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"EDUCATION IS THE KEY OF LIFE"
A Minor Field Study about the discourses of parental involvement in two Tanzanian primary schools
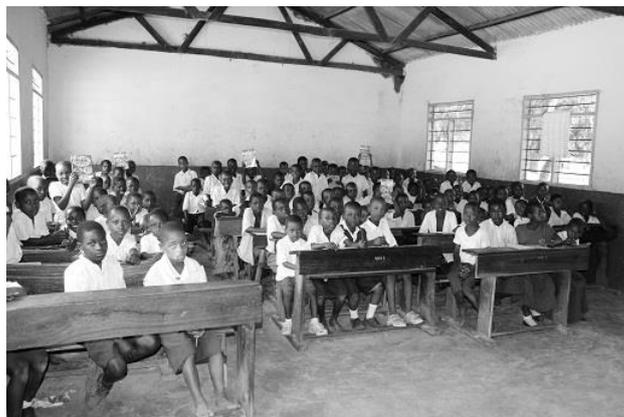
Abstract

In Tanzania, the enrolment in school is high but the students' performance is in general low. Parents are seen as important agents to provide students with opportunities to succeed in school. It is therefore of interest to investigate what is being said about parental involvement (PI) in the Tanzanian school. The aim with this study is to identify and analyse common assumptions about PI in the context of the Tanzanian primary school. We had the opportunity to travel to Tanzania for eight weeks to investigate this. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with eight parents and two teachers about PI were carried out in two rural villages. Questions to the parents about their perception of education were furthermore asked in order to achieve a background for their statements about PI. The study is based on a discourse analytical approach, meaning that the result was obtained through identifying discourses by analysing the respondents' statements. The analysis resulted in five discourses: *Education for the future, PI as a resource, PI as pressures from teachers, PI as a lack of education* and *PI as paying attention to children's education*. The contents which fill the discourses are discussed in relation to the context of the study as well as perception of the relationship between home and school. The parents in this study value education highly and their involvement is mostly about contributing with financial support. Yet, the teachers are demanding a higher involvement from parents. The low socioeconomic background is a barrier for many parents to become involved. A conscious effort, aimed at getting parents more involved, is needed in order to increase the children's academic performance.

Acknowledgements

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1 Background: Parental involvement in Tanzania

The intention of the background chapter is to provide an introduction to the study. The chapter also presents a description of the study's context and education in Tanzania, followed by the study's aim, the disposition of the paper, previous research and the study's theoretical framework.

1.1 Introduction

In western society, parents are today seen as necessary agents in managing the goals regarding learning, development, health and wellbeing (Tallberg Broman, 2013). Borgonovi and Montt (2012) state that it is important for parents to spend time with their children and to be actively involved in their education to give them a good start in their lives. That parents are seen as important has not always been the case. The influence from parents in school used to be almost non-existent (Tallberg Broman, 2013). In the late 1900's, the school was seen as the main operator in order to meet all individuals in their most receptive developmental years. Such a separation between home and school can partly be understood from a professionalization perspective. By separating home and school, the concept of professionalism and the specific teaching assignment emerged. The parents and family were not considered adequate or competent enough to raise the children. These ideas can also be recognized from the beginning of the 2000's, as education is the recurrent answer to many of the challenges facing a rapidly changing society. The focus has previously been on students and the school, but nowadays parents have become more involved. With the changing conditions such as the statutory right for influence of parents, the importance of close collaboration with parents is emphasized. Through increased parental responsibility and involvement in school, a greater mutuality and shared responsibility are achieved (Tallberg Broman, 2013). Markström (2013) argues that parents are expected to live up to society's expectations of good parenting through the "right" support of their children. They are expected to take responsibility in relation to the school by pedagogically supporting their children in different ways, for example by reading to their children, practicing various skills such as language and communication, helping with homework, encouraging children to have a positive attitude towards schools and teachers etc. These expectations will create an idea about what a successful parent is. Consequently this also creates an image of a less successful parent.

From an international perspective, a number of factors influence how parents become involved in their children's schooling. For example, it appears that parents of younger children are more involved in school than parents of older children. The older the children get, the less involved the parents become (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Zedan, 2012). It also appears that parents of children in private schools are more involved than parents of children in governmental schools. Furthermore, the number of parents who attend general school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school events etc. is higher in households where the parents have completed a higher level of education (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). To what extent parents are involved in their children's education

partly depends on their socioeconomic background (OECD, 2011; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012) referring to Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan's (referred in Sirin, 2005, p. 418) definition about socioeconomic status. The definition includes parental income, parental education and parental occupation. Students from socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds are, generally speaking, used to an environment which is more conducive to learning, including having more involved parents. Nevertheless, students of similar socioeconomic backgrounds whose parents read for them regularly in their first year of primary school perform better than students whose parents do not (OECD, 2011). This means that the parents' involvement in their children's education has a positive effect on the children's achievement in school, regardless of the parents' socioeconomic background. The levels of parents' involvement vary across different countries and economies (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

This study is about parental involvement (PI) in the Tanzanian primary school. The issue of PI in the Tanzanian school has been devoted little attention. There are too few studies on PI in Tanzania to be able to encourage PI in school in order to make sure that the children succeed in school. In order to promote PI in the school it can be an advantage for teachers and school leaders to gain insight into parents' reasoning about this phenomenon. Notably, to understand PI in the Tanzanian school, this study does not aim to present how the reality *is*. Instead, pursuant to the theoretical approach of this study (see section 1.7.1), the interest lies in analysing how the reality is *created* through the Tanzanian parents' and teachers' statements about PI in the Tanzanian primary school. Thus, what is said about it will create realities about what PI in school is. Hopefully, this study will provide a deeper understanding of the things Tanzanian parents and teachers take for granted in their involvement in their children's schooling and the reality created through their statements about PI.

Reading about PI, there does not seem to be a common agreement on the concept. In this paper, Borgonovi and Montt's (2012, p. 13) wide definition of the concept will be used. They define it as "… parents' active commitment to spend time to assist in the academic and general development of their children". On the one hand, it can be a weakness to use such a broad definition as it creates a lack of clarity about what is meant by the definition. It says, for example, nothing about what an *active commitment* is which means that it is up to each individual to interpret and understand. On the other hand, we see the ambiguity in the definition as a strength. It makes it adaptable which we consider appropriate for study purposes since it creates a kind of openness. We have chosen to focus on the academic, rather than the general, development in the definition. It is further understood as parents' conscious way of spending time in their children's lives aiming to somehow promote the children's development in issues regarding their schooling.

Furthermore, PI can generally be divided into two categories, school-based involvement and home-based involvement. School-based involvement is activities that occur in the contact/meeting between the parent and the school. Examples of school-based involvement are school meetings, talking with teachers, attending school events and volunteering in school. Home-based involvement, on the other hand, is activities that occur outside the school, for instance, discussing with the child how well he/she is doing at school and/or helping the child with his/her homework (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

1.2 The context of the study

Tanzania; officially United Republic of Tanzania (Swahili: Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania), is located in the heart of Eastern Africa. The country is a union between the mainland and the autonomous islands of Zanzibar. Tanzania has a large ethnic diversity and the population consists of about 120 different ethnic groups. Residents on the mainland belong to different Bantu people. The majority of the population on Zanzibar have their origin from the mainland but some also have an Arabic origin. In the recent twenty years, there has emerged an increasing tension between Christians and Muslims. Despite this fact, the country has survived internal strife and Tanzania is today considered as one of the most stable countries in Africa, south of the Sahara. The majority of the populations in Tanzania live in poverty, several in the countryside (Sida, 2009a). Tanzania was for many years a colonized country. It became independent in the early 60's (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Around 9000 inhabitants live in Bulunde where the study was partly carried out. The road from the nearby town to the village is a rough red gravel and dirt road. The households are commonly sheds made of mud with a grass roof and no windows. In Bulunde, most people's lives are settled around agriculture and the majority are farmers and cattle keepers. Men are mostly engaged in house building whereas women mind the household activities such as cooking. It is an indignity for the family if the man of the household does the cooking. In the primary school (standard 1-7) in the village, about 540 children aged between seven and 16 years old are enrolled. The school has nine teachers in total. Some teachers are well-educated while some are not. There are mainly three school related problems in the village. Firstly, the school is far from home for many of the children. Some of them walk 8 km to school every day. In addition, there is an ignorance about school. School is not particularly highly valued and many people living in the village do not see the importance of education. About 80 % of the children are enrolled in school and around 20 % are working at home. Finally, there is poverty among the inhabitants which, consequently, means that some families cannot afford the costs of school supplies such as exercise books and school uniform[1].

The other village, where a part of the study was conducted, is called Tazengwa. Tazengwa means "the hill where no one can live" in the local language (Kinyamwezi). It was named at a time when there was a shortage of water in the area. The Kinyamwezi tribe lives in the village. They are engaged in farming and livestock. Although education has been given a slightly higher status than it previously had, it is still not particularly highly valued and many do not see the importance of education. There is one primary school (standard 1-7) in the village. Currently there are 362 students enrolled in the school and 17 teachers[2].

1.3 Education in Tanzania

The formal educational system in Tanzania can be divided into different levels. The first level is two years of pre-primary school. This level is for children that are five to six years old. The main purpose with pre-primary school is to promote children's personal

[1] Field supervisor Isaack Daniel
[2] Interpreter Charles Ndali Masanja

development and prepare the children for primary school. After pre-primary school, the children continue to primary school. The registration and attendance at this level is compulsory for seven years for all children (MoEVT, n.d.). In theory, primary school is free. Unfortunately, during our time in Tanzania we were made aware that charges apply regarding school uniforms, school materials and other school fees, which means that the poorer parents cannot always afford to pay their children's schooling. When the students have completed seven years (standard 1-7) of education, they usually take a Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). The basic and core skills of literacy, numeracy, arithmetic and life skills are expected to be obtained at this level. If the students pass the examination, they can continue to secondary school. The secondary level includes junior-secondary school and senior-secondary school. Junior-secondary school is the ordinary level and is for four years. Senior-secondary school is the advanced level and is for two years. When completed, higher education is possible (MoEVT, n.d.).

Education is a key priority for both the parents and the government in Tanzania. The government's budget has tripled the last decade and parents invest a lot of money to pay for their children's education (Uwezo, 2013). Enrolment is higher than it has ever been and nine out of ten children between nine and 13 years old were enrolled in school in 2012; girls marginally more than boys. Even so, concerns are expressed about the children's learning performances in the Tanzanian school, which are still low. One out of four children in standard three can read a standard two story in Swahili, four out of ten children in standard three are able to do multiplication at standard two level and less than one out of ten children in standard three can read an English story at standard two level. The socioeconomic status affects the children's learning outcomes and there are large differences across the country. Children from urban districts perform better than children from rural districts. Some children do not complete their schooling and about 3.5 % of the children aged 9-13 years are dropping out of primary school. It is revealed that the teachers are often not present in school, which makes it difficult for the children to learn consistently. The class sizes are large and there is an average of 47 students for every one teacher in Tanzania. Tabora Region (including Bulunde and Tazengwa) has the largest classes in the whole country with an average of 54 students per teacher. Uwezo emphasizes the role of parents and states that parents have the responsibility to make a supportive learning environment at home as well as to ensure that the learning environment in school is the same. It is furthermore underlined that parents have a responsibility in demanding better outcomes from the government. It is suggested that parents should be more involved in school by checking their children's homework and exercise books, that teachers should ensure they have a dialogue regarding the children's performance and that community leaders should emphasize the importance of education and its future values (Uwezo, 2013).

One of the elements in the development of a functioning democracy is access to education. In its cooperation with Tanzania, Sweden has developed, in particular, cooperation within the education sector. In Tanzania, education has not always been available. During the last 15 years, however, there has been a considerable development in this particular issue (Sida, 2009b). In 2000 the United Nations organized a summit in New York for representatives of UN member countries. The meeting aimed to build a new global partnership with the goal of reducing extreme poverty and establishing a series of goals. During this meeting the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

were developed. The aim is that the goals should be achieved by 2015. One of these goals concerns education. It states that "… by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." (UN, 2013). The development relating to this issue in Tanzania shows a positive curve since the MDGs were developed. Statistics show that in 2008, about 98 % were enrolled in primary school, whereas in 2000, only 53 % attended primary school (Svenska FN-förbundet, n.d.). In September 2010, Tanzania received the United Nations' Millenium Award for its strides towards universal primary education (Uwezo, 2013). One of the main issues, in relation to education in Tanzania today, is to improve the quality of education, which still remains low. The Swedish government has provided some development strategies for the aid work in Tanzania. Between the period 2013-2019 one ambition with the aid work is that girls and boys should assimilate basic knowledge and skills in school (Regeringen, 2013).

1.4 Aim

The aim with this study is to identify and analyse common assumptions about PI in the context of the Tanzanian primary school. This is done based on interviews with Tanzanian parents and teachers about PI. In order to understand PI, a context and a background are needed. This is achieved by asking the parents questions about their perception of education.

1.4.1 Research questions

- What importance is attributed to education?
- What characterizes the statements about PI?

The first research question is formed to provide a background and explanation for PI. The question will be answered by analysing the parents' statements regarding their perception of education. Research question two intends to answer the study's purpose. This is done by examining the parents' and teachers' statements about PI.

1.5 Disposition

The paper consists of four parts: background, method, result and discussion. This first part is a background about PI in Tanzania. An introduction of the phenomenon PI, the context of the study and the aim and research questions have already been presented. Furthermore, the background includes a presentation with previous research about PI and the theoretical framework of the study. In the section theoretical framework, discourse analysis, which is the theoretical approach of this study, is described. Three perspectives on the perception between home and school will also be presented in this section. The second part is a presentation of the method of the study, where the study's procedure is described and motivated. This part covers the choice of method that we used to collect the empirical data. Furthermore, the sample, pilot study, empirical implementation of the study and the implementation of the analysis are presented. This part also includes a discussion of the ethical considerations that were made. These include the Swedish Research Council's four ethical guidelines, discussion of method and cultural considerations. The study's result is presented in part three. This part is

divided into two sections based on each research question. In part four, the result is discussed in relation to the aim and research questions, previous research and the study's theoretical framework. This part also includes a conclusion of the study and suggestions for further research.

1.6 Previous research: Parental involvement

The research regarding PI that is presented in this section is widespread and taken from the national (Swedish), Tanzanian and international context. In the search for previous research, we mainly focused on two keywords which have been shown to have a clear linkage to each other: *parental involvement* and *socioeconomic background*. The research presented in this section is divided under the following headings: *PI and children's performance*, *Issues related to PI*, *PI-strategies* and *PI and gender*. Some of the research has already been presented (see section 1.1). At the end, under each heading, the research presented is summarised. We conclude this section by summarising the current state of research.

1.6.1 PI and children's performance

When parents are talking to their children about school as well as how they are doing in school, it signals the parents' supervision of their children's school lives and the importance of their children's succeeding in school (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Believing in the importance of learning has a positive impact on children's achievement in school (Zedan, 2012). It is beneficial for students' performance when parents highlight the value of school and talk with their children about what they have learnt. Furthermore, discussing non-school related matters such as political or social issues, books, films or television programmes with the children has been shown to have a positive effect on children's motivation and academic skills (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

One way to improve poor academic results is for parents and teachers to discuss the children's behaviour or progress (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Research results have shown that the contact between the parents and teachers is stronger if the child is low-performing or struggles in school. Borgonovi and Montt declare that this is because teachers discuss more about children's progress or behaviour with parents of children who are in the most need of help.

It has just been stated that the children's school performance is improved when parents become involved by talking to their children about school and what they have learnt, as well as by talking with their children about non-school related issues. Discussing children's school performance with teachers may also promote children's school performance.

1.6.2 Issues related to PI

Research points towards that, even though there is a willingness among parents to be involved in their children's schooling, the involvement is sometimes hampered by socioeconomic factors. A study carried out in Kenya found that there are some socioeconomic factors, including illiteracy and low income, that hamper parents from

becoming involved in their children's homework. Often, homework is not just incomplete, but also not done, due to this. As a consequence, the students are being punished (Ogoye-Ndegwa, Saisi Mengich & Abidha, 2007). Another factor that hampers parents from becoming involved in their children's education is their lack of time and resources. It has been shown that single parents have more difficulties in reconciling family and work than other parents. Another reason is that some parents may feel that they are not able to help their children with school work due to lack of preparation and knowledge (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

Research findings that take a slightly different direction can be found in Wabike's (2012) study, carried out in Tanzania. Problems faced by Tanzanian families in becoming fully engaged in their children's lives are raised. Wabike found that the children's presence or absence in school is not always a question of lack of time. More often it has to do with what is considered important in the society. The reality faced by many children in Tanzania is illustrated in the study: the father is fishing the whole night and sleeps during the day while the mother, who sleeps during the night, is often selling fish in the market during the day or is working on the land. This results in fewer contact opportunities between parents and children. These children do not attend formal schooling. The formal educational system demands that children of school-going age ought to be at school, whereas the fishing community's social organization and the labour market follow different patterns. The research report indicates that these patterns do not allow optimal presence of parents to raise their children (Wabike, 2012).

Another hinder for parents to become involved may occur when the children grow older. According to Forsberg's (2009) study, it has been found that older children show a resistance to PI. For example, conflicts concerning homework may occur as the children do not want the parents to know what schoolwork they have. Neither do they want parents to visit them in school. This leads to the parents not becoming involved.

Issues that prevent parents from getting involved, which are raised under this heading, are partly due to socioeconomic factors such as illiteracy, low income and lack of knowledge. It is also shown that parents' difficulties in becoming involved are due to time constraints, while other research reports shows that it rather depends on what is considered important in society. Another difficulty in becoming involved arises when the children get older, when some children begin to show resistance to their parents.

1.6.3 PI-strategies

As stated earlier, parents who are more socioeconomically advantaged are more likely to involve themselves in their children's education. It has been shown that socioeconomically advantaged parents generally attend school activities more than other parents do (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Strategies on how parents from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds may become involved have been proposed. For example, a study (Graves Smith, 2004) conducted among low-income families shows PI in schools can be enhanced by intentional strategies. One strategy is to build a resource centre where, for example, the parents from low-income families can be given resources by government agencies and community organizations. The other strategy proposed is to increase PI by, for example, inviting parents to school for conferences and family evenings (Graves Smith, 2004).

Furthermore, it is suggested by Borgonovi and Montt (2012) that teachers, schools and government agencies may increase PI and thus improve the students' performance by ensuring that parents have books at home and by motivating the parents to read to the children when they are young. This applies particularly to those parents who are socioeconomically disadvantaged as they are less likely to participate in these activities.

Research also indicates that in order for parents to become more involved in school, a clear policy on PI is needed (Ogoye-Ndegwa, Saisi Mengich & Abidha, 2007; Borgononvi & Montt, 2012). The lack of policy about PI may increase the gap in the students' performance, depending on the parents' socioeconomic background.

> Better-educated parents and parents who have more control in their working lives are generally more likely to be receptive to initiatives aimed at increasing direct PI in their children's lives. Therefore, policies that do not make special efforts to increase awareness of the importance of PI among all parents, and policies that do not put in place the conditions necessary so that all parents can become involved, and are involved in those activities that are most beneficial, may inadvertently increase disparities in student outcomes related to socioeconomic background by increasing involvement among those who are already highly involved (Borgononvi & Montt, 2012, p. 46).

Moreover, it does not require many hours, money or specialized knowledge for parents to become involved and make a difference in their children's education. However, these activities require interest and active engagement. By encouraging PI, the students' school performance can be enhanced. A higher quality of PI, meaning both school- as well as non-school related PI such as discussing films, books and political or social issues with the child, can reduce performance differences across socioeconomic groups (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

It has just been established that it is mainly the PI of parents with low socioeconomic backgrounds that should be promoted. It does not require any specialized knowledge to be involved in their children's schooling, but for parents to actually become involved it requires intentional strategies, which is the government's, the school's and the teacher's responsibility. It is suggested that it should be ensured that parents, particularly from low socioeconomic backgrounds, have resources such as books at home, giving them opportunities to become involved. What is also required is a clear policy regarding PI.

1.6.4 PI and gender

Research indicates that PI is mainly the responsibility of the mother in the family and that mothers are more likely to be involved in their children's education than fathers (Ogoye-Ndegwa, Mengich & Abidha, 2007; Forsberg, 2009). In Kenya, it has been found that active homework help is primarily seen as a "mother's responsibility" (Ogoye-Ndegwa, Mengich & Abidha, 2007). Reasons for this may be that mothers show a greater interest in educational matters, show a greater need to "be in control" than fathers, or want to have an influence on their children's everyday lives (Forsberg, 2009). In contrast to this, when it concerns homework and the parent's gender, another study (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012), conducted among PISA-countries, found that fathers are more likely to be involved in helping with homework than mothers are. According to this study, mothers seem to be more involved in other activities, such as discussing books, films or television programmes, talking with their children about what they are

reading on their own, discussing how well their children are doing at school and just spending time talking with their children.

Some studies have examined the correlation between PI and the children's gender. It has been shown that parents of girls are more involved in their children's schooling than parents of boys. One reason for this is argued to be that girls involve their parents more than boys do. It is suggested that girls, unlike boys, tell their parents what they learn at school, what occurs in class and inform them of activities in the class more than boys do (Zedan, 2012). Other research findings indicate that PI does not differ significantly whether the child is a boy or a girl (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Nevertheless, the forms of involvement may differ. It has been found that during the first year of primary school, parents sing more songs to girls than to boys. In addition, parents discuss their son's progress and behaviour with the teacher rather than their daughter's. One reason suggested, also by Borgonovi and Montt, may be that boys often have more behavioural problems and low achievements. Research also shows that parents of boys are more indifferent than parents of girls and scarcely look at tests and work done by their sons and that parents do not care much about the boys' grades. The only positive difference in the boys' favour is the participation in personal activities. In that matter, parents of boys participate in personal activities more than parents of girls (Zedan, 2012).

To sum up, regarding the parents' gender, research indicates that there are perceptions that PI is primarily the mother's responsibility. Some research shows that the fathers are more involved in certain activities and mothers in others. Regarding the children's gender, some research shows that it affects PI. Other research shows that it does not, but that the forms of PI may differ depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl.

1.6.5 Summary of previous research

The current research situation presented here has touched a few different aspects of PI. Under the heading *PI and children's performances*, research showing that PI has positive effects on children's school performance was brought up. Some of the factors that constitute an obstacle for parents to become involved were presented under *Issues related to PI*. It showed that there are some difficulties that prevent parents from getting involved, often depending on socioeconomic factors. Under the heading *PI-strategies*, presented research suggests that intentional strategies can increase PI. Lastly, a presentation of research about PI and gender, showing that conditions for PI are affected by whether the parent is a mother or father and/or whether the child is a girl or a boy.

1.7 Theoretical framework

This section describes discourse analysis from which this paper has its origins. Three theoretical perspectives on the relation between home and school are also presented under this section.

1.7.1 Discourse Analysis

There are different perspectives within discourse analysis. According to Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000), it is possible to combine the different perspectives. The important point is that the various elements are combined so they do not conflict with

each other. In this study, we have not chosen to use a particular focus, but have been inspired by various elements in discourse analysis. In this section we outline the discourse concept and present the discourse analytical premises that we have adopted.

The discourse concept often includes the idea that language is structured in different designs that our assertions follow when we act in different social domains. However, there is no clear explanation for the concept. Different positions have tried to provide different definitions. Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000, p. 7, our translation) describe discourse as "… a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or a segment of the world)". The emphasis is placed on "a particular way", which means that there are frameworks which can be built to show which presentations can be made for them to be considered correct and fair, etc. (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007). Discourses are something which represent reality, while also creating it. Through discourses we create meaning, context and understanding. Without these interpretations that discourses represent, each individual unit would stand alone and lack an understanding and meaningful context. Through discourses, it is also possible to capture what is taken for granted within a context, for example, in a particular political structure or within the school (Börjesson, 2003).

Discourse analysis is an analysis of the linguistic patterns that our assertions follow when we act (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). According to Börjesson and Palmblad (2007) discourse analysis deals with how the characteristics and belongings are discursively transformed, linguistically based and secured through action. The analysis of this study concerns the linguistic patterns that the respondents follow in their reasoning about PI. We define linguistic patterns as what is recurrent in the respondents' statements (see section 2.5). Discourse analysis involves a discussion of problems within the essence of a phenomenon. Analytical questions within the discourse analysis are about society regarding reality creation and which cultural conditions that form the basis of constructions of reality. Within these questions, the focus is shifted from how the reality *is* to how it is *created*: Why is reality constructed in a certain way? When is this description valid? (Börjesson, 2003). This study deals with the issue why PI is constructed as it is within the Tanzanian context where the empirical data is retrieved. Why is the PI constructed in a particular way?

According to Börjesson and Palmblad (2007), the basic question within discourse analysis deals with what is qualified as real and true, in a certain time and in a particular place. When discourses and social structures are studied, reflection is required on what is said, how it is said and how it could have been said (Börjesson, 2003). Regarding this study, we are only interested in the content which fills the discourses, not *how* it is said. Hence, we will consider what is said about PI in the Tanzanian primary school and what could have been said otherwise. Within discourses, the boundaries of what is true, trustworthy, and sensible etc. are determined. These limits to what is acceptable to express can provide understanding of the discourses' core. The crossed limits are visible only when someone has passed them (Börjesson, 2003). Discourses are not just what is said in different contexts, but also what makes it possible to say it. What is it that enables the respondent to reason about PI in a certain way? In order to find out about this, the examination of the context becomes important. The discourses that are constructed in conjunction with this may limit the room for action but also open up new opportunities for action (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007).

In accordance with discourse analysis, Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000, pp. 11-12) refer to Burr and describe a number of theoretical premises. The theoretical approach of this paper is founded on these following theoretical points:

- **A critical approach towards true knowledge.** Knowledge of the world cannot be seen as an objective truth. It is only through the categories of the world that reality is accessible to us. Reality is a product of the way we categorize the world.

- **Historical and cultural specificity.** Our approach to knowledge is always culturally and historically contingent. The social world is constructed socially and discursively, meaning that the world is not determined by external conditions or what is given in advance. It also means that people do not have inner essences.

- **Correlation between knowledge and social processes.** The way we perceive the world is maintained in social processes. Knowledge is created through social interaction.

- **Correlation between knowledge and social action.** Various forms of actions become natural or unthinkable in a particular worldview. This means that different social world images leads to different social actions. Thus, the social construction of knowledge entails concrete social consequences.

Despite the fact that knowledge is socially constructed and can never reflect an unambiguous reality, it does not mean a denial of different types of social phenomena, but rather that we can only think through discourses (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007). It is impossible to talk about everlasting or real structures. Discourses occur before reality. The world cannot be visible in a meaningful way without discourses (Börjesson, 2003).

To summarise, the interest in this study is to find out which discourses that revolve around PI in the Tanzanian primary school. When parents relate to their children's schooling, their abilities to become involved are controlled by the discourse or discourses that make up the phenomenon of PI. PI in school can be seen as a set of rules for what is possible for parents to express themselves about this particular phenomenon. PI, as an action, is controlled by the language and the discourse that it is within.

1.7.2 Three perspectives on the relation home and school

In order to further explore and understand the respondents' statements about PI, three of Gutman's perspectives (referred in Markström, 2013, p. 214), concerning the relation between parents and teachers, will be used when discussing the discourses (see chapter 4). The first perspective builds on an idea that individuals, in terms of parents or family, have the best knowledge about their children's needs and that they are the best educators. The second perspective is built on the idea that the government should have the responsibility for the children's education, because they have a general overview of education and pay for children's schooling. The last perspective, which we in this study advocate, is a democratic perspective characterized by a common educational authority between parents and school.

2 Method

In this chapter, the choice of method, the study's sample, pilot study and the study's empirical as well as analytical implementation will be presented. Ethical considerations, including the Swedish Research Council's four ethical guidelines, discussion of method and cultural considerations are also presented and discussed.

2.1 Choice of method: Qualitative interviews

In order to achieve the study's purpose, which is to identify and analyse common assumptions about PI in the Tanzanian primary school, qualitative interviews were conducted. Qualitative interviews are used in order to understand the world from the interviewees' perspective and develop meaning from their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Qualitative interviews relate to the discourse analytical approach, which we have assumed in this study. Kvale and Brinkmann state that all interviews are naturally discursive. As interviews highlight the respondents' individual experiences, in order to get an idea about their reality we considered it appropriate to conduct qualitative interviews.

With the purpose of giving the respondents the opportunity to construct longer stories, so-called semi-structured interviews were conducted, meaning they were neither open, everyday conversations nor closed questionnaires (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Within discourse analysis, this is a common method to collect empirical data. Such interviews allow the researcher to analyse the discursive patterns created when participants use certain discursive resources in their arguments (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000).

It should be noted that this is not an ethnographic study since we have not examined people's everyday knowledge, lifestyles or a specific culture, which Patel and Davidsson (2011) mean are usually considered in such a study.

2.2 Sample

The sample of this study comprises four parents from the village of Bulunde and four parents and two teachers from the village of Tazengwa in Tanzania. Our first intention was not to conduct interviews with teachers. The reason why we eventually chose to interview teachers was that we wanted to receive statements about PI from different perspectives in order to obtain a more rich empirical data. Due to our time frame of eight weeks, we only conducted two interviews with teachers.

In accordance with Trost (2010), a strategic sample was first made. Within a strategic sample, a number of variables are chosen that are of theoretical importance, such as gender, age or education. Furthermore, categories are selected based on the variables, such as male or female. Regarding the parents in this study, the variable was gender and the categories mother and father. A criterion for the parents was that they had at least one child in primary school and a criterion for the teachers was that they were working in primary school. Also in accordance with Trost, a convenience sample was made, which is considered as a practical method to gain a strategic sample. The convenience sample is used to find a sample that matches the set variables through "… taking what

you happen to find" (Trost, 2010, p. 140, our translation). Our field supervisor helped us to find the respondents in Bulunde through proceeding from the variable and criterion regarding the parents. He sent oral requests through the children to the parents about participating in our study. The parents were informed about the study and were told to contact our supervisor if they were interested in participating in an interview. Due to certain circumstances, which meant that our interviews were postponed on several occasions, we changed the interpreter for another. Therefore, for practical reasons, we also changed the village to Tazengwa. Along with the interpreter, we walked around the village and "knocked on doors" looking for suitable respondents (in Tanzania, people say "hodi hodi" instead of knocking on doors). We explained about ourselves and the study. If they matched the variable and criterion, we asked them if they wanted to participate. All the respondents we asked were positive about participating and said yes. In order to find two teachers who were willing to participate, we walked together with our interpreter to the primary school in Tazengwa. Our interpreter introduced us to the teaching staff outside the school. We told them about ourselves and the study and that we were looking for two respondents. Two teachers said yes and the interviews were carried out the same day.

The study's respondents are presented in Table 1. The first letter in the respondents' fictional name stands for the village (Bulunde or Tazengwa). The second letter stands for the respondents' role (mother, father or teacher). The number indicates the order in which the interviews were conducted in each village.

Table 1. The study's sample

Respon-dent	Village	Role	Age	Occu-pation	Educational level	Child-ren	Inter-preter
BM1	Bulunde	Parent mother	41	Farmer	Form 4 (secondary school)	2	Yes
BM2	Bulunde	Parent mother	42	Teacher	Two years teacher training	3	No
BF3	Bulunde	Parent father	35	Farmer	Form 6 (secondary school)	2	No
BF4	Bulunde	Parent father	49	Farmer	Standard 7 (primary school)	11	Yes
TF1	Tazengwa	Parent father	65	Farmer	Standard 7 (primary school)	6	Yes
TM2	Tazengwa	Parent mother	30	Stone breaker	Standard 1 (primary school)	2	Yes
TM3	Tazengwa	Parent mother	43	Farmer	Standard 7 (primary school)	5	Yes
TF4	Tazengwa	Parent father	64	Retiree	Advanced diploma in business administration	9	No
TT5	Tazengwa	Teacher female	-	Teacher	Completed teacher training	3	No
TT6	Tazengwa	Teacher male	-	Teacher	A bachelor degree in education	3	No

In addition to the interviews, our intention was to obtain the Tanzanian curriculum for primary school in order to access data about PI in Tanzania. After several efforts by talking to the Tanzanian Embassy in Sweden as well as our field supervisor and the school manager of Nzega district (including Bulunde and Tazengwa), we were lastly told that there was only one curriculum for primary school in the whole district, possibly locked away somewhere. We were also told that the teachers in the district are working under direct guidelines from the government. No written guidelines could be obtained.

2.3 Pilot study

The first two interviews formed the basis of a pilot study. The pilot study was carried out to check the interview questions. Through this, we found that the follow-up questions needed to be developed further as we perceived the interviews as poor. Possible answers from the respondents were considered and potential follow-up questions for each interview question were written down. The pilot study also made it evident that we were missing a question about PI in the home. Following the advice of our field supervisor, an interview question regarding this was added. During the analysis we chose to disregard the pilot study since its empirical data was not rich enough.

2.4 Empirical implementation of the study

In total 12 interviews (including two interviews in the pilot study) were conducted. The interview questions in the two villages were the same. We proceeded from an interview guide (see appendix 1) containing questions based on our research questions in order to answer the aim of this study. When we considered it necessary, we asked follow-up questions. Another thing in common, during the interviews, was that we, as interviewers, had two different roles. One of us mainly asked the questions and the other took notes and listened. The one of us who took notes also filled in with follow-up questions. We made half of the interviews each and switched roles between the interviews. If needed during the interviews, we had an interpreter to assist us as some of the respondents did not speak English. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the interpreter's role is to help and not to take over the interviewer's role. The interpreter should also be culturally acceptable and proficient in the language. All the interviews were recorded with a dictaphone and the interviews took about ten to 30 minutes each. Before recording, the respondents were informed about the conditions for their participation (see section 2.6.1). We spoke with our field supervisor about some sort of payment to the respondents for their participation. Payment is not necessary, but appreciated. Each respondent was given a can of cooking oil in appreciation of their participation in the study. In order that their choice of participating would not be affected, they did not know about the "payment" before the interviews and it was given to them at the end of each interview.

In the village Bulunde, we conducted six interviews (including the pilot study) with parents. Together with our supervisor, we decided the times when it was appropriate to conduct the interviews. The interviews were conducted in a school environment. During these interviews, we sat around a rectangular table inside a school office with stone floors, stone walls and lattice windows. The one who interviewed sat on one long side

of the table and the respondent sat on the opposite side. The other one, who was tasked with taking notes and to fill in with follow-up questions, sat on a couch next to the table. The interpreter sat on one of the short sides of the table.

In Tazengwa, four interviews with parents and two interviews with teachers were conducted. The interviews were carried out in a home environment. Two of the interviews were conducted outdoors, just outside each respondent's home. For example, during one interview, we sat in a circle on low wooden pallets behind the house of bricks in which the respondent lived. The other two respondents invited us into their home. The interviews with the teachers were conducted in a school environment, in each teacher's office.

2.5 Implementation of the analysis

The discourse analytical approach, which is explained in a previous chapter (see section 1.7.1), has been the basis of our procedure during the analysis. In this section, we describe how we proceeded in the analysis process in three steps.

The first step in the analysis process was to transcribe the interviews. Transcribing means to transform, changing the interviews from one form to another (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). We transcribed half of the interviews each. If there was any uncertainness concerning the transcriptions, we helped each other to listen to the recording in order to reduce any misunderstandings. Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000) point out that one important thing concerning the transcription process is to consider what is useful in relation to the study's purpose and research questions. As much as possible of what was said was transcribed, both the interview questions and the answers. In order to maintain essential details, the interviews were transcribed as literally as possible. The transcriptions of the interviews conducted with an interpreter were only transcribed in English, not in Swahili. Pauses and intonations were not noted, partly because some interviews were made with an interpreter which made it difficult and partly because we did not find it relevant in relation to the study's purpose. The collected data has been seen as "... linguistic statements describing one reality" (Bolander & Fejes, 2009, p. 85, our translation). Bolander and Fejes point out that there is no one text that provides a more truthful picture of the reality than any other text. In accordance with discourse analysis, we have considered the transcribed material for the interviews with parents and the teachers on the same level. Hence, we are not interested in what is true or false, but what is said, regardless of who is making the statement. The interest in this study concerns the discourses that are constructed and which become truths.

According to Bolander and Fejes (2012), designing a number of analytical questions can serve as a guide tool within discourse analysis when implementing the analysis. In accordance with this, as a second step in the analysis, after all the interviews had been transcribed, a number of analytical questions based on the study's research questions were designed. These questions were:

- What do the respondents say about PI?
- What do the parents say about education?

The questions were aimed to obtain an overall picture of the respondents' statements about PI and the parents' statements about the perception of education. Each analytical question was answered with the help of a writing programme on the computer. The respondents' answers were copied under the analytical questions where suitable.

As a third step, a deeper analysis was made. The following questions were designed:

- What is recurrent in the respondents' statements about PI?
- What is recurrent in the parents' statements about education?

These questions aimed to serve as a tool for identifying the fundamental reasoning that built up each discourse. Notably, the interest in this study is to determine what *content* identifies the discourses. Each question was, as in the second step, answered with the help of a writing programme on the computer.

The discourses have been built up within each research question. They comprise the respondents' recurrent way to talk about PI as well as the parents' perception of education. In order to detect what we term as recurrent, we searched for the reasoning in the respondents' statements that was *performing* the same thing, as language, in accordance with discourse analysis, is performative (see for example Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007). Thus, to clarify, we have not searched for specific words in the respondents' statements. Discourses through the recurrent reasoning in the respondents' statements were identified. In the search for what was recurrent we found, for example, reasoning concerning the parents' financial support in different ways as well as their reasoning about providing food. These lines of reasoning had the same content and form the basis of the discourse *PI as a resource*. The discourses identified through the analysis are presented in the Result chapter (see chapter 3).

2.6 Ethical considerations

In this section, ethical considerations will be presented and discussed. The section includes discussions concerning the Swedish Research Council's four ethical guidelines, the method of the study and cultural considerations. To determine the study's quality the two concepts validity and credibility will be used. Validity is about how well the measured phenomenon corresponds to reality, while credibility is about the quality of the instrument for collecting data (Stukát, 2011). In accordance with discourse analysis, we cannot give an objective image of reality as the result in this study is seen as *one* version of the reality (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). Therefore, we are questioning the objective aspects in the concepts validity and reliability.

2.6.1 The Swedish Research Council's four ethical guidelines

During the research process, there are some ethical considerations to make. We have assumed the Swedish Research Council's (2002) four ethical guidelines: the information requirement, the requirement of informed consent, the confidentiality requirement and the utilization requirement. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide standards for the relationship between researcher and respondent. They are also intended to guide the researcher when planning the project. In accordance with the information requirement, the respondents were verbally informed about the purpose of the study. The respondents were also informed on the conditions of participation, for example, that the participation

was voluntary and that the interviews would not be used for any purpose other than for this study. According to the requirement of informed consent, the respondents should have the right to determine over their own participation in the interview process. We told the respondents that they participated on a voluntary basis and sought their consent. In comparison with the interviews conducted in Bulunde village where the respondents voluntarily signed up for participating in the interviews, there was a risk that the respondents in Tazengwa felt somewhat restricted to say no because they did not have much time to consider their participation. However, as the respondents showed a positive attitude to participate in the interviews we do not think that they felt forced to be a part of the study. They also had the chance to withdraw their participation without this having negative consequences for them. If a respondent wanted to cancel his/her participation in the middle of the interview, it was free for him/her to do so. The respondents have, in accordance with the confidentiality requirement, been given the utmost confidentiality. Their personal information is not specified to restrict unauthorized access to this information. Concerning the utilization requirement, the information collected about individuals has been used only for this study's research purpose. The collected material neither has been nor will be used or lent out for commercial or other non-scientific purposes. In addition to the four research ethical principles, we also followed the Swedish Research Council's (2002) recommendation and asked the participants if they were interested in receiving a report or summary of the study. We told the respondents to contact our field supervisor/interpreter or the other interpreter if they were interested to know the result of this study.

2.6.2 Discussion of method

Using qualitative interviews gave us the opportunity to obtain the respondents' perspectives and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) about PI. We, therefore, consider that a qualitative method was appropriate, as the aim of the study was to identify and analyse common assumptions about PI in the context of the Tanzanian primary school. Because of our theoretical approach, we did not consider a quantitative study, such as using a quantitative survey method, suitable. The questions used in such a method are often isolated and the respondents need to consider different statements, which could lead to difficulties when identifying discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). Observation as a method, which intends to observe behaviour and episodes (Patel & Davidson, 2011) was not appropriate in this study either, since this was not what the study aimed to examine.

We consider that the pilot study increases the study's validity. According to Patel and Davidson (2011) a pilot study can be used to check and adjust for example, the content of the questions, number of questions and the formulation of the questions, in order to make the implementations of the interviews as good as possible. As we complemented the interview guide with one question and reflected over appropriate follow-up questions, we consider that the interview guide became more complete since it corresponded better to the study's aim and research questions. In the pilot study, we have been able to anticipate the result which is obtained in the main study, which increases the study's validity. Furthermore, the pilot study increases the study's credibility. Patel and Davidson state that a pilot study can be used to test a technique for the collection of empirical data or to examine a particular procedure. Thanks to the pilot study, we noticed that the recorder picked up a lot of disturbance noises, which we had

in mind when we conducted the other interviews and made sure that we tried, as well as we could, to avoid noisy places.

According to Stukát (2011) efforts should be made to obtain a representative sample in order to generalize the study's result. A representative sample is an image of the population in miniature. Since the knowledge produced is seen as *one* representation among other possible representations (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000), the result of this study cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, we argue that we can see traces of generalizability, since much of the previous research is consistent with the result of this study. Due to this, the result may have importance beyond the boundaries of the discourses.

During the empirical implementation of the study, we see it as an advantage that the both of us were present. We could help each other by, for example, asking follow-up questions. On the other hand, there can also be a disadvantage in being two in the implementation of the interviews, because the respondent may feel that he or she is in an inferior position (Trost, 2010). We had this in mind and tried our best to reduce these feelings among the respondents by being conscious of how we sat during the interviews.

We are aware that our roles as researchers affect the result as we are co-creators of the discourses that have been identified in the analysis (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007). The interview questions may be considered as leading which involves a risk that the result may have been created by our own notions of how PI in school "should" be. For example, when the parents were asked to tell about their contact with the school we assumed that there was, or should be, a contact with the school, which has probably affected the responses we got and hence the study's results.

Winter Jørgensen and Phillips (2000) state that it is important to have a distance to the empirical data because the researcher's own values should not overshadow the analysis. Being two during the analysis process could help us to become aware if our own values emerged. If we had been alone during this process it would have been more difficult to distance ourselves from the empirical data, which would have affected the study's credibility negatively. Furthermore, it has been helpful to record the interviews with a dictaphone and after that transcribe them. This facilitated the analysis process since the purpose was to analyse what was recurrent in the respondents' statements. According to Winther Jørgensen and Phillips it is important to make the analysis process transparent and that the research steps are written as clearly as possible as this will increase the study's validity. This will help the readers to assess the process as well as to form their own opinions about it. Furthermore, we consider it as a strength that we used analytical questions. These questions have guided us in the analysis and helped us to carry out, and write, the analysis in clear steps.

Discourse analysis as a theoretical approach has helped us to critically examine the discourses identified, which we regard as an advantage of the approach. However, it has been difficult to determine the boundaries of the discourses. Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000) also underline this difficulty and point out that to determine where one discourse begins and another ends is a practical problem. They claim that if the delimitation of discourses is seen as an analytical operation, it would mean that discourses are only constructed rather than already existing. Yet, we argue that not anything can be seen as discourses. Again, we point out that traces of reality can be

found in the discourses in this study as the content within them is consistent with the current state of education in Tanzania. This indicates that the discourses in this study are not only constructed by us but also show a part of the reality in the contexts where the study was conducted.

2.6.3 Cultural considerations

To reduce the risk of cross-cultural misunderstandings we needed time to become familiar with the new culture in Tanzania before we started our interviews. In other cultures there are other standards of interaction with strangers in terms of initiative, directness, ways to ask etc. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In some situations, our own social rules probably became inhibited. For example, "knocking on doors" to ask if people want to participate in an interview would most likely be unusual in Sweden. Nevertheless, once we had become acquainted with the culture in Tanzania, we did not see any problem doing so. Neither did our interpreter, which indicates that such a visit is not strange in Tanzania. We also noticed that the way Tanzanian people communicate is characterized by simplicity and harmony. By using semi-structured interviews, we had expected to obtain longer statements from the respondents. The answers we received to the interview questions were often not so long and developed as we had hope. As this could be explained by peoples' different way of communicating than we are used to, rather than the formulation of the questions, we do not see this as constituting a problem against the study's validity. There could, however, be a risk that the respondents gave us the answers that they thought we wanted to hear. Since our perception was that they showed a genuine interest in participating, we argue that the respondents' answers were honest.

During some of the interviews there were some distractions. It could happen, for example, that a respondent became preoccupied with answering the mobile phone that rang or received a visit, which interrupted the interview for a while. Nevertheless, we noted that the respondents seemed unaffected by these distractions. It was rather we than the respondents who became distracted by these interruptions. In Sweden, we have experiences of "taking one thing at a time", that "time is money", that time precedes human relationships and that schedules are taken seriously. In Tanzania, we experienced that multiple tasks are handled simultaneously, that interpersonal relations precedes time and that plans are constantly changing. Due to this, these interruptions most likely do not affect the study's credibility negatively.

Using an interpreter may also affect the study's credibility. In order to reduce misunderstandings and misinterpretations, we showed the interpreters the interview questions before we started to interview the respondents. Yet, the risk remained that what was being said was not translated correctly. This would mean that the discourses we identified by the respondents' statements were unreliable. On the other hand, we did not aim to assess whether the respondents' answers were true or false since we, in accordance with Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000), did not see their statements as a description of reality, only one version of the reality. We are aware that the interpreter, regardless of the interpretation, is involved in the construction of the reality expressed through the interviews. Interviews conducted without an interpreter would mean that we received the respondents' answers directly. However, those interviews might involve certain limitations for the respondents due to language. When the respondents are using

Swahili, which is their mother tongue, it may be easier for them to express themselves more freely without restrictions. Hence, the interviews conducted with an interpreter may be more credible than the others due to the respondents' potential opportunities to express themselves more easily. The risk still remains that what is being said is incorrectly translated by the interpreter. Yet, since both the interpreters were proficient in English, which Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasizes as important, our assessment of the interpretation is that it is credible. The interviews conducted in English, without an interpreter, are also seen as credible as the respondents spoke English relatively freely.

Another decision we had to make during our field study was to replace the interpreter and, due to this, also change village. Since the context is a part of the construction of the discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000), we realize that this change may affect the empirical data of this study. For example, one discourse has been identified in the village Tazengwa and not in the village Bulunde. We mean that this is probably because this discourse mainly includes statements from the teachers rather than the switch of village. During the implementation of the analysis, we did not notice any other significant differences concerning the change of interpreter, the village or the interview situations, except for minor differences such as choice of words. With regard to our theoretical approach, the choice of words could have had great significance since *how* something is said may be important when discourses are studied (Börjesson, 2003). Since we only analysed the content of *what* was said we do not think that this affects the study's result significantly.

3 Result

In this chapter, the result of the study is presented. Based on each research question, the result is divided into two sections: *The perception of education: A background of parental involvement in Tanzania* and *Parental involvement in Tanzania.* The first section is based on an analysis of only the parents' statements while the other section is based on all the respondents' statements. The discourses that were identified through the analysis (see section 2.5) are reported under headings, which are constituted from the names of the discourses. The result is presented by reproducing the respondents' statements and exemplified by quotes. The quotes are reproduced literally from what is said in English. In cases where an interpreter has been used (see section 2.2), the respondents' statements are presented in the third person. Within each discourse, the central result is presented. At the end of each presented discourse, a summary is also given.

3.1 The perception of education: A background of parental involvement in Tanzania

The discourse *Education for the future* is presented in this section. The parents' statements within this discourse are considered as a basic explanation of their motives when they reason about PI (see section 3.2), which will be further discussed in the Discussion chapter (see chapter 4).

3.1.1 Education for the future

The parents' perception of education is given a prominent role in their statements. The lines of reasoning in this discourse show how the parents believe education can help their children in various ways. These lines of reasoning determine the framework of what builds up this discourse.

There is a consensus among the parents that education is the most important thing for their children in life, which is stated by all of them. In the village Bulunde, three out of four parents declare that "education is the key of life". These declarations seem to be constructed because of the school's slogan.

> **BF3:** That is a kind of slogan you can say that education according to our school /…/ that education is the key of life. Education is their right. No education no development.

Some parents state that they encourage their children to study and that they emphasize the importance of education in their communication with their children.

> **BF3:** I don't know where you [his child] are going to live but education should help you in this way and in this way and you are going to succeed because you should have education. /…/. So I am trying to sit with my children to try to direct them that you are supposed to do this or to do this. So try to direct them or generally a conclusion like we try to explain about the education in your life.

It is pointed out that education can help the children in different matters in the future. A few of the parents have an ambition for their children to continue to higher education after finishing primary school. For example, TF1 states that he will be happy if his

children continue with higher education. If they do not, he says that he will find other ways for them to train themselves to become independent in the future, in order to perform other duties, such as carpenters, drivers or mechanics. Many others argue that education can help the children to get an employment and to become self-reliant. Some parents furthermore say that education can help their children to employ themselves.

> **TM3:** She says she will be very happy if they get job and become self-reliant. She says that going to school is to expand your knowledge and it's not only being employed, but you can employ yourself /…/ she wants her kids to get a wide range of knowledge /…/. They just expand their knowledge and they can employ themselves in other activities such as keeping kettle or agriculture activities and so forth.

The discourse shows that some parents have a clearer idea of what their children will be occupied with in the future than others. For example, BM2 thinks that two of her children will be playing football and the third will become a nurse in the future. BF4 intends his children to become teachers and politicians, especially members of parliament. Others claim that it is up to each one of their children to decide on what they want to do when they have grown up. Some of the parents state that their children's occupations in the future depend on the children's own interests.

> **TM2:** They really have to decide their selves when they grew up. She cannot just force them this is the best and this is the best, they really have to choose themselves. She cannot know their interest of each kid they are free to choose what job they want. But should it be a good job for themselves, she just will agree with that.

Another parent states that it is impossible to know what the children will do in the future as it will depend on the children's school performance. She does a parable with a pregnancy.

> **TM3:** She says that when the kid is in school, it's like a pregnancy, so you could not just know whether she would give out a boy or a girl or a nothing, so she could not even answer it properly she says, because it's like a pregnancy, when you take the kid there you give the teachers the expectations that depend on the results, that what she says.

The result confirms that one of the parents does not just see the children's future secured by education. He points out that if the children obtain a good education, they can also help their parents.

> **BF4:** He would his or her children to get a good education because if he could get a good education it will help him or her to get a job, and if the children could get a job he could also help the parents here.

Furthermore, one parent emphasizes that the important thing about education is that it can create an understanding of other people in one's surrounding, which he claims could reduce the gap between people from different families that might otherwise occur.

> **BF3:** Normally you can say that education can help student to understand /…/ our environment. How can you live with the other people, /.../. We are studying at the same school, this is my fellow. We are the same people, not to make the gap that this one they are coming from rich families, this one is coming from the poor family so that is the gap. So sometimes you can say that education can help the student to live their lives from the poor family to the rich family at the school. That is why you can see in the class that all the students that are the same stage.

A common assumption in the parents' statements is that education can help their children to solve problems in their future lives. One parent highlights that knowledge of different subjects can help his children to solve problems that they may encounter in different situations. In the quote below, he gives some concrete examples.

> **BF4:** First, if he could know English he could communicate with the other. And not only that he could travel in many countries without having any problems. And if he could know mathematics it could help him or her to calculate his money, or make some calculations. If he could know geography, it could be easy for him to travel, to know the place without any problems.

Other examples of problems, which children can solve through education, are related to the children's health. One parent indicates that he is trying to encourage his children to undergo education in order for them to be able to solve problems they might face in the future. He indicates that education affects one's choice if suffering from some kind of disease.

> **BF3:** How they are going to solve this problem, just a small problem for example a suffering from a certain disease. But don't think that some people using a magical power that of course to have this condition or sometimes what they are going to do, make sure that you go to hospital. That is consider education. So I am trying to sit with my children to try to direct them that you are supposed to do this or to do this.

One parent talks about the importance of educating her children in order to prepare a good future for them and to avoid reproaches later on.

> **TM2:** She says that it is very important to educate these kids. And if you educate them you are preparing for them a good future. And it is good to train them so that you [the mother] move from the blames when they grew up. You remove yourself from their blames when they grew up.

In summary, the discourse includes the parents' perceptions of the role of education. In their statements, education becomes the most fundamental factor in order for the children to have a better life in the future. Education can help the children to become independent and to obtain employment or to employ themselves. Education may also give the children the opportunity to help their parents in the future. In addition, it is noted that education can help the children to better understand other people in their surroundings. It can also give the children knowledge to solve various problems that may occur as well as to avoid falling into various problem situations.

3.2 Parental involvement in Tanzania

The discourses presented in this section are: *PI as a resource, PI as pressures from teachers, PI as a lack of education,* and *PI as paying attention to children's education.*

3.2.1 PI as a resource

The fundamental reasoning in the respondents' statements, that forms the basis of this discourse, is about how parents support their children in their education by financial support in different ways and the providing of food. This discourse represents the statements about the prerequisites for the children attending school.

The discourse shows that there are different ways for parents to support their children financially to enable them to attend school. First of all, it is highlighted by almost everyone that a way to be involved in school is to support the children financially by paying school fees and buying school supplies. The parents buy school uniforms, exercise books, course books, pens, pencils and everything else that is not paid for by the school. According to one of the teachers, the parents become involved in school when the children are missing some of the materials, which are needed in school.

> **TT5:** They participate when you have missing something, like chalks, exercise books, pens for their children. They buy themselves some and they buy their pupils, because the school have no money to give the pupils anything according to the teaching. So parents are expected to buy the uniform for their children, exercise books and books, pens, pencils.

Additionally, some parents give their children pocket money to have while in school.

> **TF4:** I give them money to school. If I have some cash I give them each 200 shillings. That is what I do, I always do. When they reached at school there are things which is prevented by the locals like ice cream and brandy nuts.

The responsibility for parents to pay their children's school fees in the future is expressed. The respondents emphasize poverty that makes them feel some uncertainty regarding their children's future. The problem is raised that higher education is expensive in Tanzania and what the children will occupy themselves with in the future will partly depend on the financial conditions of the parents. TF1 expresses the wish that his children in the future acquire higher education, but that this requires financial resources.

> **TF1:** /.../ it will depend on the financial situation, so he [TF1] is to train they [his children] according to what is in his pockets, because he would be needed to dig deep in his pocket so that he pays fees for them to train his mechanics or carpenters or builders.

One respondent sees it as her task to make sure her children receive education but expresses poverty as an obstacle to the future. She claims that she cannot afford to pay higher education on her own and expresses a wish for external financial support.

> **TM2:** She says that her aim is to prepare her kids for their future life, but she says there will be some sort of hinders in the future. Higher learning in Tanzania is very expensive and the life in Tanzania is poor. /.../. If any support come from Sweden she will be very, very much thankful. What she does to the moment she goes to collect the stones and use the stones to get the aggregates and sell. That she cannot sustain the payment of higher education for the kids.

Besides contributing with money when it concerns school supplies, school fees and pocket money, the discourse shows that parents become involved in school when the development of the school is concerned. TT5 points out that it is the parents' responsibility to contribute with money to the development of the school since the school, which she is working at, has no money. A consequence for the children that may occur due to the school's lack of money is highlighted by TT5. She states that if the parents do not contribute as they are requested in school developments, the teachers will not be able to teach the children. Similarly, TT6 pronounces that it is important for parents to become involved in school in order to achieve a development of the school. As the parents are the ones that own the school, they must contribute to the school's development.

> **TT6:** /…/ when we want to have the development at the school, the parents are the ones that are going to give us the supports for buildings, maybe for buildings like toilets or maintaining desks etc. etc. So it is better to involve parents because they are the one who own the school.

Another reasoning in the respondents' statements about PI concerns providing the children with food. Eight out of ten respondents mention providing food as a part of PI. The discourse shows that neither of the schools in this study offers any food for the reason that the schools have no money. Therefore, it is a part of PI to ensure that the children receive food from home. The discourse shows that parents provide food for their children before school, during the breaks and after school.

> **BM1:** /…/ because he is living just near the school, at ten o'clock he will be back to home to have tea so the mother preparing food and tea for the kid. And during the day time during the break time of course the kid will be back to home to take the lunch.

To summarise, the discourse relates to PI where the prerequisites for children's attending school are given. PI becomes a resource in the sense that those prerequisites apply to the parents' responsibility to support their children with financial support and food. The financial support is shown in various ways: by paying the children's school fees, buying assorted school supplies and providing the children with pocket money to school, as well as to contributing with money to the school's development. The respondents' statements follow this discourse when they are reasoning about PI.

3.2.2 PI as a lack of education

An apparent reasoning in the respondents' statements about PI that forms this discourse regards their talk about obstacles preventing parents from becoming involved. The respondents' statements illustrate that parents do not know how to become involved in their children's schooling, which they say is a result of parents' lack of education.

One teacher says that when parents are asked to come to school, the majority of parents in the village Tazengwa do not show up. The reason why they do not is, according to her, because many of the parents who are uneducated do not see the point of attending. In the quote below, her statement regarding this obstacle is expressed.

> **TT5:** The difficulties I think they don't know how are they supposed to be at the school. Uneducated, many of them are uneducated so they don't know what it means when we call them at the school. They say maybe we are wasting your time to come here [to school], they continue their activities there [at home]. /…/ Some parents they participate very good but a lot of them they don't know how the means of participating at the school so to they can serve less to participating at the school. Because they can call them to the meeting but maybe 60 % of the parents they don't come to school, only 40 % they come. /…/. So we have a hard time for parents to make them participate at the school. A big number of parents they don't know how to participate at the school.

A similar point of view is suggested by TT6. He suggests that the parents that did not go to school do not see the importance of education. Therefore, they do not become involved in their children's schooling.

> **TT6:** Some of the parents they did not go to school so they don't know the importance of education. That is why even though we are involving them they are not ready to come to attend in order to see the procedures of their children or their daughters or their sons

because himself or herself they not go to school so he don't know what the importance of education.

One of the parents reasons a slightly different way. She points out that if the children themselves are educated, they will take their children to school when they have grown up.

> **TM2:** /.../ when they grow up of course they just follow the same path. If they are educated she is sure that even this when they get kids they will take them to school. Education have been a sort of foundation for the kids. And the kids will just follow the same channel as the mom did so they have to do the same to their kids when they are married or when they grew up.

In summary, it is stated that PI depends on the parents' educational level. The statements indicate that parents who lack education also lack the ability to become involved in their children's schooling.

3.2.3 PI as pressures from teachers

There are expectations from teachers that parents should be involved in their children's schooling. These expectations are formed by the reasoning in the respondents' statements, which builds up this discourse.

It is revealed through the parents' statements that the teachers expect the parents to cooperate with them. Furthermore, some teachers want the parents to have close contacts with their children and with the school so that the children will fulfil their school attendance. The parents are also expected to comment on a daily report, which the children bring home from school.

> **TF4:** They expect to be close with the school. They are expecting that as a parent I am supposed to be close to my children and close to school. /.../ so that we help the schools to want them their attendance, their regularly attendance that they are nearly going to school. They come back home so that daily report which we will receive from the school. They will be writing there, everything which they do there at the school day. They ask you as parent to comment on the daily report.

The teachers' pressure on the parents to become involved includes them sending out requests to the parents. These requests are either oral or written. The requests concern different things, for example, to attend school meetings. One of the teachers expresses as follows.

> **TT6:** /.../ we can write the messages to them that we are involving you, we are asking you to come to school to join with us /.../ the task which are calling for parents to contribute. For instance there is a meeting at the school for development, so you parents are asking to come together tomorrow or which day it could be arranged.

The requests may also concern buying school supplies for the children. It is indicated that parents are supporting at the insistence of teachers. The teachers send requests to the parents in order to make sure that the children have the requirements needed for the school. The discourse further shows that the requests may also be about contributing with money to the school in any matter. Through one parent's statement it is shown that the pressure exerted by teachers actually results in the parents becoming involved.

> **TF4:** /…/ when the children they are been giving a letter which they want us to attend there, we do usually attend. For instance, they can say that we want you parents to contribute each family 500 shillings. We usually contribute 500 shillings and we discuss it with them if there is a point to discuss.

One of the parents expresses a somewhat more vigilant attitude when she is requested to contribute with money. She provides an example of a concrete situation when she received an oral request through her children.

> **TM3:** The kid was told by the teacher to come home and take 15.000 shilling for buying a desk so she [TM3] was amazed, so she had to go there and ask is it true or is it pass by sentence from my kid. She took the money in her pocket and she went to check what was just brought to her by the kid was correct, then she went there and everything was correct, therefore she paid the money and she was given a receipt.

Furthermore, one teacher suggests that the parents are expected to pay fees for the watchmen at the school.

> **TT5:** We have two security or watchmen. At night they be here to work at the surrounding area of the school, so parents they give them money after a month.

A demand for greater PI is expressed through the teachers' statements. One teacher states that it is desirable that PI should be a matter for the parents to a greater extent.

> **TT5:** I think that they should participate better and teaching their children at home after school /.../. I think also it is better for parents to come at the meeting of the school with parents and teachers and the pupils.

The other teacher also expresses the wish that parents should be more involved in order for the students to develop optimally.

> **TT6:** Parents involvement what you can adding that parents /.../ it is better to cooperate fully with the teachers /.../. If their parents are going to cooperate fully with the teachers it means that even teaching and learning will become a simple way. So it seems that the children will get education easier more than having a large luggage for caring themselves. So I want to say that parents must make sure that they are following the developments of their students.

To summarise, this discourse includes the respondents' statements, which concern pressures from teachers, relating to the teachers' expectations on parents in different matters. These pressures are revealed through oral or written requirements that the parents receive from the teachers and they often include requests for contributing with money. The expectations are also expressed through the teachers' reasoning in which they express a wish for a greater PI. As a result, PI is increased by the teachers' pressure.

3.2.4 PI as paying attention to children's education

The fundamental in the respondents' statements creating this discourse is that the parents pay attention to their children's schooling in different ways. The discourse includes statements concerning the parents' contact with school as well as their contact with their children concerning school.

The parents in the study highlight the necessity of contact between home and school in order to receive information about their children's performance in school. When parents

and teachers communicate, they often talk about the children's performance. The discourse shows that many parents go to the school to find out about the children's progress. For example, BM1 says that she always go to school to check on her children's progress. Several of the respondents live near the school, which, according to some of them, facilitates the contact with the teachers.

> **TM3:** She says she is always too close to the teachers who teach her kids and she goes there to check whether their progress are good or their attendance are good or bad.

When meetings are held at the school, one respondent states that the children's progress is discussed.

> **TM2:** They usually do meetings at the school. She goes there and they [teachers and parents] exchange ideas and the development of the school and the kids. They talk about so many things about the development of the kids.

Another way for parents to pay attention to their children's schooling is to ask their children what they have learnt in school. In addition, the majority of parents mention that they check their children's exercise books in order to find out what they have been working with in school.

> **BF4:** When they come home, he ask them what subject have you learned at the school. And then if maybe, not only to tell them, even to show them what they have written in their exercise book.

Besides asking the children what they have been working with in school and looking in their exercise books, a couple of parents pay attention by finding out if their children have any school assignments to do. If they do, TM2 encourages her children to do them in order to take them to school the next day. Additionally, one respondent ensures that her children's school assignments are done correctly.

> **BM1:** If there is some mistakes he did she is trying to make a correction and /…/ also to make revision for the things which has been written. Maybe if there is a mathematics maybe the subject was maybe two times two and instead of writing four, he has written five, so the mother is trying to tell no, two times two is four and not five. So she tells how they get good answer or the right answer.

It is also revealed that the parents pay attention to their children's schooling when a school related problem occurs. The respondents point out that their contact with school often involves problem solving.

> **TF1:** He says that he's close to the school /…/ if there is something wrong he is to see the teachers and ask them about that. /…/. He goes to ask them what is the problems of kids.

It is pointed out that a good contact between the parents and teachers is important in order to solve problems.

> **BF3:** You can sit with the teachers here in order to go in a deep how we can solve or maybe you can see that this problem is causing by this student. He is not coming to school. /…/ he cannot express herself or himself. /…/. It should be a good contact, parents or guardians with teachers. If there is a problem you can solve it together in order to make sure that to remove that problems and create a good way for students to learn.

Usually, when a problem occurs concerning their children, the parents contact the school. Less common is that the parents try to solve their children's problems on their

own at home, before they involve the school. However, it is revealed through one of the parents' statements that he, at least once a week, makes sure he sits with his children in order to find out if they have any problems in or outside school. If they do, he says that he primarily tries to solve his children's problems at home without any outside help. However, if they cannot solve the problem on their own, he contacts the school to try to solve the problem together with the teachers.

> **BF3:** /.../ so I can check what is their problem out of this school, maybe at home if you see any problem, and how about they are doing with their fellows. Maybe you can see that there are this, then I try to make a discussion with these people so try to avoid to be with this one. It could be twice per week or once per week to meet with my children and to discuss about their problems and somehow if the problem is solvable so we can solve it. If it unsolvable so we can go to another stage, that to come to school and /.../ how we can solve it in order to make sure that this student, this pupils they are learning.

To summarise, it has been found that a way for parents to be involved in their children's schooling is to pay attention to their children's schooling in different ways. This can be done by asking the teachers about their children's performance, by asking their children what they have learnt in school, by looking in their children's exercise books and by asking what they have done in school. The parents also pay attention to the children's assignments received from school. Furthermore, the discourse shows that the contact between parents and teachers should be good in order to solve the children's problems. According to the parents, problems are solved primarily at the school with support from the teachers. Sometimes, the parents try to solve their children's problems on their own before they involve the teachers.

3.3 Result summary

The aim of this study has been to identify and analyse common assumptions about PI in the context of the Tanzanian primary school. This has been achieved through interviews with eight Tanzanian parents and two Tanzanian teachers. Furthermore, in order to achieve an understanding about PI, questions about the parent's perception of education were asked. The research questions intended to answer the aim of the study were:

- What importance is attributed to education?
- What characterizes the statements about PI?

Each research question has been answered by identified discourses through the respondents' statements about their perception of education and PI. The discourse identified within the first research question through the parents' statements regarding the perception about education is *Education for the future*. The result reveals that education is highly valued and is given a prominent role. The parents' perception of education is that the aim of education is to help the children in different ways in the future, especially to solve future related problems. Within the second research question, the discourses identified were: *PI as a resource, PI as pressures from teachers, PI as a lack of education,* and *PI as paying attention to children's education.* The names of the discourses represent the characteristics of the parents' and teachers' statements about PI.

4 Discussion

The study's result will be discussed in this chapter. This will be done in relation to previous research and theoretical framework. As discourses cannot stand alone, but are parts of different contexts (Börjesson, 2003), the main focus will be on the socioeconomic context in which the discourses have been identified. Furthermore, the discourses will be discussed in relation to each other. The discussion is divided under the following headings: *The prominent role of education, Parents – the prerequisite for children's education, Parents educational level and parental involvement, A shared responsibility for children's education, Conclusion* and *Suggestions for future research.*

4.1 The prominent role of education

It seems that the education issue has received a more prominent role in Tanzania in recent years. This may be a result of the development cooperation that has taken place in Tanzania where education is emphasized (Sida, 2009b; UN, 2013; Svenska FN-förbundet, n.d.; Regeringen, 2013). The linguistic patterns that the parents in this study follow and which build up the discourse *Education for the future,* could be explained by the prevailing social situation. Education is constructed as if it is the key to the future that can solve and prevent any future problems. Here we can make parallels to the Swedish society where education has become the recurrent answer to many questions addressed to a changing society (Tallberg Broman, 2013). A probability is that education receives an overemphasized role where teachers are expected to take most of the responsibility. This could be linked to Gutman's perspective (Markström, 2013, p. 214) that education is the government's responsibility, where the teachers are seen as the primary educator, which may lead to the children's parents being omitted in the question of who has responsibility for children's education. An alternative way to understand PI in relation to their perception of education is that when parents think that education is important, they choose to become involved. This, however, may require that they see their own role as important.

4.2 Parents – the prerequisite for children's education

Gutman's perspective (Markström, 2013, p. 214) concerning education as a governmental responsibility, implies that education is the government's responsibility because it pays for the children's schooling. In our study, this is not the case. Although primary education, in theory, is free in Tanzania (MoEVT, n.d.), the parents have to pay assorted school contributions. If they do not, the children will not have the opportunity to attend school. Therefore, it may seem paradoxical that education would only be the government's responsibility. The parents cannot be omitted from the children's education, but are in this study seen as individuals whose responsibility is to provide resources. This is confirmed in the discourse *PI as a resource*. A discourse closely related to this is *PI as pressure from teachers*, considering that the teachers will send requests to the parents when they want them to become involved; mainly when they want them to contribute with resources in different ways. The parents' socioeconomic

background, including the family income, will affect the parent's involvement (OECD, 2011; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Borgonovi and Montt (2012) argue that an obstacle to parents' participation is their lack of resources. Since many families in Tanzania live in poverty (Sida 2009a) and come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Uwezo, 2013), a consequence could be that parents cannot become financially involved as they are expected to be. As a result, the children are unable to complete their schooling. The conclusion of this is that parents *cannot* be separated from the children's education, because without *PI as a resource*, the children would not be able to go to school. Yet, a positive result, raised by Uwezo, is that many parents are today investing a lot of money in education. This could be explained by the parents reasoning within the discourse *Education for the future* as many parents give priority to education.

4.3 Parents educational level and parental involvement

In addition to the poor financial situation and as a part of the low socioeconomic situation, which constitute obstacles for PI, the educational level among the majority of parents is low in the villages where the study was conducted. This can explain the teachers' statements in this study that build up discourse *PI as lack of education*, which correspond with the previous research showing that parents with low education get involved less than parents with higher education (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). As Ogoye-Ndegwa, Saisi Mengich and Abidha (2007) point out, PI may be hampered by socioeconomic factors. In accordance with this, the low educational level among the parents' constitutes obstacles preventing them from becoming involved in their children's schooling. One obstacle caused by this could be that parents do not know *how* to be involved. For example, Borgonovi and Montt (2012) argue that some parents feel that they are not able to help their children with their schoolwork because of lack of knowledge. Despite that, Ogoye-Ndegwa, Saisi Mengich and Abidha (2007) mean that there is a willingness of parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds to become involved, but the parents' lack of education can, unfortunately, lead to a feeling that their knowledge is not enough for them to become involved. When talking about parents' lack of knowledge in their involvement as a result of them being uneducated, there is a risk that parents' knowledge about their children is being neglected. In accordance with the study's theoretical approach, the statements about parents' lack of education may create a truth that the teacher possesses the most authentic knowledge of how children should be educated. This is also in accordance with Gutman's perspective (Markström, 2013, p. 214), that it is primarily the government which has responsibility for children's education. Parents may find themselves in a disadvantaged position in which they feel that they do not have sufficient knowledge about their children's development. Therefore, the parents' lack of education cannot by itself provide an explanation why they do not get involved in school. Instead, the statements, which make up the discourse *PI as a lack of education,* could produce barriers for the parents to be involved in their children's schooling. This can be seen as a criticism towards the parents in which they are not seen as competent enough to be part of their children's development (Tallberg Broman, 2013), especially the parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Another obstacle preventing parents from getting involved, raised by the teachers in this study, is that parents do not see the importance of education and, therefore, make other priorities. This could possibly be due to the parents' lack of education, but not necessarily. Whether they are educated or not, Wabike (2012) argues that PI depends on what is considered important in society. Wabike's study concerns the fishing community in Tanzania, which does not follow the same patterns as the school system. In the same way, a possibility in this study, where the majority are farmers, is that the agricultural society and the school system do not follow the same pattern. Cases where the school is not considered to be important can be understood from Gutman's perspective (Markström, 2013, p. 214); that parents see themselves as the best educators and always knowing the best about their children's different needs. This could mean that children do their learning at home, not in school. Parents who are lacking financial resources and do not see the importance of education may, therefore, give priority to agriculture instead of education.

4.4 A shared responsibility for children's education

Even though the enrolment in school is high, the learning performances among the children in Tanzania are, in general, low (Uwezo, 2013). Uwezo acknowledges the parents' role in the children's education and calls for a greater involvement among parents. An inference that can be made from this is that *PI as a resource* is not enough for involvement. Uwezo suggests that the parents should be more involved in school by checking their children's exercise books. Based on the study's context where many families come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, we can also understand the teachers' demand for an increased PI, appearing in the discourse *PI as a lack of education*. A way to understand the teachers demand for a greater PI is that they acknowledge the parents' role as important in the children's education. The same applies to the discourse *PI as paying attention to children's education,* which was identified in this study. When the parents state that they look in their children's exercise books, they demonstrate their own role in their children's education. Another way to perceive the discourse is that when parents are paying attention to the children's school performance, this is based on their belief in the importance of learning. This perception does not necessarily exclude the other perception that the parents demonstrate their own role in their children's education, but may rather constitute a complement. Zedan (2012) states that to believe in the importance of learning has a positive effect on the children's school achievement. It is furthermore suggested by Uwezo (2013) that the teachers should ensure they have a dialogue with parents regarding the children's performance. The discourse *PI as paying attention to children's education* contains, besides statements about looking in their children's exercise books, statements that the contact between home and school is often in regard to discussing the children's performance as well as school related problems in order to solve them. A way to improve poor academic results is to discuss the children's performance with the teachers (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). When the parents in the study declare that they contact the school in this matter, it could be an endeavour towards a shared responsibility between the parents and teachers. This goes under Gutman's democratic perspective (Markström, 2013, p.

214) that the relation between home and school is characterized by a shared educational authority between parents and teachers.

The assumption about a shared responsibility, which we have made in this study, contributes in creating a reality about what is considered as true and appropriate when it comes to the question of responsibility for the children's development. This created truth furthermore generates in expectations on parents. In accordance with Markström (2013) this can strengthen the image of what a successful parent is, which in this case would be a parent who is involved in school, with all that implies. The image of what a successful parent is also produces an image of what an unsuccessful parent is. In this case it would be a parent who is not involved in school. We wish to emphasize that our intention is not to judge what a successful or unsuccessful parent is. Additionally, it should be underlined that we are highly aware of the obstacles that many of the parents face, often because of their low socioeconomic background, which means that they are unable to become involved, even though there is a willingness among them.

According to Tallberg Broman (2013), a shared responsibility is achieved through an increased PI. Aside from the financial barriers, which means that many parents are unable to participate and obviously is a major problem for many parents, our thoughts go in accordance with Borgonovi and Montt (2012) who declare that it does not require specialized knowledge for parents to be involved in their children's schooling. In accordance with Graves Smith (2007) we agree that intentional strategies are needed from the government, the school and the teacher. For example, for parents to become more involved, a clear policy regarding PI is needed (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Ogoye-Ndegwa, Saisi Mengich & Abidha, 2007). If there are no guidelines about PI, it may be difficult for parents to know how they should be involved. In our search for policy documents regarding PI, we could not find any. This is particularly an issue among parents with low socioeconomic background, as parents from socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds tend to be more receptive to initiatives aimed at increasing PI in their children's lives. Without a clear policy, the gap in children's school performance may increase (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). A risk that we see is that this could lead to widening social gaps in society.

4.5 Conclusion

This study has provided us with an increased understanding for the common assumptions about PI in the context of the Tanzanian primary school, which has been the aim of this study. Several discourses have been identified and they are marked by the respondents' different ways of looking at the relationship between home and school. Regarding the first research question, what importance is attributed to education, education is attributed a significant role for the children's future. This perception of education is likely to affect PI. There are two alternative ways of looking at the role of education in relation to PI; parents can either be hampered in their involvement or become motivated to be involved. They can be hampered if the school receives an overemphasized role in educating the children, which may omit the parents' role as educators. Conversely, they can be motivated to become involved if their own role in their children's education is acknowledged. The latter is marked by the vision of a shared responsibility between home and school. As regards the second research question about what characterizes the parents' statements about PI, an identifiable theme in the

discourses is the prevailing socioeconomic context. The parents' financial situation is the most fundamental way for them to be involved in school, as their financial contribution creates opportunities for their children to attend school. Furthermore, the parents' educational level may affect the parents' understanding why they should be involved and how. In order for the parents' to become involved beyond contributing financially, as well as to attain a shared responsibility between home and school for the children's education, conscious efforts aiming to an increased PI are needed.

As PI in Tanzania has been devoted little attention in previous research, our hope is that this paper has generated in increased knowledge about PI in the Tanzanian context. The content that fills the discourses regarding PI is important to understand because it shows what is required to achieve greater cooperation between home and school. By making the prevailing discourses visible, more opportunities are given to reflect on how these discourses are created and what can be done to increase PI. With regard to our assumption that parents and teachers share responsibility for children's education, we believe that an increased PI is worth striving for with the intention of making sure that the children succeed in school.

4.6 Suggestions for further research

Looking at previous research there is a discourse regarding what is male and female PI where mothers are expected to take the greatest responsibility in this matter (Ogoye-Ndegwa, Mengich & Abidha, 2007; Forsberg, 2009). Since language results in action (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007) what such gender-related discourses do to PI is to limit mothers or fathers in their participation due to their gender. In our study, neither the mothers nor fathers are significantly presented in a certain way through their statements about PI. Moreover, we cannot discern any considerable differences in the respondents' way of talking about PI depending on if it is a mother or father who is making the statement. Nor can we express an opinion about the parents' statements concerning PI differing depending on whether their child is a boy or a girl. Since no such patterns were found, we can make the conclusion that there is no gender related discourse revolving around PI in the two contexts where the study was conducted. On the other hand, we can speculate that the outcome would have been different if we had deliberately prepared questions to the respondents about gender and PI. A suggestion for future research is therefore to examine if there are any gender discourses revolving around PI in Tanzania.

In this study, the focus has been on examining PI among parents of children in primary school. Since parents of younger children are more involved than parents of older children (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Forsberg, 2009; Zedan, 2012), another proposal for further research is to examine PI among parents of older children. As some children drop out of school between nine and 13 years old (Uwezo, 2013), it would, in particular, be interesting to examine the discourses revolving around PI among parents whose children do not complete their schooling.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide

Questions to parents

- Opening question: Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?
- What do you think is important for your children to learn in life/in school?
- What do you think education can do for your children?
- How do you support your children in their schooling?
- What do you discuss with your children after school?
- Could you tell us about your contact with school?
- What do you think your children will be doing when they have grown up?

Questions to teachers

- In what ways do parents get involved in school?
- How do you suggest that parents should participate in school?
- How does that correspond to reality?
- Do you see any obstacles to them to become involved?
- In which situations do you contact the parents?
- What are the directives/policies concerning PI in school?
- Whose responsibility is it to involve parents?

General follow-up questions

- Can you give an/some example/examples of this?
- Why do you think so?
- In what way?
- What do you mean by….?
- Could you develop...?
- What is your role in this?