**PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME:
PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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There is considerable evidence that parent involvement in children's learning results in improved skills, abilities and test scores of learners, while parents gain knowledge on how to support, encourage and help learners. This is particularly relevant within the South African context where many schools still report sporadic and broken attendance of learners and often teachers, general demotivation and low morale of learners and teachers, poor academic results and very little parent involvement. This paper examines school practices of involving parents in primary school children's learning as well as the problems many schools encounter in this regard. Data is derived from a survey of primary schools throughout the country and in-depth interviews with a small sample of primary school principals and teachers. Findings suggest, among others, that there are limited opportunities for parent-initiated discussions on learners' learning problems; that only a small percentage of parents are regularly involved in improving their children's reading, writing and maths skills; that teachers claim to have a homework policy but that parents are seldom consulted in determining the policy and that many teachers are demotivated and reluctant to attempt to improve parent involvement in homework activities. Moreover, parents are seldom taught ways of assisting their children at home and fulfilling their obligations in terms of the homework policy. In addition, the amount of assistance children receive at home with their schoolwork is negatively affected by poor socioeconomic circumstances, illiteracy of parents, the wide-spread practice of grandparents caring for children and the impact of HIV/AIDS on South African society.