

The Empowerment Approach to Parental Involvement in Education

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to explore how parents perceive the essence of parental involvement in education. A qualitative phenomenological design using eight group interviews of ten parent participants was used for data collection. The main findings of this qualitative study indicate that the meaning attached to parental involvement falls short of its real essence, and focuses on parental responses to activities determined by schools as against meaningful partnerships. The main recommendation, therefore, is advocacy that begins with empowering all stakeholders, especially parents with regard to the essence of parental involvement. In this regard, the approach recommended in this study proposes an approach that empowers parents, schools and communities through school-based and cluster-based forums using actions that recognize the power of *zenzele* (do it yourself) for schools and parents, and *masakhane* (doing it for ourselves together) for school clusters and the community.