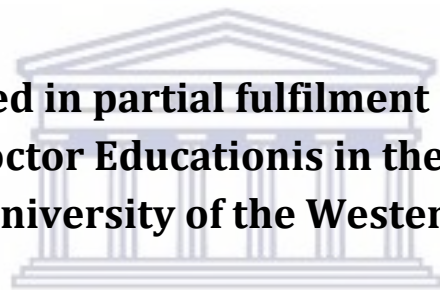


**INVESTIGATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT AT A DISADVANTAGED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN  
THE WESTERN CAPE THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY ACTION  
RESEARCH PROCESS**

**Tracey-Ann Adonis**

Student No: 9212890

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
the degree of Doctor Educationis in the Faculty of Education,  
University of the Western Cape**



**UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE**

**Supervisor: Prof. Shaheed Hartley**

**November 2017**

**INVESTIGATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT  
AT A DISADVANTAGED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE  
THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS**

**Tracey-Ann Adonis**

**KEYWORDS**

South Africa

Education

School effectiveness

School learning environment

Educators

Principal

Parent involvement

School management

Partnerships

Social capital

Participatory action research



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

# Declaration

I hereby declare that *‘Investigating the development of the learning environment at a disadvantaged primary school in the Western Cape through a participatory action research process’*, is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Tracey-Ann Adonis

November 2017

.....



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# Acknowledgements

*'Thank you is more than good manners. It's good spirituality.'*

- Alfred Palmer

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Prof Shaheed Hartley. Thank you for your guidance and mentorship during this journey of developing my research practice.

I would also like to thank my friend and colleague Prof Priscilla Daniels for your encouragement, sage words and your unwavering support during this process. Words cannot express my appreciation for you.

Thank you also to my colleagues at the Community Engagement Unit at the University of the Western Cape for your unfailing support.

A special thanks to my family. Articulating the deep sense of gratitude I have for you is not easy. Thank you my dear husband for being my biggest supporter. Robert; your love, sabbatical bracelet and soft words of encouragement were never lost on me. It got me through several difficult stages and I am forever grateful.

To my dear children and study buddies Kelly-Ann, Robyn-Leigh and Jadon. I will always hold our moments of engagement as precious and I appreciated the times I was called upon to explain a concept you struggled with. This opportunity provided me with the much needed breaks to step away from what I was doing, only to return to my process with greater insight. You three are the reason I embarked on this specific project and I am forever grateful for being blessed with three distinctly different and amazing children. To my eldest 'daughter', Delicia Bonaparte, your support and healing hands are appreciated with much love.

To my parents and extended family, your love and guidance were key to my development and you deserve a huge thank you. My siblings, your support has always been unfailing and each of you had an instrumental role to play in all my achievements. Thank you for the 'lifelines'.

It would be amiss of me not to express my gratitude to Mr. Paul McAvoy, educators and parents at my alma mater primary school. Thank you for entrusting me with your process and allowing me the opportunity to develop my research skills. It was an absolute privilege.

To my spiritual intercessors, I am deeply appreciative of your constant prayers and words of encouragement.

Finally, the ultimate gratitude goes to my Almighty Father God for granting me with the ability and for being a constant at my side.

*'Gratitude turns what we have into enough'*

- *Author unknown.*



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

# Abstract

South Africa (SA) is a developing country struggling to address transformation and various institutional reforms inherited from a previous apartheid regime and also created by the current democratic government. Education is an area which is struggling within a SA context. Many schools, particularly in disadvantaged communities, are faced with inadequate infrastructure and a lack of resources yet the expectation is for these schools to show evidence of effectiveness irrespective of these challenges. In this study, the development of the learning environment at a disadvantaged primary school in the Western Cape, South Africa, was investigated through a participatory action research process. The study was underpinned by the Epstein (2001) participation model, the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (2005) and Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism (1979). The literature aimed to generate an understanding of theories of school effectiveness and how optimal school learning environments are integral to facilitating school effectiveness. The elements of school effectiveness were explored namely leadership, management, educators – parent partnerships and school learning environments which are expected to function within a unique SA context, yet the support and resources for facilitating the development of these elements are inadequate. The development of the learning environment through a participatory action research design that emphasizes transformation and effects change which facilitates school effectiveness at a disadvantaged primary school was investigated.

The research site was a primary school in the Western Cape, South Africa where a principal was newly appointed into the leadership at the school. Data was collected through initial questionnaires in order to establish the perceptions that thirteen educators and the principal had of the actual learning environment and their perceptions of what a preferred learning environment. The scales from this instrument were further explored in semi-structured interviews with thirteen educators, four parents and the principal. These stakeholders provided me with thick descriptions and insights of the challenges experienced within this specific context and guided the facilitation of a series of workshop interventions in response to these challenges with the aim to facilitate change in this specific context. A focus group was also conducted with the educators to evaluate the interventions.

The major findings from this study was that the school learning environment was influenced by the school context, its unique challenges and pressures; that collaborative efforts between stakeholders

contribute to school effectiveness, as facilitating innovative ways of ensuring learner success through capacitating the stakeholders in this context was an empowering experience; that the school is an organisational system which requires that all its components (principal, educators, parents and community) effectively collaborate through open channels of communication in order to facilitate optimal teaching and learning environments which will contribute to school effectiveness, and that the interventions provided resources which facilitated effective teaching and learning.

Learning environments need to be investigated as it contributes to school effectiveness and the validation of the experiences of educators, learners, parents, principal and the community of the learning environment is important particularly in the South African context. This study provided educators, parents, the principal and the education department with an opportunity to contribute to a process of transformation and change in their specific context. This study therefore delivered an exemplar of a historically disadvantaged school engaging in a participatory action research study that provided an evidence-based approach to facilitating the transition of newly appointed principals at schools.

The following recommendations were formulated; i) a mentoring system could be initiated that pairs senior educators with younger educators at the school as this could possibly affirm senior educators; ii) the school governing body would require development and roles and responsibilities of parents need to be clarified; iii) the Science Learning Centre as an intervention could be investigated at the school by following up with the primary school learners in 6 – 7 years, and iv) the Western Cape Education Department could initiate similar research processes for newly appointed principals and facilitate the development of optimal learning environments and school effectiveness through partnerships.

**Keywords:** South Africa, Education, School effectiveness, School Learning Environment, Partnerships, participatory action research

# Contents

## Chapter 1: Rationale for the study

1.1	Introduction .....	14
1.2	Background to this study .....	15
1.3	The history and context of the Kensington-Factreton community.....	17
1.4	The role of the researcher .....	19
1.5	The choice of methodology: Community Based Participatory Action Research .....	20
1.6	Research Problem .....	21
1.7	Research Question .....	21
1.8	Significance of study .....	22
1.9	Limitations of the study .....	22
1.10	Structure of the thesis.....	23
1.11	Conclusion.....	23

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1	Introduction .....	24
2.2	Theoretical Framework .....	24
2.2.1	Epstein's participation model .....	24
2.2.2	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model of partnership .....	25
2.2.3	Social constructivism.....	28
2.3	Studies impacting on the research.....	29
2.3.1	The context of South African schools.....	29
2.3.2	School effectiveness and its components.....	34
2.3.2.1	Leadership, Management and Organisation.....	37
2.3.3	School learning environment .....	44
2.3.4	Partnerships and Collaboration .....	47
2.3.4.1	Parental involvement.....	48
2.3.4.2	Teachers within a transforming educational system .....	50
2.3.5	Developing social capital in community schools.....	55
2.4	Conclusion.....	56



### Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction .....	57
3.2 Sample.....	57
3.2.1 Sample Design and sampling methods .....	57
3.3. Research Design .....	59
3.3.1 The rationale for using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach.....	60
3.3.2 Participatory Action Research: a definition .....	60
3.3.3 Overview of the data collection methods used .....	62
3.3.3.1 The Development of the Perception of Learning Environment Questionnaire.....	65
3.3.3.2 The Development of the semi-structured interview .....	67
3.3.3.3 The importance of reflective enquiry in action research.....	68
3.3.3.4 The preparation of the interventions for principal and educators.....	70
3.3.3.5 Participant observation, field notes and analytic memos .....	72
3.3.3.6 The capacity building intervention for parents.....	73
3.3.3.7 Focus group / workshop with educators to evaluate interventions.....	74
3.3.4 Data Analysis .....	77
3.3.4.1 PLEQ Analysis .....	77
3.3.4.2 The analysis of the semi-structured interviews.....	77
3.3.4.3 Analysis of interventions.....	80
3.3.5 Validity and Reliability.....	81
3.4 Ethical Statement.....	82
3.5 Conclusion.....	83

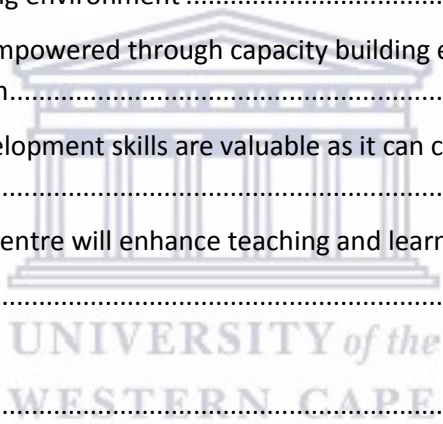
### Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction .....	84
4.2 What were the key role players' (educators and principal's) perceptions of the actual learning environment vs the preferred classroom learning environment? .....	85
4.2.1 CAPS familiarity .....	89
4.2.2 Resource Adequacy.....	91
4.2.3 Work Pressure .....	92
4.2.4 Learner Support .....	93
4.2.5 Parental Involvement.....	94
4.2.6 Affiliation.....	98

4.2.7	Professional support .....	99
4.2.8	Staff freedom .....	101
4.2.9	Participatory decision-making.....	101
4.2.10	Innovation .....	102
4.2.11	Transformational leadership.....	103
4.3	How could stakeholders work towards facilitating an effective school within their specific context? .....	104
4.3.1	CAPS familiarity and Work Pressure .....	104
4.3.2	Resource Adequacy.....	106
4.3.3	Parental involvement.....	107
4.3.4	Affiliation and Professional support.....	110
4.3.5	Staff Freedom, Participatory decision-making and Innovation .....	113
4.3.6	Transformational leadership.....	115
4.4	What kind of interventions will facilitate partnership development between the key role players / stakeholders at primary school level?.....	116
4.4.1	Intervention 1: Workshop on developing a collectively owned mission statement .....	116
4.4.1.1	Activity 1: Smiley face exercise .....	117
4.4.1.2	Presentation: Why are we here? .....	117
4.4.1.3	Activity 2: Do you understand what this organisation values, believes in and hopes to be? 118	
4.4.1.4	Activity 3: Develop a slogan based on your idea of your specific brand as a community school 118	
4.4.1.5	Activity 4: The collaborative mission .....	119
4.4.1.6	Activity 4: A team building exercise called ‘Crossing a Bed of Lava’ was conducted with all the participants.....	120
4.4.1.7	Evaluation of the workshop session .....	121
4.4.2	Intervention 2: Mastering the art of reading and writing: Workshop for parents and volunteers 123	
4.4.2.1	Overview of the workshop.....	123
4.4.2.2	Programme Day 1.....	123
4.4.2.3	Programme Day 2.....	124
4.4.2.4	Programme Day 3.....	125
4.4.2.5	Evaluation.....	125

4.4.3	Intervention 3: SynNovation – team building .....	127
4.4.3.1	Welcome and briefing session .....	127
4.4.3.2	Introductions and setting the scene .....	128
4.4.3.3	Synnovation skills .....	128
4.4.3.4	Open-mindedness exercise .....	129
4.4.3.5	Closing session .....	130
4.4.4	Intervention 4: Science learning centre built for the primary school .....	130
4.5	What were the teachers’ perceptions of the interventions implemented?.....	131
4.5.1	Intervention 1: The collectively developed mission statement.....	131
4.5.2	Intervention 2: Mastering the art of reading and writing .....	132
4.5.3	The SynNovation – team building exercise.....	132
4.5.4	Intervention 3: The science learning centre .....	133
4.6	Conclusion.....	135
<u>Chapter 5: Discussion of findings</u>		
5.1	Introduction .....	136
5.2	What were the key role players’ perceptions of the actual learning environment vs the preferred classroom learning environment? .....	137
5.2.1	The school learning environment was influenced by the school context .....	137
5.2.1.1	The key stakeholders experienced significant pressure due to the implementation of a new curriculum .....	137
5.2.1.2	The lack of resources within the school learning environment does not facilitate effective teaching	140
5.2.1.3	Parental involvement was not ideal within the school context.....	142
5.2.1.4	The school learning environment is influenced by management, leadership and team building.	144
5.3	How could stakeholders work towards facilitating an effective school within their specific context? .....	146
5.3.1	Collaborative efforts with all stakeholders contribute to school effectiveness. ....	146
5.3.1.1	Different levels of collaboration were evident in the school context .....	147
5.3.1.2	The school learning environment will be improved through partnerships and effective communication .....	148
5.3.1.3	Capacity building leadership skills for stakeholders were required within school governance structures in order for it these structures to understand their roles and functions. ...	151

5.4	What kind of interventions will facilitate partnership development between key role players / stakeholders at primary school level? .....	154
5.4.1	The school as an organisational system was recognised in the development of a collectively owned mission and vision statement. ....	154
5.4.2	The reading and writing volunteers assist the educators in meeting the needs of the learners and communities we serve. ....	159
5.4.3	Developing skills in synnovation techniques will assist educators in creative thinking and collaborative decision-making .....	161
5.4.4	The science learning centre represents possibility for the school.....	164
5.5	What were the stakeholders’ perceptions of the interventions implemented? .....	164
5.5.1	The interventions provided much needed resources which facilitated effective teaching and learning .....	164
5.5.1.1	Educators recognised that a mission and vision statement would provide them with guidance in the school learning environment .....	165
5.5.1.2	Communities are empowered through capacity building experiences which affirm the role they have to play in education.....	166
5.5.1.3	Organisational development skills are valuable as it can contributed to the learning environment.....	167
5.5.1.4	A science learning centre will enhance teaching and learning.....	167
5.6	Conclusion .....	168
<u>Chapter 6: Conclusion</u>		
6.1	Introduction .....	169
6.2	Key elements of each chapter.....	169
6.3	Major findings .....	170
6.4	Implications of the research .....	173
6.5	Limitations.....	174
6.6	Recommendations .....	174
6.7	Conclusion.....	169
References.....		176



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Quality facet and key indicators and relationship between indicators (Scheerans, 2013, p.6) ...	37
Table 2: Sample summary.....	59
Table 3: The data collection plan in chronological order.....	63
Table 4: Planning & Teambuilding workshop for X primary school.....	71
Table 5: Code families.....	79
Table 6: Codes for participants in the research process.....	83
Table 7: Cronbach alpha scores and standard deviation for each scale for the preferred and actual PLEQ .....	86


## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Schema of Interdependent Ecological systems shaping both directly and indirectly the development of individuals, families & communities – adapted from Hall (1984).....	27
Figure 2: An effective school according to the systems model (adapted from, Scheerans, 2013) .....	36
Figure 3: The action research process .....	70
Figure 4: The synnovation problem solving process.....	76
Figure 5: A comparison of the scale means obtained from the actual and the preferred questionnaires of the PLEQ.....	87
Figure 6: Scales of the PLEQ (Actual and Preferred mean scores).....	88
Figure 7: CAPS curriculum contributes to increased workload .....	90
Figure 8: The community context determines the level of parental involvement in the learning environment .....	97
Figure 9: The connection between communication, collaboration and relationships were perceived as important within the learning environment.....	112
Figure 10: Parental involvement in relation to the community context .....	143
Figure 11: The connection between communication, collaboration and relationships were perceived as important within the learning environment.....	150
Figure 12: Components in the school system .....	154
Figure 13: Elements in transformation in the school.....	156
Figure 14: Levels of collaboration in the school .....	156
Figure 15: Synnovation ground rules .....	161
Figure 16: Mission and vision and value system at the school.....	165

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: PLEQ ACTUAL .....	193
Appendix 2: PLEQ PREFERRED .....	201
Appendix 3: EDUCATOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....	208
Appendix 4: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....	210
Appendix 5: PARENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....	211
Appendix 6: EXAMPLE OF JOURNAL ENTRIES .....	212
Appendix 7: PARTICIPATION OBSERVATION SCHEDULE .....	213
Appendix 8: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM .....	214
Appendix 9: ACCESS GRANTED TO DO RESEARCH .....	218
Appendix 10: ETHICAL CLEARANCE.....	219
Appendix 11: SYNNOVATION OPEN MINDEDNESS EXERCISE .....	220
Appendix 12: STRATEGIC SESSION PRESENTATION .....	221

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS



SA	South Africa
CBR	Community based research
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SASA	South African Schools Act
PAR	Participatory Action Research
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DoE	Department of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
NDE	National Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
SMT	School Management Team
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OBLEQ	Outcomes based learning environment questionnaire
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
PLEQ	Perception of Learning Environment Questionnaire
SLEQ-SA	School-level Environment Questionnaire South Africa

# Chapter 1

## Rationale for the research study

### 1.1 Introduction

South Africa (SA) is a country where the democracy has recently reached the twenty year mark. According to the stages of human development, SA could therefore be figuratively described as a very youthful and inexperienced young adult trying to define itself and reconstruct its essential being to be the best it could possibly be amidst several challenges. Glaring challenges for this country include the inequalities inherited from a previous apartheid regime and also those created by the current government attempting to rectify the injustices of the past.

One of the most obvious areas where inequalities are apparent is the education sector where many schools in SA are faced with inadequate infrastructure, lack of resources, ineffective management and are often found in communities where there are dire socio-economic challenges (Sedibe, 2011). With this in mind, there needs to be a consideration of how schools aspire to effectiveness within poor communities especially within the framework as stipulated by government policy and evident within the governance structures at schools.

Nicolson (2015) reports that 12 million people in SA live in extreme poverty. The challenge of facilitating effective learning environments given the socio-economic and sociological problems that are direct spin-offs of poverty, for example unemployment and low levels of education of parents particularly in disadvantaged communities, places a huge responsibility on the shoulders of the managers and educators at schools. The latter argument is critical given the decentralisation of the state's role in schools post 1994 where partnerships with the community and stronger relationships with 'those closest to the learner' (preferably parents) are encouraged and in fact is a key principle in education reconstruction and legislated within a South African context (Heystek, 2011; Van Wyk, 2007). Conway (2013) expanded this notion and argued that good school, family and community partnerships lead to improved academic learner achievement, self-esteem, school

attendance and social behavior. Kamper (2008) though also highlighted that the impact of poverty is such that parents of learners from poor schools have several needs which range from health care, employment and these parents often have low educational qualifications and might even be illiterate (p.2).

## **1.2 Background to this study**

Goos and Jolly (2004) assert that it is widely recognised that parents and families are the primary educators of children and are responsible for laying down the social and intellectual foundations for their learning and development. The democratic elected government of 1994 identified this as a critical area that would require revisiting and hence the development of the South African Schools Act (1996) that articulated the role of parents in the education of their children.

The SA National Department of Education (1998, p. 11) also suggests that leadership, which could come from many different areas such as principals, teachers, parents or governing bodies as a whole, could play a major role in initiating transformation. The resultant formation of school governing bodies made up of the principal, educators and elected parents; the latter that performs as a key governance partner alongside traditional management structures of schools was a method which decentralized school management. In this way schools were encouraged to become 'self-managed' and 'self-reliant' (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). The school system however has inherited a range of challenges resultant from years of oppression, particularly those schools found in disadvantaged communities where lack of resources, inadequate buildings and school premises in dire need of upgrade are common occurrences (Kamper, 2008). Within these contexts there is a need for effective, transformational and transactional school managers who are able to manage and lead the school system in a positive manner that encourages change and promotes improvement and development and gives learners hope. The social issues facing communities need to be addressed in a way where the focus is located within primary school settings in particular where children are given the opportunity to learn how to look forward, at a young age, through acting on what they can control and through obtaining a sense of freedom through education. School Managers (Principals), educators and parents working in partnerships at the primary school level is therefore important for learners as it sets the foundation for achievement through education.



Researchers (Kim & Bryan, 2017; Lopez & Donovan, 2009 and Lemmer, 2007) confirm that parent involvement is critical and impacts on the educational success of children. It is however not clear on how these partnerships are forged and the roles and responsibilities of parents supporting the educator are not clarified. Smit, Sluiter, Driessen & Slegers (2007) indicate that educators often need to be prepared to interact more effectively with parents in order to harness collaborative partnerships which are beneficial to the learner. The South African reality is such that quality educational experiences are largely impacted by the resource capacity of parents. More often than not, parents are not equipped to deal with the complex nature of tasks and concepts particularly in science and mathematics. Singh, Mbokodi & Msila (2004, p. 301) found that “presently, there appears to be insufficient participation of black parents in managing schools...” The reality of context, socio economics and social class is therefore largely ignored yet it plays an important role in the optimal involvement of the community in the school.

While the government has made huge strides in increasing its spending in the poor sectors of the educational system which serve the black majority, much more must be done about improving the quality of learning experiences in schools and classrooms if we are to offer real educational opportunity to young citizens (Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003). Exploring the learning environment within a primary school setting with a view to develop a sustainable partnership model between the school and the community and how this impacts on school effectiveness therefore appears to be quite significant.

School change as required by government is assessed in different ways. Archer, Scherman, Coe and Howie (2010) reported that South African learners consistently achieve poorly on international assessments of learner performance such as the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International reading literacy study (PIRLS) conducted in 2016. The results obtained from the Grade 3 and Grade 6 national study conducted by the National Department of Education (NDE), (2011) also stated similar findings. These assessments provided an important indicator in school change within a South African context.

### 1.3 The history and context of the Kensington-Factreton community

The Kensington-Factreton community is an area situated on the Cape Flats that was created for population by non-whites as per the Group Areas Act (Da Costa, 1983). The area has several boundaries namely Acre Road in the north, Kensington Road to the north-west and to the west, Voortrekker Road to the south, and 18th Avenue or Aerodrome Road to the east. Between the residential area and Voortrekker Road is a small light manufacturing and commercial area with a few scattered houses (Da Costa, 1983). This community forms part of Ward 56 which includes the suburbs of Factreton, Goodwood, Kensington and Summer Greens (City of Cape Town, 2006). According to A. Van Blerk (personal communication, May 23, 2012) the community is historically a 'coloured' area however there are pockets of residents from Congo, and Nigeria as well as 'whites' and 'blacks' living in informal settlements within the community. The socio-economic profile confirms that 31 percent of the population's age falls within the category 18 – 54 years and 21 percent of the population are from 6 – 17 years of age (Statistics South Africa, 2001). This profile also verifies that the group of scholars or students within this area is substantial (City of Cape Town, 2006).

Within the Kensington-Factreton community, there are eight primary schools and two high schools. These schools service the general local community however schools receive learners from various communities for example Langa, Gugulethu, Mitchell's Plain and Eerste River (P. McAvoy, personal communication, March 4, 2014). This occurrence creates a classroom of learners with different social, economic and cultural realities which could be a challenge for educators. According to the Families South Africa Western Cape Annual Report (2010); the Kensington-Factreton community is characterised by many children that come from a very poor background and are exposed to issues such as poverty, domestic violence, drugs, alcohol abuse and/or problems within the family – most of these problems manifest within the school setting.

The school which formed the case study of this research is an English medium school located in the suburb of Factreton. It is a public school in line with the South Africa Schools Act (SASA, 1996). The schools mission was:

*Our vision is to build an education system that provides learners with knowledge skills and attitudes that will enhance their national participation and global*

*competitiveness; a system that will enable our community to manage their lives successfully and with dignity*

According to the principal, this mission was not mutually developed or owned by the educators and prior to his appointment as principal, he had no knowledge of this mission or who developed it. The research process therefore coincided with the transitioning period of the principal into his leadership role at the school. The current principal was also an ex-pupil at the school and after having had taught at a high school in the same community, was approached by a teacher to fill her position as she wanted to take the package. He agreed to this and over period of time found himself drawn into the management of the school as he was a head of department prior to his appointment as principal. There was no position of vice principal but he fulfilled many leadership roles and assisted in the management of the school. He was also instrumental in the development of a computer laboratory at the school which since its inception and with the speed of change in the field of technology and computers has become defunct. Due to his leadership and management role, he does not have the time to fully engage in his 'pet-project'. It should be noted that his father was also a principal at the same school. His passion for giving back and ploughing into the community was evident in my discussions and interviews with him; and he is a 'hands on' person who is committed to developing the e-capacity of the school and has subsequently engaged in several initiatives to add to the resource capacity of the school.

At the time that the research commenced, the principal had just been appointed and had a staff of eleven educators and two non-teaching posts. These numbers have subsequently increased to a teaching staff of twenty and five non-teaching posts by 2016. In 2014 there were 400 learners at the school and in 2017 these numbers have increased to 706, including 105 Grade R learners. The school is located in the lower socio-economic area of the Kensington-Factreton community and the learners are from the immediate surrounding community as well as from several townships such as Langa, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha. There is also a substantial contingent of children whose parents are from other African countries such as Congo and Cameroon which highlighted the challenge of language and culture in addition to the already diverse classroom at the school.

The school has a solid brick structure of classrooms and the administration offices surrounding a quad with a prefab structure of several classrooms adjacent to this structure. The school is on the list for upgrade however this process has been delayed several times by the Western Cape Education Department. Given the age of the school, 60 years in 2019, this upgrade is desperately needed especially considering that the school grounds and prefab buildings are in dire need of repair and development.

#### **1.4 The role of the researcher**

The researcher has been a resident of the community for most of her life and was a student at the primary school which forms the case study of this research. Even though the researcher was an ex-pupil at the school, the decision to use this school as a site was made subsequent to approaching several primary schools in the area in order to obtain a sense of the community and their perceived challenges. The response to these preliminary visits were varied and while only three principals provided feedback and availed themselves for these preliminary discussions, there were principals who were unavailable due to a range of reasons such as sabbatical, attending workshops or in meetings. The principal at the selected site was keen to engage in this research process as he regarded it as an opportunity to form critical linkages and support sustainable development within the context of the school. This was beneficial to the principal as it would also assist in the process of facilitating relationships and collaborations particularly since he had just been appointed as principal. The researcher is an academic researcher in the Community Engagement Unit at the University of the Western Cape and the unit supported specific areas where it could influence the research process. This support enabled me to facilitate collaborations and partnerships for the school. Given that the researcher was a learner at the school more than three decades ago; there were only two teachers who were aware of my connection to the school at the time of the research. The influence of the researcher on the research process was negligible and her exploratory and facilitative role in the process did not pose any ethical dilemma. The researcher was also cognisant of her affiliation to the school and therefore this is acknowledged upfront.

## 1.5 The choice of methodology: Community Based Participatory Action Research

The nature of my research was informed by my role as an educator in the educational development of my children. Through my experience, the intensive role that I play in assisting and aiding my children with their respective homework responsibilities, encouraged me to think of the parents in my community who were not necessarily fortunate to have access to resources required to optimally assist their children. As I am a first generation university graduate, I am aware that achieving a higher education qualification takes resilience, dedication and hard work and without securing bursaries and funding from several sources, near impossible. My decision to plough back into my community was therefore driven by my passion for children to develop to their optimal potential and for them to challenge the status quo by rising up against socio-economic challenges that exist in the community.

It is for this reason that a community based participatory action research approach was appealing as it emphasised social action and possibly would facilitate my vision to plough back. The rationale for community based PAR draws on diverse historical influences and is guided by the following principles:

- a) It is a collaborative enterprise between the academic researcher and community members which in this case are the principals, teachers, parents and learners. Facilitating a collaborative process is essential as rapport building and establishing trust between the community members is essential as we attempt to facilitate optimal data collection.
- b) It validates multiple sources of knowledge and promotes the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination of the knowledge that could be produced. The use of this research approach would therefore facilitate that research instruments need to be thoughtfully selected and developed in order to ensure that the data collected characterizes the indigenous knowledge present within the primary school communities.
- c) It has as its goal social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice.

While the research is an exploratory research study, the goal would be for the findings of the research to be used in a manner which will be beneficial to the communities within the primary school setting and facilitate the development of good learning environments.

(Strand, Marullo, Curforth, Stoecker & Donohue, 2003).

The continuous nature of this methodology is facilitative of growth and therefore change which could potentially be beneficial to the school, is inevitable. The role of the researcher in this process is critical and will build on the strengths, resources and collaborations that exist in the school, while being reflective of her role and experience at all times during the process.

## **1.6 Research Problem**

The development of partnerships and positive relationships within a primary school setting between principals, educators and parents contributes to greater learner success however there is often little indication of how these alliances might be facilitated, supported and sustained over time. This study explored the nature of the existing partnerships in a particular community between the school (principal and educators) and with principal / educators and parents to provide opportunities for critical reflection on the roles of the principal, teachers and parents in order to enhance the practice of promoting a meaningful learning environment and to facilitate the strengthening of partnerships in this community through an adequate and relevant intervention strategy.

## **1.7 Research Question**

The following main research question is what drove this research:

What is the nature of the learning environment at a primary school in the Kensington-Factreton area with regard to the key role players at the school (principal, educators and parents) and how do these collaborations influence the school learning environment and essentially impact on school effectiveness?

The following sub research questions will guide the research process:

1. What were the key role players' (educators and principal's) perceptions of the actual learning environment versus the preferred classroom learning environment?

2. How could stakeholders work towards facilitating an effective school within their specific context?
3. What kind of interventions would facilitate partnership development between the key role players / stakeholders at primary school level
4. What were educators' perceptions of the interventions implemented?

## **1.8 Significance of study**

An exploration of the unique learning environment context of primary schools and the value that collaborations between the principals, educators and parents added to the classroom learning environment was valuable in the sense that this knowledge contributed to a unique set of lessons learnt that could be applied to other learning environments thus laying the foundation for the effectiveness of schools. This research investigated the principal's, teachers' and parents' perceptions of the relationship between the classroom learning environment and the different levels of partnerships at a primary school in the Kensington-Factreton community, what influenced the different levels of partnerships at this school and how this understanding provides the basis for identifying the intervention that needs to occur in order to improve or enhance the current situation.

The study was significant as it provided a case study of the developmental aspect of facilitating 'ideal' learning environments through partnerships between principals, teachers and parents and the community at primary school level in a disadvantaged community. This study furthermore contributed to the knowledge of collaborative enterprises and learning environments; specifically within disadvantaged schools. Previous research was primarily conducted at secondary school level and this study contributed to the body of knowledge at the primary school stage. This study provided unique baseline information on partnerships at the primary school level and the intricate balances and support provided at each level of partnership as it aims to improve learning environments and facilitate school effectiveness.

## **1.9 Limitations of the study**

The primary limitation of this research case study lies in the occurrence of the research at one primary school within a specific community context therefore the findings cannot be generalized to other primary schools. The study will need to be taken further and parallels could however be

drawn between the results from these instances with that of other primary schools. Researcher bias was recognised and acknowledged.

### **1.10 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis was structured in the following manner:

Chapter one provided an overview of the research study that highlighted the idea of the thesis as well as the motivation for this study

Chapter two allowed for an in-depth literature review of all key concepts, policies, theories and development in the field of school learning environments

Chapter three presented the participatory action community based research design and the case study method employed in the research particularly as it was conducted at a purposively selected primary school in a disadvantaged South African community.

Chapter four highlighted the results from the study and the importance of transformational leadership to facilitative collaborations within school learning environments as it contributes to school effectiveness. This chapter also provides the intervention strategy that was developed and implemented in order to facilitate collaboration between key role players as it contributes to school effectiveness.

Chapter five presented the discussion of the findings and;

Chapter six the conclusion and recommendations of the research

### **1.11 Conclusion**

Chapter one presents the reader with an overview of the research and highlighted the rationale for the exploration of the learning environments at a primary school within a disadvantaged community with the view to develop a sustainable partnership model between the school and the community as it seeks to improve school learning environments and result in school effectiveness.

Chapter two continues with an in-depth investigation of the literature that exists within the field of learning environment research, the organisational development at schools and the importance of collaborative partnerships between all levels of governance at schools and the community.



# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provides a brief introduction to this research and identifies the rationale, context and the research questions associated with this research. The following chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature with regard to the key elements in South African school learning environments and school effectiveness with a focus on developing collaborative partnerships within the organisational context of the school.

### 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was underpinned by the following theories; Epstein (1995) model of participation, the ecological systems perspective of Bronfenbrenner (2005) and the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky (1978). These theories will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

#### 2.2.1 Epstein's participation model

The importance of parent involvement in the educational achievement and success of school learners was advocated for by Joyce Epstein. Epstein's framework was based on the social network theory and she championed the vital role of parents and emphasised the important overlap that parents, teachers and others have on the success of school learners (Price-Mitchell, 2009). The Epstein model recognised that there were several processes or layers of involvement outside of the immediate family system, between schools, families and the community. According to Epstein (2001) a typology of parental involvement within schools included the following six layers;

1. **Parenting** which essential would assist families to be sensitive to and be supportive to the learning needs of their children.
2. **Communicating** which involved the effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programmes and children's progress.

3. **Volunteering** which implied that parent's capabilities are recognised and they would be able help and support the school. Epstein (2008) stated that the "activities that facilitate volunteerism improve the recruitment, training, and schedules of volunteer stakeholders to support student activities and school programmes" (p.12).
4. **Learning at home** through the provision of information and ideas about how to assist students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
5. **Decision making** which allowed opportunities to include parents as key stakeholders in school governance, developing parent leaders and representatives.
6. **Collaborating with community** through the identification and integration of resources and services within the community for mutual benefit in order to achieve school effectiveness and improve student achievement. Epstein recognised assets and resources within community settings (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Voorhis, 2002) and these authors propose that schools should seek to access these resources. Negotiating collaborative efforts with the community in order to improve academic achievement of schools also engages the learners within their respective communities and simultaneously generates relationships within the community and cultivates a sense of belonging.

Epstein (1996) therefore proposed 'an integrated theory of family and school relations' which is characterised by these overlapping spheres. These spheres were however unidirectional and linear and hence participation and involvement evolved into the notion of partnership, which recognizes the school as an open system that engages in learning at the boundaries between family, school, and community. According to Price-Mitchell (2009) 'systems thinking embrace a view of the world through relationships, connectedness, and context rather than quantitative measurements' (p.14). These overlapping spheres are articulated in the ecological systems model which substantiates Epstein's participation model and expands it to a more holistic view of parental involvement in schools.

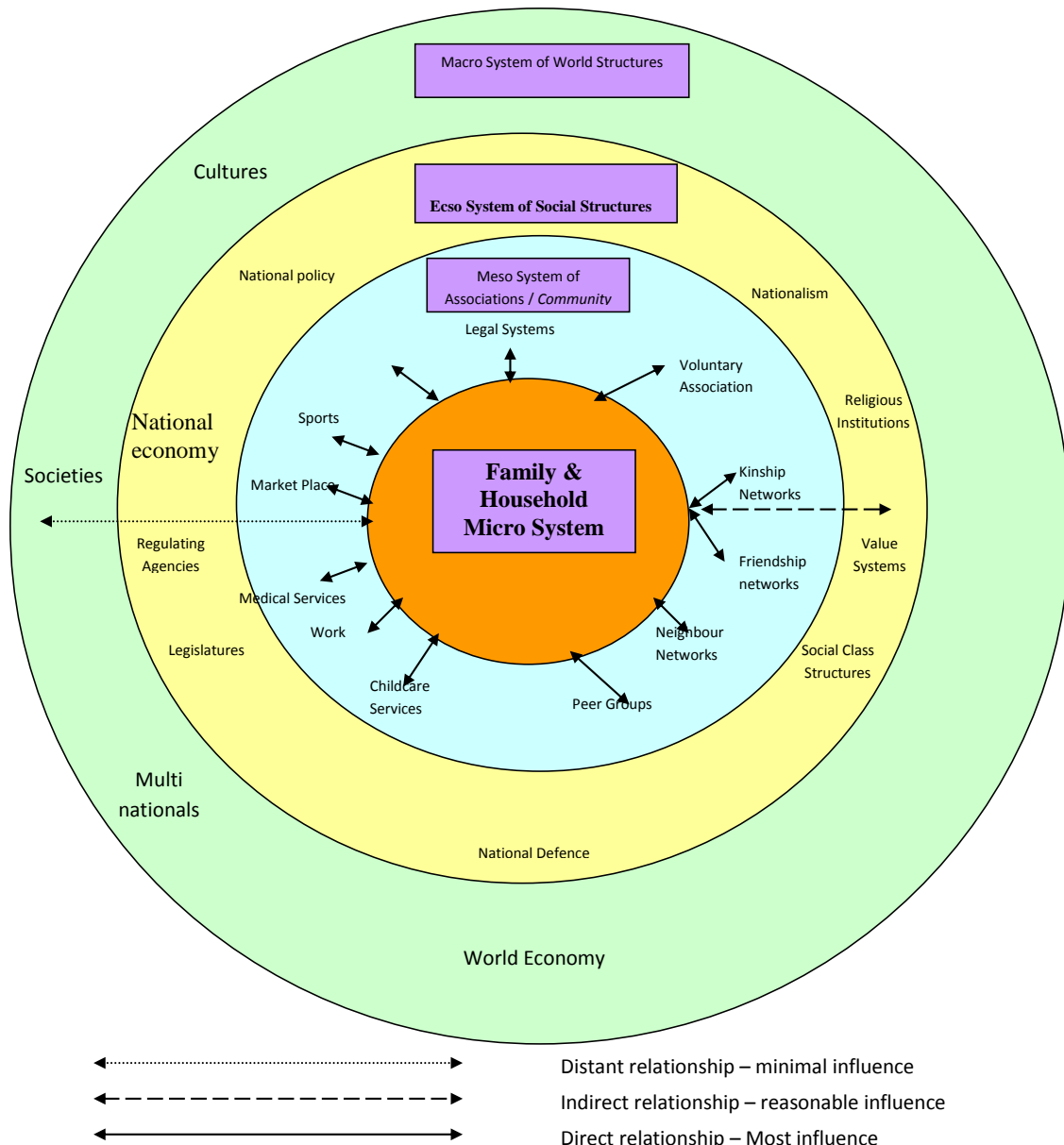
### 2.2.2 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model of partnership

Education is complex within the 21<sup>st</sup> century and therefore new perspectives are required that address how parents, schools, and communities will work together to face these challenges. The systems thinking provide a holistic perspective of the world. Rooted in biology, the theory seeks

to understand the school as a system, as an integrated whole found within a specific context where various shared environments overlap (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems perspective is valuable as it recognises the school as a system and calls for a holistic understanding that educators and families are the most influential environment in children's learning and development within a complex set of 'layers'. The ecological model recognises the complexity of the individual's context of development (Mampane & Huddle, 2017). Crosnoe (2004), states that families and schools are the two primary ecological contexts. Families within the communities are the micro level (the most basic) in the ecological system and this level is influenced by the macro and meso environments where the schools, sports, religious affiliation etc. directly influences the micro system. The school can therefore be regarded as an ecological system that is dynamic and which is highly dependent upon connections, affiliations and communications between the system's components, in this case, the principal, educators, parents and learners. Schools and teachers should work to support the primary relationship and to create an environment that welcomes and nurtures families (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Hall (1984) provided a conceptual model of the influences on the micro system of the family (*figure 1*) which was adapted for the purposes of this research. This figure articulates the manner in which individual, family and community development is shaped by direct and indirect interactions between interdependent ecological systems. It is therefore important that we study the school learning environment in a way where we recognize the impact of the micro level of the family and determine ways in which we could seek to collaborate. The recognition of the levels of influence facilitate the development of an adequate school learning environment within the classroom which Hall's model illustrates.



*Figure 1: Schema of Interdependent Ecological systems shaping both directly and indirectly the development of individuals, families & communities – adapted from Hall (1984)*

It is the view of Hawe, Shiell and Riley (2009) that understanding the school within its complex and unique context will facilitate the understanding of the dynamic forces in the change process which could possibly improve the effectiveness of interventions. The acknowledgement and

examination of the intersection of these ecological environments is important in the context of this study.

### 2.2.3 Social constructivism

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism is popular in the arena of educational psychology. Social constructivism concedes that the human mind is constructed through the individual's interaction with the world which is fundamentally influenced by context and history (Vygotsky, 1978). Verenikina (2009) asserts that Vygotsky's theory acknowledges that mental processes could only be understood if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them. Social constructivism was based on Piaget's idea of the child as an active learner through social interaction in learning and development. Social constructivism is essentially a dynamic learning theory and contends that education can never be value free; it must be underpinned by a set of beliefs about the kind of society within which knowledge is being constructed. This making meaning is achieved through explicit and implicit messages that will best convey those beliefs (Turuk, 2008).

According to Ferreira and Schulze (2014, p.2) different pedagogies based on constructivist theory appear to have six characteristics in common as articulated by Fox (2001) in Marais (2016) namely:

- Learning, including the learning of values, is an active process through social interaction.
- Knowledge and insight (e.g. knowledge of values) is constructed and not inborn or passively absorbed. The knowledge is resultant from mediating cultural, contextual and historical constructions and values.
- Knowledge is formulated, rather than discovered as a result of a process of mediation.
- Although knowledge is individual and particular, it is also socially constructed.
- Learning is a process of trying to understand the world and make meaning.
- Effective learning requires meaningful, open-ended, challenging problems to solve as it involves the integration of cultural, contextual and historical influences which leads to development.

For the purposes of this research, the social constructivist theory focuses on the aspect of making meaning and developing an understanding within the context of the school. Creating meaning of the information in this social context (in this case the school, amongst educators, parents and the principal) is central to this research. Socio-constructivism focuses on the effect of partnership and negotiation of reasoning and learning (Marais, 2016). Principals, educators and parents within this specific context experience things relative to that context therefore using a social constructivist approach allows these key role players with the opportunity to construct meaning of their lived experiences. Against this theoretical background and supported by similar studies, a review of literature is provided in the subsequent section.

## **2.3 Studies impacting on the research**

### **2.3.1 The context of South African schools**

Within the post 1994 South African (SA) context of change, education is regarded as one of South Africa's key problem areas (Oswald & Perold, 2015, p.2). A report commissioned by the Centre for Development and Enterprise highlighted the South African Education Crisis and the quality of education in South Africa from 1994 – 2011. Some of the key findings from this report were:

1. 'SACMEQ<sup>1</sup> II (2000), SACMEQ III (2007) and SACMEQ (2013) showed that there was no improvement in South African Grade Six literacy or numeracy performance over the seven year period.
2. South African pupils ranked 10<sup>th</sup> of the 14 education systems<sup>2</sup> for reading and 8<sup>th</sup> for mathematics, behind much poorer countries such as Tanzania, Kenya and Swaziland.
3. South Africa's post-improvement level of performance is still the lowest of all participating countries, with the average South African Grade Nine child performing between two and three grade levels lower than the average Grade Eight child from other middle-income countries.
4. South African mathematics teachers have below-basic levels of content knowledge, with high proportions of teachers being unable to answer questions aimed at their pupils.
5. The top 5 percent of Grade Six pupils in South Africa (565 pupils) scored higher marks on the same mathematics test than the bottom 20 per cent of Grade Six mathematics teachers in the sample (80 teachers).

---

<sup>1</sup> SACMEQ refers to the Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality

6. An inspection of school data showed that of the 100 pupils that start grade one, 50 will drop-out before Grade 12 (most of which happens in grade 10 and 11), 40 will pass the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam and 12 will qualify for university. Analysis of every South African dataset of educational achievement shows that there are in effect two different public school systems in South Africa. The smaller, better performing system accommodates the wealthiest 20-25 per cent of pupils who achieve much higher scores than the larger system which caters to the poorest 75-80 per cent of pupils. For example, the latest TIMSS (2011) study showed that the average Grade Nine pupil in KwaZulu-Natal was 2,5 years' worth of learning behind the average Grade Nine pupil in the Western Cape for Science, and that the average Grade Nine pupil in the Eastern Cape is 1,8 years' worth of learning behind the average pupil in Gauteng.
7. The analysis of pupils in the Eastern Cape showed that while pupils are already 1,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade Three, this grows to 2,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade Nine, making effective remediation at this higher grade improbable. Given that these learning deficits are acquired early on in children's schooling careers (i.e. in primary school), it is imperative to also identify and remediate these learning gaps early on, before they become insurmountable learning deficits and lead to almost certain failure and drop-out.
8. Poor quality schooling at the primary and secondary level in South Africa severely limit the youth's capacity to exploit further training opportunities.
9. The sub-standard quality of education provided to most South African youth has severe economic consequences for those affected. Furthermore, the economic prospects of the youth appear to be deteriorating over time. The percentage of 18-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has increased from about 30 per cent in 1995 to 45 per cent in 2011 while the percentage enrolled in education has decreased from 50 per cent to 36 per cent over the same period. The unemployment rate for the youth has also increased from 36 per cent in 1995 to 50 per cent in 2011, standing at twice the national unemployment rate in 2011. Furthermore, of those unemployed in 2011, more than 70 per cent had never been employed before. Perhaps most disconcertingly, for the youth, completing Grade 12 does not markedly increase one's chances of finding employment relative to 18-24 year olds with less than the NSC. Rather, the value of matric lies in opening up opportunities to acquire some form of tertiary education, an opportunity available to only a small minority.'

Spaull (2013, p. 4-7)

This report clearly indicates that education is in a dire state and that improving the state of education in South Africa is critical if we really intend to improve the socio-economic status for the majority of South Africans. Spaull (2013) concludes the report by stating that

*“Substandard education does not develop their capabilities or expand their economic opportunities, but instead denies them dignified employment and undermines their own sense of self-worth. In short, poor school performance in South Africa reinforces social inequality and leads to a situation where children inherit the social station of their parents, irrespective of their motivation or ability. Until such a time as the Department of Basic Education and the ruling administration are willing to seriously address the underlying issues in South African education, at whatever political or economic cost, the existing patterns of underperformance and inequality will remain unabated” (p.60)*

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2017) has expanded on the severe economic threat that the poor state of education poses to this country which has a legacy of racial classification and hierarchy based on skin colour. This is particularly evident in the great degree of inequality between previously and still advantaged *white* schools that have a wealth of resources resultant from a historical background which favoured the white race as opposed to the previously and still disadvantaged *black* schools where resources are lacking. The National Income Dynamics Study (2013/6) provides unique insights into the lives of individual South Africans over time and reports the educational expenditure of households since 2008 and also presents an overview of the expenditure of households and the government as it relates to education (Branson, Kekana & Lam, 2013). This report highlighted that ‘70% of respondents under 26 who have completed grade 10 and 11 but are no longer enrolled in secondary school are either unemployed or out of the labour force’ (Branson et al., 2013, p. 2-3). School costs are identified as the budget item that needs to be cut to contribute to household budgets. Government has designed several policies to redress these inequalities (Schools Act, 1996; South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996) which have introduced the no fee school programme and grant recipients receiving free education and the report highlighted the impact of these educational expenditure reforms.



The OECD 2007 report was also useful in the sense that it raised the issue of household expenditure on education which showed that the poorest income quintile spent 4.7% of household income on education compared to the decreased figure in 2011 which implied that the no fee policy had some equalizing effects (Branson et al., 2013, p. 9-10). Decreasing the burden of school costs for low-income households needs to be examined in more depth and particularly in relation to school effectiveness and the quality of education. This is particularly relevant since the introduction of these policies and especially since performance remains the basis of profiling schools according to the department of education (Wilkinson, 2015).

The third report reviewed in order to highlight the state of education within South Africa was the report compiled by van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull and Armstrong in 2011 which was prepared for the National Planning Commission. These authors found that the educational attainment of several African countries revealed a strange trend specific to South Africa indicated as follows:

*‘The rate of attainment of levels of education up until about 11 years is high in South Africa relative to other middle-income countries. Beyond 12 years of education, however, South Africa’s attainment rate is amongst the lowest of these countries. As far as access to education is concerned, it would therefore appear that South Africa is doing well throughout most of the primary and secondary phases and poorly thereafter. However, it is important to understand that high rates of grade progression despite a generally low quality of schooling in the primary and early secondary phases leads to substantial drop-out prior to the standardised matric examination, failure to pass matric and failure to achieve a university endorsement – all reasons for discontinuing education. A closer analysis of access to education in South Africa thus points to a deeper problem of quality.*

van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull & Armstrong (2011, p.1).

The importance of quality education is highlighted in the previous extract particularly as primary school learners are promoted to higher grades despite not having fully mastered the requirements. This does not bode well for learners within the senior phases and beyond, as the level of literacy and mathematics is low.

Inclusive education is also a practice which has been embraced as an ideal model for education within the South African context. This practice advocates for the inclusion of learners with diverse sets of needs within a classroom which compounds the problem as class sizes are huge yet educators are required to manage a more ‘heterogeneous mix of learners from different backgrounds and with different levels of ability and disability’ (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015, p.1). The South Africa White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training system (Department of Education (DoE), 2001) outlines the strategy for inclusive education which essentially advocates for educational reform to accommodate learners with a range of special needs within the mainstream classroom and in essence calls for a recognition and respect of learner diversity (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). The implication of the implementation of this practice requires educators to go through a process of capacity building and training in order to cope with the demands of this policy-driven learning environment. Within a South African education landscape where the majority of schools lack resources and equipment, the optimal implementation of inclusive education practice is therefore complex. This is compounded by an educational curriculum called the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which is largely an inflexible curriculum concerned with teaching a specific subject matter and completing specific curriculum requirements. This view is supported by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013). Inclusive education requires flexibility in implementation and teaching practice and requires the educator to gauge the learner’s pace and adapt accordingly to meet the learner’s needs (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Nel & Malinen, 2012). The CAPS curriculum faces the challenge of implementation alongside the inclusive education model of practice and while educators appear to favour the inclusive education practice method, it does not appear to be realistic given the constraints (resources, equipment etc.) under which educators have to teach.

According to Motshekga (2012) the maximum educator to learner ratio is 40:1 in primary school settings with the high school ratio at 35:1. The reality within the South African context is that these numbers are not met and often teachers have to contend with class sizes greater than this policy benchmark (Marais, 2016). Overcrowded classrooms are unfortunately the norm within South African education and Marais (2016, p.1) asserts that it will ‘remain a part for the immediate future and perhaps even for the long-term future.’ Irrespective of the dire state of education within

SA, ‘the strategic importance of teachers cannot be denied as they are expected to act as agents of change and have a key role in ensuring that quality education is delivered to all children regardless of context’ (Oswald & Perold, 2015, p.2). The impact of overcrowded classrooms does not bode well for quality education and several researchers highlight the disruptive nature of overcrowded classrooms which extends from disciplinary issues within the classroom to negatively impacting academic achievement (Marais, 2016; Benbow, Mizrachi, Oliver & Said-Moshiro, 2007; Bayat, Louw & Rena, 2014). Within these settings, facilitating an ideal learning environment is extremely difficult and may contribute to a challenging learning environment which is not conducive to learning and essentially quality education. Developing innovative strategies to overcome these barriers is critical within the South African educational landscape if the aim is to deliver quality education and thus contribute to school effectiveness.

### **2.3.2 School effectiveness and its components**

School effectiveness is compared to educational effectiveness, school improvement and is also an aspect of educational quality (Scheerens, 2013). School effectiveness is also contentious issue and a general definition of school effectiveness is ‘the level of goal attainment of a school’ (Scheerens, 2013). Global debates though exist around what constitutes school effectiveness (Mortimore, 2000 in Botha, 2010, p.606). The United States of America has the following correlates which guides the classification of an effective school:

1. a productive school climate and culture;
2. acquisition of central learning skills by students;
3. monitoring of student progress;
4. staff development at the school site that was practical in nature;
5. outstanding leadership;
6. salient parent involvement;
7. effective instructional arrangements and implementation;
8. high operationalised expectations and requirements for students; and
9. other possible correlates

Creemers (1997, p.113)

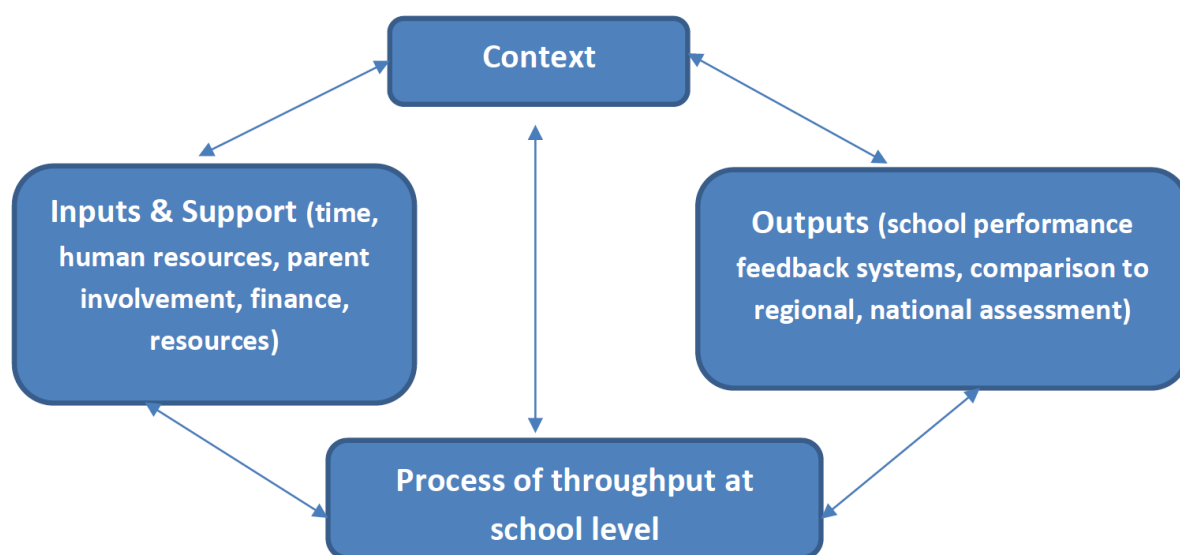
While the correlates identified are important criteria it does not account for contextual and socio-economic variability. The dynamic and diverse contexts within a transforming South African education landscape means that school effectiveness needs to be considered as it relates to contextual variability, the educational level of the parents, juvenile delinquency, school safety and security as each of these variables differ across the country.

According to Grobler, Bisschoff and Moloi (2002) school effectiveness within the South African context is probably strongly related to the public's perceptions of how well grade 12 learners do in the final examination. An effective school would therefore be one where all learners pass this national examination with a large percentage obtaining a bachelor's pass which qualifies them entrance into a university tertiary educational institution. One of the benchmarks of an effective school is the impact on learners' education outcomes specifically with regard to test or examination results obtained during formal assessment (Botha, 2016, Grobler et al, 2002). Grobler et al, 2002 believe that educators possibly regard input, process and contextual variables as influential in the perceptions of school effectiveness and hence these also need to be considered. Several attempts have been made to define school effectiveness particular by researchers who continuously aim to clarify the dilemma with regard to learners' education outcomes (Botha, 2016). With this in mind, Bennet, Crawford and Cartwright (2013, p.176) define an effective school as a school in which students' progress further than might be expected from them. The dilemma though is determining relevant and accurate ways to measure student progress while taking into account the learner's context and background and often, academic achievement is measured without taking cognisance of contextual factors (Botha 2016).

Botha (2016) contests the general definition of school effectiveness relating only to academic achievement when he asserts that 'examination results are a measure of academic learning but do not give the whole picture with regard to the effectiveness of a school academically' (p.6806). In a uniquely South African context, school effectiveness would need to be viewed in its relation to the socio-economic and resource constraints within which the school is located and it is therefore determined by the context of the school.

School effectiveness literature has recently recognised the significance of a complex set of interlocking systems, including the nation, district, school and classroom (Fleisch & Christie, 2004, p.95). Botha (2016) expands on this and proposes a contextual approach to school effectiveness which comprises of three effectiveness factors namely goals, pressure and support. Goals are embedded in its national context (goals for educational effectiveness as depicted in learner’s outcomes and goals for school improvement), pressure includes strong central control, external evaluation and school accountability and support refers to time, financial and human resources and includes a culture of decentralisation (Botha, 2010). According to Botha (2010, p.608) ‘every school experiences different pressures from its immediate environment, and therefore each school develops different priorities and criteria.’

The following figure presents a basic systems model of school functioning.



*Figure 2: An effective school according to the systems model (adapted from, Scheerens, 2013)*

The interrelationship between these components is explained in the following table:

*Table 1: Quality facet and key indicators and relationship between indicators (Scheerans, 2013, p.6)*

<b>Quality facet</b>	<b>Key indicators and relationship between indicators</b>
Productivity	Outcomes
Equity	The distribution of inputs, processes and outcomes
Effectiveness	Association between inputs and processes on the one hand and outcomes on the other.
Efficiency	Effectiveness at the lowest possible costs
Responsiveness	The way input, processes and intended outcomes are fitted to the demands of the context

An effective school therefore extends beyond the activities of teaching and learning and needs to incorporate the notion of the school as an organisation, guided by policy and how the management approach facilitates and optimises its core business within a specific context. Schools are therefore perceived as organisations that have to comply with a certain set of rules and regulations and have specific hierarchies of authority, communication patterns and outputs (Dorman, 1998: Dorman, Fraser & Mcrobbie, 1997 in Aldridge, Fraser & Laugksch, 2011). Comer (2015) provides the following analogy of a school and refers to it as ‘relationship hothouses’ as the effectiveness of a school largely depends upon the ability to manage the complex relationships between the principal, educators, learners and parents. According to Southworth (2014), successful and effective school leaders make use of a number of organisational structures and systems such as process planning, target setting, communication and monitoring and these leaders are dependent on the existence of appropriately supportive policies. The leadership team’s support and implementation of teaching, learning and assessment policies make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and therefore to the quality, outcomes and effectiveness in a school (Botha, 2016).

### **2.3.2.1 Leadership, Management and Organisation**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century holds many challenges for principals as they strive to manage public schools effectively. According to Kamper (2008) ‘effective school leaders attend to both structure and culture, continuity and change; they are both managers and leaders; they are both transactional and transformational. It would appear that no single leadership model adequately describes the

expectations and reality for contemporary school leaders (p.4). Mestry (2017, p.7) found that leadership preparation and training are central to school effectiveness and school improvement. Quite often principals are in leadership positions without adequate preparation required to optimally manage the portfolio. Spaul (2013) posits that the lack of effective leadership and management within schools attributes to the poor academic standards at school level. The most important challenge of leadership is to build and sustain an organisational culture that focuses on continual improvement of educational programmes, professional development of teachers' capacities and skills; and student learning (Alger, 2008, p.18). The expectations placed on principals are quite demanding especially within a turbulent policy environment. Foremost in the role of principal, has been the shift from management and control to the 'demand for an educational leader who can foster professional development among staff' (Mestry, 2017, p.1). The new educational dispensation calls for principals to achieve a balance between instructional leadership and management in the following manner:

*'Leadership deals with areas such as supervising the curriculum, improving the instructional programme of the school, working with staff to identify the vision and mission for the school, and building a close relationship with the community. Management refers to the financial management of the school, maintenance of the school building and structures and complying with educational policies and acts.'*

- Botha (2004))

It is the opinion of the researcher that the principal appears to juggle several complex roles and responsibilities in order to effectively run a public school as there are numerous important roles that needs to be fulfilled. It is therefore imperative that there is a level of support for the principal. This would translate to support from deputy principals, heads of departments, educators, governance structures and parents. Research conducted by Bush and Heystek (2006) and Piggot-Irvine, Howse and Richard (2013) found that South African principals require capacity building in supporting networks as well in the associated spheres of influence that the principal oversees such as finances, policy development, human resources and administration. South Africa does not have a formal professional programme for a career as a principal and while the Department of Education recognises the lack of a coordinated system, it is embarking on the development of a career pathing exercise for education leaders and managers (DBE, 2016). Mestry and Grobler

(2004) suggest that ‘education leadership and management should be seen as a process where the development of education leaders and the achievement of organisational goals are synchronized.’ The organisational view of the public school is critical to this research process as principals are essentially chief executive officers appointed to run a business within a challenging socio-economic context characterised by resource constraints. Naicker and Mestry (2013) however recognise that the principal cannot be the sole proprietor of this responsibility and suggest a reconceptualisation of school leadership based on the distribution of accountability to the principals, educators and parents. They label this active practice of leadership as distributive leadership.

The constant response to change and transformation within deprived contexts requires strong leadership coping and adaptation skills (Bhengu & Myende, 2016, p.1). These authors also state that leadership for coping and adapting to policy change is under-researched and theorized. One of the major changes resultant from policy has been the decentralisation of governance powers to school level in the form of school governing bodies. Principals are expected to share the responsibility of the school with the School Management Team (SMT) where leadership skills such as transparency, democracy and ethical governance are critical to embedding schools within the community. Government has not provided adequate support for this process in order to ensure that this is achieved and Bhengu and Myende (2016) highlights the fact that policy by nature does not adequately cater for the contextual realities particularly of deprived contexts. Where a school is able to leverage school, community and family resources for learning, healthy development and overall success at schools, school effectiveness and school improvement will be achieved (Butcher, Lawson, Iachini, Bean, Flaspohler & Zullig, 2010, p.257). van der Berg et al. (2011) identifies a vision of ‘School Management for Instructional Leadership’ for effective schools where principals are carefully selected and have a clear understanding of their roles as leaders of the curriculum and whom together with the management teams who share the same vision and understanding, can facilitate an optimal learning environment.

#### **2.3.2.1.1 Decentralisation at schools: School governing bodies**

Decentralisation is a policy driven concept which acknowledges in principle that governments alone cannot control schools and that it needs to share power and responsibility in partnership and



collaboration with key stakeholders at the school. This includes principals, educators, parents, learners and the community and advocates for self-management, mutual responsibility in education reform and ultimately school improvement. The promulgation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996 resulted in the decentralisation of decision-making to the local school level (Heystek, 2011, p.456). Mafora (2013) claims that decentralisation of school management and governance was one of the major educational reforms post 1994. The assumption inherent in this policy statement was to give schools more autonomy and that the community within which the school was located would participate and engage in collaborative decision-making in the best interest of the school. Self-management of schools was therefore an international trend which showed a positive influence on academic achievement, however the operationalisation of this trend within a South African context with its socio-economic, political and development challenges was not thoroughly theorised or interrogated (Heystek, 2011).

SASA 1996 calls for increased parental and community involvement in achieving an effective school. In the South African context and in accordance with the SASA 1996, governing bodies refer to democratically elected members from the parent body of the school that assists in the self-management of schools. The notion of democracy is central to the school governing body role as SASA advocates for increased responsibility of parents in the governance of schools in facilitating a quality education experience for all learners. The roles of the parents therefore have to be redefined. The following extract provides the basis for the notion of democracy:

*Quality education aims and values:*

*Provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities and contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society.*

*Democratic aims and values:*

*Democracy has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation. This country requires a new national system for schools, which will redress past injustices in educational provision, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms*

*of unfair discrimination and intolerance, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, and provides a governance and funding structure for schools in partnership with the State.*

(Preamble: SASA, 1996, p.1)

The theory behind this policy statement implies that the community is well-equipped and knowledgeable in governance and particularly in finance management. According to Statistics South Africa (2010), 40.3 percent of people older than 20 years of age have completed primary education and 30.8 percent have completed secondary education. The reality is that public schools in disadvantaged areas do not have the resources, human nor financial, and adopting such an open-minded approach to school management through governing bodies who are expected to manage budgets and influence legislation, does not appear reasonable without the necessary capacity building. While a lack of education does not preclude parents from being effective in the governance of schools, it does imply that training opportunities that will enable them to play positive roles in school governance are required (Prew, 2009a). The provincial education heads of department are responsible for the training of governing bodies however Heystek (2011) reports that this training is not always of the highest quality.

Heystek (2006) and Mncube (2009) reported that there are several challenges which limit parental participation and contribution at governing body meetings. These include parental literacy levels, their experience of management as well as their time and availability to attend meetings. The alienation and disempowerment that parents experience because of these challenges results in marginalisation and therefore, lack of involvement is evident in disadvantaged contexts (Mafora, 2013).

Heystek (2011, p.456) found that ‘three decades of research about the possible link between improved education results and self-managing schools has produced only limited evidence of this’ and while international studies indicate that academic improvement can be directly linked to governance (Hofman, Hofman & Guldmond, 2002; Ranson, Farrell, Peim & Smith, 2005), the expectation that school governance in South Africa may have a positive influence on the quality

of education, still does not seem realistic.’ Facilitating and ensuring that governing body members are trained appropriately in order to ensure that the school will be able to function in a self-management manner, is ultimately the liability of the principal. The leadership role of the principal in the new educational system has intensified considerably and the sustainability of this role in the South African context is questionable.

#### 2.3.2.1.2 Different types of leadership styles employed by school managers

Creative ways of leadership within the organisational context of the school is essential as it is through these styles of leadership that school managers, can improve school effectiveness and facilitate school innovation. The SA National Department of Education (1998, p. 11) suggests that leadership, which could come from many different areas such as principals, teachers, parents or governing bodies as a whole, could play a major role in initiating transformation within education. Bhengu and Myende (2016) stated that leadership within deprived contexts has to have the ability to cope with the associated challenges of these contexts. Leadership should be flexible and able to adapt to change caused by policy reforms. The democratic transformation of South Africa has dramatically changed the way principals lead and manage schools as the expectation is that principals are expected to share leadership with School Management Teams (SMT’s), establish school governing bodies and facilitate the entrenching of their respective schools within the community in which they are located (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). Government support of these reforms is nominal and therefore school managers are required to be innovative amidst these challenges. Hamzah, Yusof and Abdullah, (2009) in Pihie, Asimiran and Bagheri (2014) found that when an organisation demonstrates organisational innovation, it reflects the ability of the school to progress and implement innovative ideas that can facilitate change and improvement at the school. It is therefore significant to examine the manner in which school managers are innovative and the types of leadership styles they employ in order to respond to their challenging contexts.

For the purposes of this research, the distributive, adaptive, instructional and transformational leadership style will be interrogated in order to explore the types of leadership styles which are best suited to facilitate quality of education and school effectiveness particularly within challenging contexts.

*Distributive leadership* presents a view away from the hierarchical structures of leadership and suggests that leadership is a collective practice of shared agency and is characterised by the division of labour and responsibility within an organisation (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; Gronn, 2003; and Gold, 2004). According to Naicker and Mestry (2013); distributive leadership ‘can provide a beneficial approach to educational change’ (p.12).

*Adaptive leadership* is criticized by theorists as it is not regarded as a fully-fledged theory. It does however provide an argument about how people adapt their behaviours to respond in a thoughtful manner to the stresses of a situation. It is a concept that has been applied within several fields such as medicine, psychology, administration and education and it involves changing behaviours in appropriate way, as the situation changes (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

*Instructional Leadership* is conceptualised using Zuber-Skerritt’s notion of action leadership. She describes this type of leadership as an ‘inventive, pioneering, collaborative, and self-developed way to lead people’ (Seobi & Wood, 2016, p. 2). The democratic values of autonomy, equal opportunity, belonging, and self-realisation forms the basis of this leadership style which is developed through critical reflection and being open to learning from others (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). The focus of action leadership is the view that the organisation has the capacity to change which is driven by the development of a collectively owned vision which essentially will improve the quality of practice, in this case, the quality of education which results in school effectiveness.

*Transformational leadership* is defined as a collective action generated by transforming leadership, which empowers those who participate in the process; it is a leadership style that facilitates the redefinition of a people’s mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment, and the restructuring of their systems for goal accomplishment (Leithwood, 1992, p. 9 in Singh & Lokotsch, 2005, p. 280). According to Mafora (2013, p.4) ‘the essence of transformative leadership is thus to bring about positive change in the social and material condition within schools and their broader communities’. This author goes further to assert that ‘the essence of transformational leadership and social justice is therefore to question organisational inequities and injustices that result from inappropriate use of power to create more inclusive and socially just organisations permeated by democratic values’ (p.4). It seems to be apparent that this argument

suggests that transformative leadership style is an active and deliberate approach that emphasises social justice, depends on dialogue between relevant stakeholders and encourages the development of sustainable partnerships that ultimately seeks to facilitate change through empowerment. Singh and Lokotsch (2005, p. 279) stated that ‘at no time in our existence is change more imminent and the future more challenging than in our schools’. While the NDE maintains that leaders in the form of the principal, teacher, parents or governing body are critical; a transformational leader makes the conscious shift that power is spread between people in the organisation and that enabling others to foster collaboration will result in empowerment and consequently improve the school culture and the effectiveness of the school.

It is my opinion that an optimal leadership model would seek to incorporate elements of each of the leadership models presented for school managers within a South African context, as they continuously seek to be innovative within a unique learning environment.

### **2.3.3 School learning environment**

Aldridge, Fraser and Ntuli (2009, p. 148) defined learning environment as ‘the tone, ambience or atmosphere created by a teacher through the relationships developed within the classroom and the way in which instruction is delivered.’ Within this definition, the significance of the educator in facilitating an optimal learning environment is inherent. The school environment subsequently has been linked to a range of aspects such as self-efficacy of teachers, productivity and satisfaction in the workplace (OECD, 2009).

Research studies have also shown that there is a relationship between student learning, values, personal growth and the school learning environment (Aldridge, Fraser & Laugksch, 2011, p. 128). Fraser (1996, p. 7) stated that ‘the quality of life in these classrooms is of great importance and students’ reactions to and perceptions of their school experiences are significant’. Learning environments therefore influence the learning as experienced by the learners. The OECD (2010) identifies seven transversal learning principles which should be implemented to meet the needs of students within the learning environment as follows;

1. The learning environment recognises the learners as its core participants, encourages their active engagement and develops in them an understanding of their own activity as learners.

2. The learning environment is founded on the social nature of learning and actively encourages well-organised cooperative learning.
3. The learning professionals within the learning environment are highly attuned to the learners' motivations and the key role of emotions in achievements.
4. The learning environment is acutely sensitive to the individual differences among the learners in it, including their prior knowledge.
5. The learning environment devises programmes that demand hard work and challenge from all without excessive workload
6. The learning environment operates with clarity of expectations and deploys assessment strategies consistent with these expectations; there is strong emphasis on formative feedback to support learning.
7. The learning environment strongly promotes 'horizontal connectedness across areas of knowledge and subjects as well as to the community and the wider world.

OECD (2010, p. 14-17)

The goal of optimal learning environments is to improve student learning and therefore I perceive that the training and capacity building of teachers should be directed at facilitating a learning environment that reflects these principles.

In South Africa, there is a paucity of research conducted into the school learning environments (Aldridge, Fraser & Laugksch, 2011). Aldridge et al., (2011) assessed the school-level environment utilising the School level environment questionnaire (SA) which assesses seven scales of familiarity with outcomes based education (OBE), resource adequacy, work pressure, student support, parental involvement, collegiality and innovation (OBE and parental involvement were included for the SA study to ensure that the scales were appropriate for SA use and in line with Curriculum 2005). For each teacher that completed the questionnaire a student was requested to complete the outcomes based learning environment questionnaire (OBLEQ). The results showed that schools where teachers used innovation in their teaching practices had classroom environments that emphasised involvement, cooperation, equity and responsibility for learning.

In a South African context where there have been four iterations of the SA school curriculum subsequent to 1994 in SA schools, intensive critical examination and engagement in a process of aligning measurement instruments available for the assessment of school learning environments, is required. With each and every new educational policy reform introduced that signifies a change in the curriculum, the roles of teachers and students within the learning environment, have to be reconceptualised (Scott & Hannfin, 2000). Prew (2009b) upon being appointed as the Director of Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) and former director and acting chief director for the National Department of Education Management and Governance, provided the insight that the change in the curriculum unsettled teachers and resulted in a sense of destabilisation as teachers developed a sense of incompetence and lack of value. The notion of changing the curriculum as opposed to changing elements of the syllabi deflated teachers as it created a sense that the knowledge base of teachers was irrelevant. He suggested that the rhetoric needed to suggest a gradual process of enhancing syllabi rather than changing an entirety (curriculum) which inadvertently disregarded everything that was effective in the 'old system'. Strydom, Nortje, Beukes, Esterhuyse and van der Westhuizen, (2012) subsequently found that change was seen as one of the most important factors that might influence teachers' job satisfaction. Therefore, if change is a negative experience, a teacher's satisfaction will be affected negatively.

The status of the profession needs to be reinvestigated and re-emphasised and the level of funding needs to be revised. Prew (2009a) asserted that a national debate about the state of education is required in South Africa which includes perspectives from all stakeholders for example teachers, principals, parents and business. He also raises the concern of a two-tiered educational system which creates division and differentiation as he says that government officials in national departments of education do not make use of the public school system and this 'sends an equivocal message about the status of public institutions' (Prew, 2009b). This view was highlighted in the report prepared for the National Planning Commission which highlighted the two different functioning educational systems in South Africa (Fleisch, 2008, Van der Berg, 2008, Taylor & Yu, 2009) in van der Berg et al. (2011). The two tier system is clarified as follows:

*“The majority of children are located in the historically disadvantaged system, which still serves mainly black and coloured children. Learners in these schools typically demonstrate low proficiency in reading, writing and numeracy. The second sub-system*

*consists mostly of schools that historically served white children and produces educational achievement closer to the norms of developed countries. This second system serves mainly white and Indian children, although black and coloured middle class children are increasingly migrating to these schools.”*

van der Berg et al. (2011).

Prew (2009b) therefore called for a review of the Schools Act as it does not focus on teachers, principals or even the greater majority of South African schools. The challenges within the learning environment are immense when considering these concerns.

Fraser (2007) stated that research in the field of learning environments has shown a consistent relationship between the learning environment and student outcomes and hence the school environment is an integral aspect of the curriculum change process (Aldridge, Fraser & Laugksch, 2011). The complexity of the learning environment is compounded by SASA (1996) in its calls for greater parent and community involvement within governance of schools. The research conducted into school learning environments has recognised that the collaborative partnership between principals, educators, learners and parents could have an impact on the classroom environment and this literature also highlighted a range of instruments that could be adapted and refined to this particular context and used in this particular study. The role of these groups in the educational system and particularly within the learning environment needs to be redefined.

#### **2.3.4 Partnerships and Collaboration**

School partnerships are important particularly as public schools are demanded to improve the quality of education amidst the challenges of resource constraints within the South African context. Gajda and Koliba (2007, p.26) defined collaboration as, ‘the means through which any chance of addressing complex societal issues and successfully reaching essential organisational outcomes, is predicated.’ These authors asserted that ‘communities of practice are the embodiment of interpersonal collaboration within an organisation in which the individual members of a social learning system share common practices and work together to achieve mutually desired outcomes’. Interconnected collaboration within an organization enabled the latter to adapt, grow, and change successfully.



Funkhouser and Gonzales (1997) state that successful partnerships involve the sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of schools staffs and families at home and at school, in activities and efforts that have a positive effect on the academic success of children in school (in Goos & Jolly, 2014, p.280). Within the primary school setting, the role of collaboration and partnerships in supporting and improving the school learning environment needs to be explored within a South African context that calls for schools to respond to new educational policy.

Gajda and Koliba (2007, p. 27) identify that interpersonal practitioner collaboration is an important strategy for sustained and substantive school improvement. Developing a shared purpose between organisations and within organisations is integral to impacting the school learning environment in a positive way. The formation of teams within the school setting is therefore critical and the role of the principal as facilitating this collaborative approach is fundamental to its success. Trim and Lee (2008) indicate that while power struggles could occur, building open, trust-based relationships is the key to successful and sustainable partnership development.

#### **2.3.4.1 Parental involvement**

According to Young, Austin and Growe (2013) 'parental involvement at school is rather disappointing because they lack the understanding of the definition of parental involvement, do not know how to help children academically, lack of encouragement from teachers, parents only contact school when in need, and the treatment of teachers towards parents'. This implies that parent involvement needs to be clarified and defined. Various definitions of parental involvement are found in international and South African literature. Theorists and practitioners define parental involvement as home-school partnerships; parental participation; and parents as partners (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte and Bertrand (1997) as listed in Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010) defined parental involvement as the presence at school, communicating with the teachers, or helping at home with homework. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) defined parental involvement as any parental attitudes, behaviors, style, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children's academic and/or behavioral success in their currently enrolled school.

The following definitions were sourced from selected South African researchers for the purpose of this study. Parental involvement refers to:

*‘..a situation in which parents are perceived to be active partners in the process of educating their children’ (Okeke, 2014, p.1)*

*‘..a combination of supporting student academic achievement and participating in school-initiated functions’ (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013, p.220)*

*‘the concept entails awareness of, an achievement in, schoolwork, an understanding of the interaction between parenting skill and learner success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about learner progress’ (Mncube, 2010, p.234)*

It is clear from this range of explanations, that parental involvement lacks a clear definition however there is consensus in the literature that it refers to activities that collectively refer to parental involvement in their children’s educational development at school as well as supporting the school in school-driven activities. Smit, Driessen, Sluiter and Slegers (2007, p.46) provide a distinction between parental involvement and parental participation as follows:

*Parental involvement was defined as the role of parents in the support of their own child, both at home (e.g. reading out loud) and at school (e.g., discussion of marks with teacher)*

*Parental participation was defined as active participation of parents in school activities.*

The complexity of parent involvement within schools should however be recognised as Price-Mitchell (2009, p. 10) asserted that parent-school partnerships are extraordinarily complex particularly considering the millions of individual parent and educator minds that continually assimilate values, develop worldviews, engage in communication, and interpret behavior. This author states that it is therefore difficult to define parental involvement and parent-school partnership in a single policy or regulation.

In view of the preceding sections, it is clear that parents have equal responsibility in educating their children in the SA educational system. Several research studies have shown that there is relevance and value when there is a high level of parental involvement within the school setting

(Westergard, 2013; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). The reality of context though suggests that parental involvement is hampered by societal issues, socio-cultural differences in the classroom and varied family arrangements which are clarified by McDermott and Rothenberg (2000:1) when they asserted that ‘urban families are marginalised from everyday school life by poverty, racism, language and cultural differences.’ It therefore appears that parents feel marginalised from the school because of these differences even though the benefits and value of parental involvement is acknowledged. The latter is confirmed by You and Sharkey (2009) when they stated that parental involvement not only provides reassurance to the child to take part in school activities and strive towards improving their success in learning), but also influences their interest, motivation and attitude at school (Shumow, Lyutykh & Schmidt, 2011. Innovative ways of increasing the level of parent involvement therefore needs to be facilitated as this benefit not only extends to the learner but also to the teacher’s self-perception and job satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

#### **2.3.4.2 Teachers within a transforming educational system**

Esteve (2000) highlights that teaching within current social contexts, differs greatly to teaching two decades ago. She states that ‘it is much more difficult to deal with mixed-ability classes that comprise 100% of the children of the area with all the social and psychological conflicts of our present societies, than it was to teach more or less homogeneous classes of children selected for their academic ability’ (Esteve, 2000, p.197). Within inclusive educational contexts, teachers are expected to integrate these learners into the class using specific skills. Society continually insists that teachers adopt new roles such as intercultural education, drug awareness, health education etc. yet the formal pre-service training of teachers remains unchanged in many countries, and teachers are unprepared to face the challenge of the new demands of classroom life (Esteve, 2000)

Within a South African educational setting teachers are essentially the drivers and implementers of any educational system policy reform and their role cannot go unrecognised. Conner and Sliwka (2014) assert that the role of teachers in driving policy requires that teacher training at educational training institutions need to adequately prepare teachers to work in complex learning environments. Comer (2015) states that teacher training should focus on successfully preparing teachers for practice in these environments and not merely focusing on curriculum, teaching methods and assessment drivers. This will ultimately ensure school effectiveness in these learning

environments. The challenge however is that educational training institutions need to constantly revisit their respective training regimes in response to the changing policies. 'Teachers' craft knowledge'; referring to the knowledge and beliefs regarding their pedagogical training received, their students, subject matter and curriculum (Van Driel, Verloop & De Vos, 1998); is related to teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hill, Rowan & Ball, 2005) in Rakumako & Laugsch (2010, p.139). There is strong evidence that teacher quality in terms of teacher preparation and qualification strongly influence students' level of achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Berry & Thoreson, 2001; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). The role of teachers is therefore critical within the SA educational system and they are a 'key enabling factor in improving the quality of education' (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2005). The reality though is that teachers have to contend with teaching reforms resultant of the continual policy changes which directly impact their immediate working environment. Research has shown that teaching as an occupation has a great likelihood of work-related stress which can lead to burnout (Bermejo-Toro, Prieto-Ursúa & Hernández, 2015). The National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (2002) in George, Louw and Badenhorst (2008, p.138) highlighted the following aspects regarding teacher morale:

- One in every four educators has a sense of low morale towards the profession.
- There was a perception that a further 33.7% of colleagues had an indifferent level of morale towards the profession.
- 38.2% had a negative morale towards job satisfaction.

This report highlighted several factors that had a negative on teacher morale namely 'poor leadership style of the provincial departments (65.5%); lack of quality of support received from Department officers (63.2%); continuous change in educational methodology and policy (60.0%); poor salary package (58.1%); poor quality of communication by the Department with its schools (53.4%); lack of promotion prospects (50.8%); amount of paperwork (49.3%); lack of educational resources in the classroom (43.7%); amount of authority given by the Department of Education to take own initiative (41.1%); low educator learner ratio (37.4%); teaching learners who have a low morale (37.4%)' (George et al., 2008, p.138). This is a great challenge within the South African education system as teacher shortages; high attrition and staff turnover is increasing and has been identified as a focus area (Department of Education, 2005).

The Department of Education has subsequently engaged in a deliberate intervention strategy to prevent a shortage of teachers (Department of Education, 2005). The recommendations from this intervention were identified in the following extract:

- **Education Policy and Planning**

- *Provincial education departments (PEDs) should develop or refine comprehensive data systems that provide information on teacher supply, teacher quality and teacher mobility. This information must be analysed, documented and fed to the Department of Education to assist with policy formulation.*
- *To develop effective data systems, a high degree of co-operation among key players is critical. All necessary parties must participate in the data development and collection effort, and ministers and legislature MECs must be supportive.*
- *Policies for recruitment must be balanced by policies for retention. Recent studies recommended retention strategies to address impending shortages. These must include the Department of Education developing a national plan in partnership with educator and labour representatives, parents and other stakeholders. It is important to listen to the teachers and address their concerns.*
- *Aligning recruitment policies and practices with the interests and expectations of prospective teachers will become even more crucial.*

- **Teacher Education and Professional Development**

- *The Department of Education and Provincial Education Department must ensure financial accessibility to teacher education through financial assistance means, such as contract bursaries*
- *Every new teacher should be required to participate in a formal induction and/or mentoring programme for at least two years, to be developed at the local district level or school site to provide extensive and intensive professional development for all new teachers.*
- *The final year of initial teacher education could be used as a period of site based teacher development through a “practical internship”.*

- **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

- *Recent research has suggested that, to ensure that there are adequate numbers of educators to serve the system, there has to be an immediate increase in the number of students recruited into teacher training.*
- *The Department of Education must assess the supply of educators in rural areas. It must consider gender equity and consider the current shortages of trained educators in key learning areas and how recruitment and retraining of unemployed educators can alleviate existing and potential shortages.*
- *The Department of Education must engage in a recruitment drive amongst rural communities with new entrants obtaining bursaries and reconsider an induction year in rural area. Strategies to attract black teacher candidates particularly to specialise in foundation phase foundation must be put in place to ensure a continual supply of these teachers*
- *A countrywide advisory group should be appointed to plan and advocate for policies and strategies to help school districts succeed in recruiting and retaining well-qualified teachers in difficult to fill teaching fields.*

- **Teacher Remuneration and Material Incentives**

- *Salary increases are the most direct and powerful way to demonstrate the value accorded to the education profession. A lack of financial progress following entry into the profession could encourage attrition after a few years and should be addressed.*
- *Teachers should be released from administrative tasks and other activities that increases their workload and distract their attention.*
- *Teachers need more steps on their career ladders across their entire career path. The promotion structure should allow for career advancement opportunities that do not remove educators from the classroom.*
- *Create financial incentives to recruit and retain teachers in hard to fill (shortage area) teaching positions. Shortage areas should be defined for this purpose at the level of Districts. These incentives should be developed and tried for a three-year period and their impact on employing well-qualified teachers monitored and evaluated. Incentives might include salary increments, bonuses for continuing in teaching positions for three*

*or five years and support for professional development. The cost of financial incentives should be shared between the education department and the provincial treasury.*

- *Financial incentives offered by employers, such as scholarships, arrangements to pay specialist teachers' accumulated higher education contribution scheme (HECS) debt, and assurances of employment (often in specified rural areas), have proved successful in drawing an expanded cohort of suitable people to teaching.*

- **Teaching and Learning Conditions**

- *The National Framework for Teacher Education Report (NFTE) suggests interventions that are necessary to sustain the recruitment of teachers into teaching. For example, a campaign for the renewed status of teachers. Media campaigns to positively image teachers must be put into place.*
- *Public awareness and appreciation of teaching as a profession has to be raised.*

(Department of Education, 2005, p. 14-16)

The recommendations presented above provides an elaborate strategy to ensure that South Africa has a sustainable pool of teaching resources in future however these recommendations have not necessarily materialised within South African contexts as teacher morale is low due to work pressure and minimal support, particularly in the lower socio-economic communities (Strydom et al., 2012; Peltzer, Shisana, Zuma, Van Wyk & Zungu-Dirway, 2009). Carrim (2003, p.318) described the amassed effect of policy changes, poor initial training and inadequate in-service training as follows;

- Teachers do not feel a sense of professional autonomy or competence.
- Teachers do not own the process of change in South Africa, but are subjects within it rather than agents of change.
- Teachers experience ongoing controls of their roles and themselves, articulated here in terms of gender, age, autonomy and choice of place of occupation.
- There is a gap between what legislative texts project teachers as being and the ways in which they actually experience their own identities

Mestry, Hendricks and Bisschoff (2009) found that unless there is a coherent and integrated professional development plan that grows out of the school vision for learner success to which

teachers are committed, workshops and other initiatives will lack meaning. In order to improve schools and provide quality teaching to its learners, teachers need to develop themselves professionally in their knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. Professional development plans for teachers need to be implemented in order for teachers to gain a sense of value and worth however there needs to be commitment from teachers. This will essentially form the basis of preparing teachers to develop social capital in addition to the knowledge that they have collected as a result of their training.

### **2.3.5 Developing social capital in community schools**

Social capital is defined as ‘the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.119). Falk & Kilpatrick (2000) defined it as an accumulation of the knowledge and identity resources drawn on by communities of common purpose and Crosnoe (2004, p.268) defines social capital as ‘the resources that flow through relationship ties’ and specifies that the resources refer to information, norms and support which improves an individual’s ability and productivity within social contexts. Within the context of the school, particularly in communities which are strapped for resources, the need for partnerships with educators, parents and the community is an important aspect contributing to school effectiveness. Crosnoe (2004) supports this in the assertion that ‘families and schools are the primary sources of social capital in the early life course’ (p.267). Leana and Pil (2014) in Strauss (2014) expands on this notion when they stated that social capital is not characteristic of the individual teacher but instead resides in the relationships among teachers, between teachers and principals, and even between teachers, parents and other key actors in the community. Literature has shown that there are some teachers working within disadvantaged communities are effective in ensuring that learners excel disregarding the lack of resources the school has and Holmes (2013) identified this occurrence resulting from quality leadership. While these achievements could be attributed to quality leadership as well as the training of the teacher, a social capital perspective would regard not only the knowledge base of the teacher but also the manner in which the teacher is able to build on that knowledge through examining the support base of the teacher (Strauss, 2014). Leana and Pil (2014) in Strauss (2014) conducted research



into the support base of teachers and found that when a teacher needs information or advice about how to do his/her job more effectively, he/she goes to other teachers.

According to Comer (2015) education has become a crucial facilitator in acquiring social capital. Within disadvantaged community contexts, the availability of social capital in families is not ideal and therefore schools provide the conduit to achieving social capital. Evidence for this is provided by (Lee & Smith, 1997 in Crosnoe, 2004, p.269) that ‘positive school environment make more of a difference for students who come from socioeconomically disadvantaged families.’ Crosnoe (2004) confirms this in the research study conducted and found that the absence of solid emotional social capital in the home was associated with poor school performance. Williams and Le Menestrel (2013, p.103) identify the following indicators of social capital which include ‘social support networks, civic engagement, trust and safety, religiosity, school and neighbourhood quality.’ These authors also state that there is an association between social capital, academic performance and educational achievement. The school is therefore an educational institution that provides an interpersonal environment which cultivates social capital in order to increase individual proficiency and productivity.

The fact that the theoretical basis of this research relies on the strength of the collective through partnerships, the notion of developing social capital in schools corroborates this as it recognises the importance of interpersonal connections between educators, parents and principal and how these contribute to school effectiveness.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The literature provided an overview of the key aspects involved in this research study. Chapter three will proceed with the methodology of this research.

# Chapter 3

## Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters provided the reader with an overview of the research and presented an in-depth presentation of the literature around the key concepts that are embedded in the notion of developing an ‘ideal’ learning environment as we strive towards the idea of an effective school. The intensive reading and elaboration of these concepts within the school learning environment and effective school frameworks, highlighted the challenges experienced within the specific South African context.

This chapter therefore outlines the methodology which was used in order to address the research questions highlighted in chapter one. It provides a justification for utilising this specific participatory action approach and also presents the instruments that were developed and employed in approaching this research process. The data analysis techniques are also presented. The manner in which quality was ensured is also highlighted and the ethical considerations are stipulated.

The following section of this chapter will discuss the manner in which this action research project commenced and the instruments and tools developed and used as well as present the way in which the analysis of the different tools was conducted.

### 3.2 Sample

#### 3.2.1 Sample Design and sampling methods

Non probability sampling methods were used in this research project. The purposive sampling design was elected for the initial stage of this research project as this research project characterised the need to develop a comprehensive understanding of the organisational culture from most of the educators at the school. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016, p.2) defines purposive sampling as ‘the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses.’ According to Palys

(2008, p.697) the selection of a purposive sample is the acknowledgement that who a person is and where that person is located within a group is important, unlike in other research where people are viewed as essentially interchangeable.’ There were thirteen educators at the school when the research commenced and the PLEQ was conducted with twelve educators and the principal as one of the teachers was not available. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve of the educators and the principal of the school.

Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique where members of the target population are selected as they meet the practical criteria for inclusion in the research namely ‘easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study’ (Dörnyei, 2007 in Etikan et al., 2016). The parents were selected via convenience sampling and were essentially parents who were involved in the workshops as well as those parents who served on the school governing body at the time.

The strategic planning mission and vision workshop was scheduled when the compliment of educators increased to eighteen. An invitation was extended to all educators; the response was great with a compliment of fourteen out of eighteen educators attending including the principal.

A workshop was conducted for parents who were prepared to volunteer at the school to assist in the development of reading and writing competency of learners at the school. Following a call from the school to parents as well as the use of the community’s social media page on Facebook, parents and community members were invited to attend the workshop. The parent compliment from the school was not great with only four parents attending while the community response was better as an additional fifteen community members attended. The commitment from the community was highlighted through this intervention as they agreed to volunteer their time to work with learners at the school. The availability of the participants in these sessions highlights the use of the convenience sampling method.

Purposive sampling was used for the final strategic intervention and evaluation workshop with fifteen educators and the principal at the primary school. The sample for this study is represented in the following table:

Table 2: Sample summary

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Sampling technique</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>
Perception of learning environment questionnaire (PLEQ)	Purposive sampling	13 (12 educators and principal)
Semi-structured interviews with educators	Purposive sampling	13 (12 educators and principal)
Semi-structured interviews with Parents	Convenient sampling	4 parents
Strategic Workshop (mission and vision)	Purposive	14 (13 educators and principal)
Strategic workshop (CAPS)	Purposive	19 (15 community volunteers and 4 parents)
Strategic workshop (SynNovation / Evaluation of interventions)	Purposive	16 (15 educators and principal)

### 3.3. Research Design

The primary goal of this research is exploratory in nature as we sought to develop an insight and comprehension of the current school learning environment and whether meaningful partnerships between the principal, educators, learners and parents enhanced the learning environment. Exploring the partnerships within the current school learning environment in the form of a case study could facilitate that key role players contribute to the enhancement of the school learning environment and essentially school effectiveness. Developing an intervention that would be applicable within the specific context with the aim of institutionalising change was the goal. This research was therefore located within the world of meta-science and draws on the constructivist perspective that essentially regards scientific research as a social activity. This paradigm suggests a democratic research practice based on socially constructed realities that are influenced by social, cultural and historical contexts. The utilisation of a community based participatory action research (CBPAR) design through a case study method was appropriate for this study as the organisational development of the school was the unit of analysis in this research.

### 3.3.1 The rationale for using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach

According to Steinberg (2014), the ‘descriptions of educational reality outside the boundaries of socio-economic contexts; hold little meaning for educators concerned with social justice and ethical action’ (p.7). It was imperative for the researcher to engage in a process that would facilitate transformation through collaborative research processes hence the participatory action research (PAR) methodology was deemed appropriate for the purposes of this study. PAR is based on certain principles. According to McNiff and Whitehead (2005), these principles include:

- A need for justice;
- A need for democracy;
- The right for all people to speak and be heard;
- The need to experience truth and beauty in personal and professional lives, and
- The need for improvement.

Within the PAR methodological paradigm, the researcher is a practitioner actively engaged in thinking and reflective process with the collaborators throughout the research. This methodology emphasises collaboration and participation and is ‘committed to conducting research that will benefit the participants either through direct intervention or by using the results to inform action for change’ (Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker (1998, p.175). The rationale for utilising this approach in the context of this research is based on the fact that this process will ensure that the theories that develop are grounded in the social experience of the key role players at the school (Israel et al., 1998). It could also ensure that the knowledge generated will be useful and relevant to all the partners’ needs and interests, and therefore will contribute to the creation of a more effective practice which implies that change is facilitated through this methodology (Lingard, Albert & Levinson, 2008). Using PAR allowed the researcher to generate and conceptualise an understanding in a sophisticated manner as it recognizes that the way in which we are shaped is influenced by our historical, political, linguistic, cultural, economic and material contexts and therefore PAR resonated with this research process.

### 3.3.2 Participatory Action Research: a definition

There are several definitions supplied for PAR in literature. The following definitions are presented below. PAR refers to;

*A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview....[and bringing] together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001)*

*It [PAR] is about jointly producing knowledge with others to produce critical interpretations and readings of the world, which are accessible, understandable to all those involved and actionable. (Paul Chatterton, Duncan Fuller & Paul Routledge, 2007)*

*Participatory action research is a form of action research in which professional social researchers operate as full collaborators with members of organisations in studying and transforming those organizations. It is an ongoing organisational learning process, a research approach that emphasises co-learning, participation and organisational transformation. (Greenwood, Whyte & Harkavy, 1993).*

From the definitions presented the focus of PAR is the social construction of realities is apparent and that we should engage in a collaborative process of collective understanding in order to engage in a social process of transformation. When engaging in PAR, the commitment to change is implicit. McNiff (1995, p.9) states that ‘action research implies adopting a deliberate openness to new experiences and processes, and, as such, demands that the action of educational research is itself educational.’

The process of implementing a PAR approach in this research process was informed by the cyclical process which aimed to combine the elements of action, reflection, theory and practice. Newman Phillips, Berg, Rodriguez and Morgan (2010, p.180) states that ‘all action research involves information collection and resultant action’. This process included ‘identifying and addressing issues, designing and conducting research on those issues, critically analysing the findings, working to resolve social problems that affect them, the parents and learners, addressing the policies that affect them and their communities and then reflecting on the results and process in an iterative fashion’ (Phillips et al., 2010, p.180).

### 3.3.3 Overview of the data collection methods used

This research was an intensive exploration of the school learning environment at a primary school. Multiple sources of data were used in the case study as the researcher aimed to capture the importance of contextual detail and in-depth description (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were utilised in this study which enabled the researcher to explore the rich context while recognizing that multiple sources of evidence (survey, field-notes, interview comments and digital recordings) will increase convergence of results so that results were triangulated which also contributed to the reliability of the research.

Quantitative data collection occurred through the administration of questionnaires and surveys to obtain information on a larger scale particularly with regard to the educators' perception of the school learning environment. This was the first stage of the action research process as the analysis of the survey instrument informed the development of the interview schedule. Qualitative methods were therefore utilised in order to provide rich descriptions and explanations from principals, educators and parents so that the researcher can obtain a holistic understanding of the school learning environment within these schools. During the research collection stage of this project, I recorded field notes and engaged in participant observation. The following table provides an outline of the research question, the chronological stages of the action research process and the related data collection tools and data analysis used for each tool.

Table 3: The data collection plan in chronological order

Research question	Chronological stage of the action research process	Data collection tool	Data analysis
1. What were the key role players (educators and principal's) perceptions of the actual learning environment vs the preferred classroom learning environment?	<b>Step 1:</b> Gathering baseline information at the school regarding the educators' and principal's views of how they experience the actual learning environment vs how they would prefer the learning environment to look like and identify trends.	Perceptions of Learning Environment Questionnaire (PLEQ) survey instrument was adapted from Aldridge, J.M, Fraser, B.J., & Laugksch, R.C. (2011) School-level Environment Questionnaire South Africa (SLEQ) which was an example of previous research conducted in this area.	Statistical Analysis, SPSS Excel
2. How did stakeholders work towards facilitating an effective school within their specific context?	<b>Step 2:</b> Conducting interviews with key stakeholders (educators, principal and parents) as they work towards facilitating school effectiveness. This was conducted further explore the trends that emerged from the significant scales of the PLEQ. Critically analyzing these findings.	Semi structured interviews with educators Semi-structured interviews with parents Semi-structure interview with principal	Qualitative data analysis using Atlas Ti software package.
3. What kind of interventions facilitated partnership development between the key role players / stakeholders at primary school level?	<b>Step 3:</b> Developing interventions in response to the priority needs identified from the PLEQ and interviews with educators and parents.  1. Developing a collectively owned mission and vision statement.	Workshop with educators, recorded plenary discussion using report back session's	Thematic analysis, Atlas ti software package.



	<p>2. Supporting parents to understand the CAPS curriculum to assist their children and struggling learners in the school</p> <p>3. Science laboratory</p>	<p>newsprint, photographic, video recording of activity. Reflective notes and participant observation. Evaluation of the session</p> <p>Reading and Literacy workshop with parents and community members.</p> <p>UWC SLCA partnership with school to build a science laboratory</p>	
1. What were teachers' perceptions of the interventions implemented?	<b>Step 4:</b> SynNovation session and evaluation of interventions	Workshop session / Focus group Interview	Participant observation and Thematic analysis, Atlas ti software package.


The development of the data collection tools as identified in the above plan will now be discussed in greater detail.

### 3.3.3.1 The Development of the Perception of Learning Environment Questionnaire

The Perception of the Learning Environment Questionnaire (PLEQ) (*refer to Appendix 1 and 2*) was the instrument developed and used in obtaining a baseline of information with regard to the teachers' perception of the learning environment at the school. This instrument was adapted from the School-level Environment Questionnaire South Africa (Aldridge, Fraser & Laugksch, 2011). The latter instrument was an adaptation of Fraser and Fisher's (1991) School-level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) which was designed to assess educators' perceptions of the psychosocial dimensions of the environment of the school. The SLEQ-SA was different to the original SLEQ as it included two new scales namely parental involvement and familiarity with outcomes based education (OBE). The scales included in the SLEQ-SA were 1) Parental involvement (the extent to which parents are involved in their children's education at both individual and school level); 2) Student support (the extent to which there is a good rapport between teachers and students and students behave in a responsible and self-disciplined manner); 3) Affiliation (the extent to which teachers can obtain assistance, advice and encouragement and are made to feel accepted by colleagues); 4) Familiarity with OBE (the extent to which teachers have been trained to use teaching and assessment strategies associated with OBE, 5) Innovation (the extent to which teachers discuss professional matters, show interest in their work and seek further professional development; 6) Resource adequacy (the extent to which the support personnel, facilities, finance, equipment and resources are suitable and adequate; and 7) Work Pressure (the extent to which work pressure dominates the school environment), 8) Student Support (the extent to which the student behavior affects the classroom, 9) Professional interest (the extent to which the teachers communicate and show interest in professional matters, and 10) Staff freedom (the extent to which the teacher has the flexibility to be innovative (Aldridge et al., 2011, p. 135). Each of the scales was indicated on the instrument with an average of six to eight items per scale. The educators were asked to respond on a five-point Likert scale with the selection Almost Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often and Almost Always (Aldridge et al., 2011).

The instrument for the baseline information of this research was expanded to include a scale on transformational leadership which attempted to determine the extent to which the educators perceived the current leadership in facilitating collegiality and innovation and decreasing work pressure. The internal consistency of this item was measured and the Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was determined. The instrument also differed from the SLEQ-SA as scales were also not indicated on the instrument and items were mixed throughout the questionnaire. Furthermore, given that OBE was replaced with the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), all items which referred to OBE were replaced with CAPS and the scale was called CAPS familiarity. The instrument was thus renamed as the perception of the learning environment questionnaire (PLEQ) and assessed the actual and preferred state of the learning environment as perceived by the educators. The implementation of a new curriculum was taking place and I recognised the importance of developing a sense of the organisational climate at the time as critical in this research process. The PLEQ included eleven scales with 5-8 questions per scale indicated as follow;

***Perception of Learning Environment Questionnaire Scales***

- 
1. CAPS Familiarity (items 3, 9, 21, 32, 42, 54, 65, and 87)
  2. Resource Adequacy (items 1, 11, 22, 33, 43, 66, and 78)
  3. Work Pressure (items 2, 12, 23, 34, 45, 56, 68, and 80)
  4. Learner Support (items 4, 14, 25, 35, 46, 57, 69, and 81)
  5. Parental Involvement (items 5, 15, 26, 36, 47, 58, 70, 82, and 88)
  6. Affiliation (items 16, 24, 27, 37, 48, 59, 71, and 83)
  7. Professional Support (items 7, 17, 28, 38, 49, 60, 72, and 84)
  8. Staff Freedom (items 6, 18, 29, 39, 50, 61, 73, 76, and 85)
  9. Participatory decision-making (items 8, 19, 30, 40, 51, 62, 74, and 86)
  10. Innovation (items 13, 20, 31, 41, 52, 64, and 76)
  11. Transformational leadership (items 10, 44, 53, 67, and 79)

*(Refer to PLEQ found in Appendix 1 & 2)*

The baseline information of the PLEQ was valuable for conceptualizing and designing the consequent instrument in this study namely the semi-structured interview schedule.

### **3.3.3.2 The Development of the semi-structured interview**

Following the analysis of the baseline information, the scales on the PLEQ where there were significant results were used as areas which would be explored in greater detail. Semi-structured interviews would allow for the exploration of these results and the perception and opinions of the educators regarding the complexities of the scales would be examined. The semi-structured interview schedule (*refer appendix 3 - 5*) included open-ended questions and also allowed me to probe certain areas for more detail in order to gain clarification from the educators, the principal and the parents, if necessary. Taylor-Powell (1998) states that open-ended questions stimulate free thought and solicit creative suggestions (p.6).

The purpose for each question in the semi-structured interview schedule was informed by literature and the baseline information from the PLEQ and aimed at addressing the research questions. All interview schedules were reviewed and a pilot interview was conducted with a colleague in the educational environment in order to test for the ambiguity / complexity of questions that were developed. I conducted twelve interviews (*refer to sample table 1 in 3.2.1*) with educators, one with the principal and four interviews with parents. The interview schedule (*refer to appendix 3, 4, and 5*) for the principal and the parents were slightly different to the one developed for the educators and the review of these instruments were also conducted in a similar fashion. (*All the instruments can be found in the appendix 3 - 5*). All interviews were conducted at the school during administrative periods of the educators. This arrangement was negotiated with the principal and the educators and the importance of not interrupting the daily business was imperative to the process. The computer laboratory was used as it was a space which was not used by any educators at the time and would lend itself to no interruptions during the interviews. It was very important to arrive earlier than the scheduled time in order to ensure that the venue was unlocked and that all equipment was adequately set up and in working order. This was critical as it ensured that no

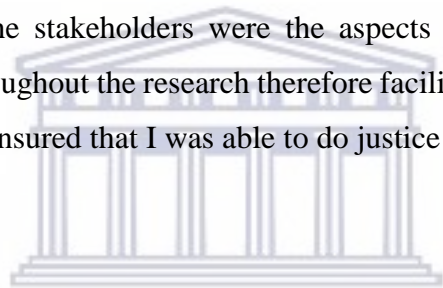
raw data was lost due to faulty equipment. Each interview lasted between one and one and half hour long and provided participants with sufficient time to respond to the questions. The unique flexibility of the semi-structured interview is its structure to address the specific dimensions as identified by the baseline data and the research questions ultimately providing the educators with the space to offer new meanings to the topic. According to Galetta (2013, p.2) the semi-structured interview ‘creates openings for a narrative to unfold, while also including questions informed by theory.’ I used several devices during the semi-structured interview sessions namely a voice recorder, notebook (to record observations), and the semi-structured interview schedule which was prepared beforehand which provided me with the guide for the interview. This ensured that the data which I was capturing would be transcribed verbatim which is essential as it is the respondent’s views and sense-making which is critical to the research process. Developing a good rapport and ensuring that the respondent is comfortable during the interview implied that I needed to engage in thorough preparation before each interview. This was critical and greatly assisted me during the interview as it enabled me to focus clearly and engage in attentive listening and observation during the process. Interviews were scheduled on one day per week over a period of six weeks with only two interviews conducted per day. I believe that this roster facilitated my optimal engagement with each interview and permitted me to be reflective in the process.

### **3.3.3.3 The importance of reflective enquiry in action research**

Engaging in a reflective process requires the ability to participate in the deliberate and purposeful cognitive act of thinking about the research and responding and modifying your practice accordingly. It is the process which generates the real learning from the experience. According to Mackay (2016, p.1), self-reflection is an important activity for the individual and the collective as it ensures the critical aspect and validity of the research. Reflective enquiry was a critical aspect of the research process and action research in general as it emphasises democratic nature of the research as well as the social justice inherent in this methodology. The need to engage in reflection was an important part of the research for all stakeholders as it provided a structured opportunity for stakeholders to value the power of their experience and acknowledge these experiences and

develop an understanding of their individual engagement and that of the collective (Colucci-Gray, Das, Gray, Robson & Spratt, 2013). Ensuring that there were structured opportunities for the stakeholders to engage in reflection as part of their process was important.

As the researcher, my reflective process was through the use of a research journal (*refer to examples in appendix 6*). The journal was extremely useful as it allowed me to critically engage with each step in the action research spiral and also allowed me to make sense of the process. One of the key reflective outcomes of the journal was the articulation of the action research process of this project and I was able to construct a diagrammatical representation of the research process (Figure 3). The importance of reflecting is a critical component of this action research project and allowed me to constantly check in with myself and navigate through the tensions that were experienced in the process. Developing trust and ensuring that there were open channels of communication with all the stakeholders were the aspects which were both challenging and stimulating. Reflecting throughout the research therefore facilitated a greater understanding of my role as the researcher and ensured that I was able to do justice to the process.



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

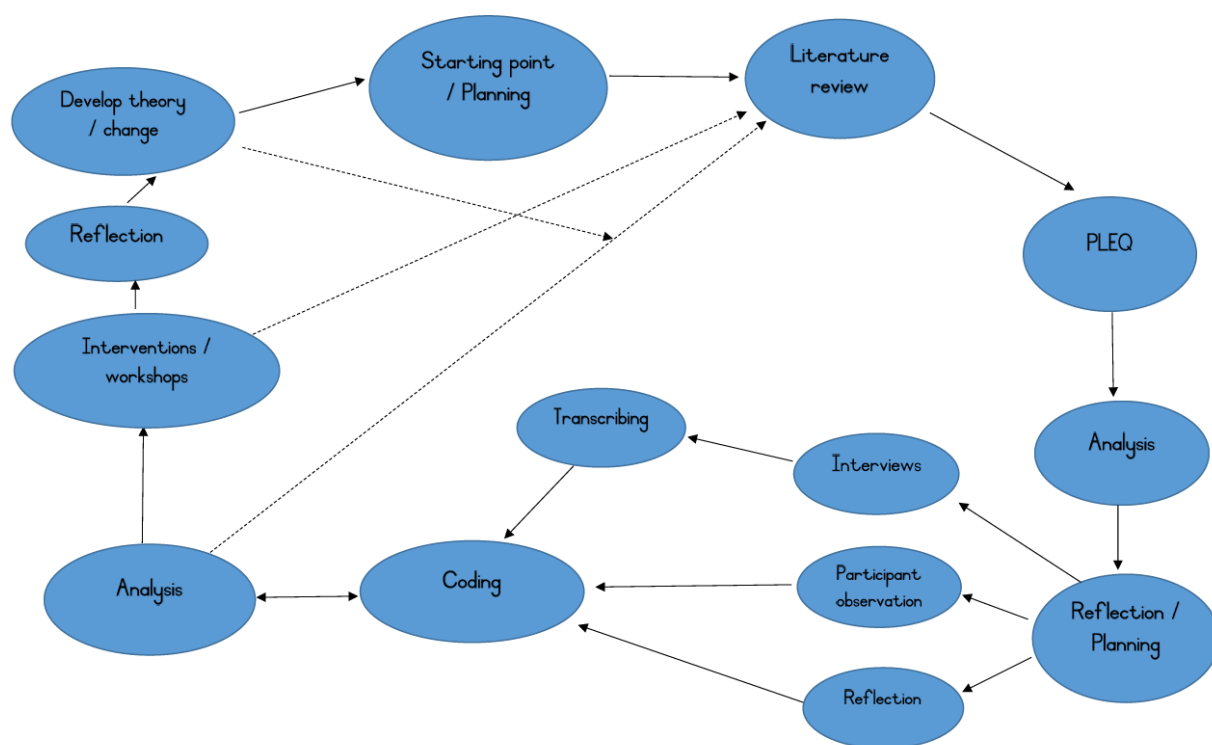


Figure 3: The action research process

The interventions which were subsequently planned were intentionally developed to ensure that all stakeholders would engage in the process of reflective enquiry and develop an understanding through dialogue by acknowledging their respective personal and collective contexts.

### 3.3.3.4 The preparation of the interventions for principal and educators

Following the intensive reflective process as well as the analysis of the interviews preceding this stage in the research, I engaged in the development of a response based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the PLEQ. The need for interventions that emphasised reflection, team building and the development of a jointly owned mission and vision statement for the school was highlighted through my reflection and analysis. These interventions would provide an opportunity

for the teachers to be reflective and also for them to contribute to the collaborative development of a mission statement through a team building exercise. The planning for this process was done through the support of a fellow colleague who assisted in the facilitation of the intervention. It required several planning sessions where the process was discussed and my reflective process and analysis was shared. It was imperative to develop a purpose for the intervention and to communicate this to the school.

Following the request for historical documentation as well as reviewing several policies including the existing mission statement of the school, the purpose was developed in preparation for the teambuilding / strategic planning workshop. A PowerPoint presentation was also developed as a guide for the day's proceedings; this was based on reviewing literature and from the source documents mentioned previously. The presentation is included in the *appendix 12*. The agenda for the strategic planning workshop: developing a mission statement is provided in the following table.

*Table 4: Planning & Teambuilding workshop for X primary school*

**Workshop Purpose:** As Richard Beckhard noted years ago, there are four issues that teams must address if they are to be effective in their work: \*

- Goals and priorities
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Group Norms and Processes
- Interpersonal Relationships

Helping a diverse group of individuals (some or all who haven't worked together before) come together as an effective, productive team is a challenge. Focusing on the four areas above helps set the stage for future productivity. While you can't create a team in eight hours, you can lay down a foundation that enable employees to begin making decisions while working and learning together, in addition to using basic skills in problem solving.



## PROGRAMME

TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
08:30 – 08:45	Welcome	
08:45 – 10:00	<b>SETTING THE STAGE</b>	
08:45 – 09:00	Why are we here? ( <i>programme for the day</i> )	Researcher
09:00 – 09:15	Key points, questions & comments you wish highlight for the day	All
09:15 – 10:00	Strategic reflection	All
10:00 – 10:00	<b>VISION DEVELOPMENT</b>	
10:00 – 10:30	Vision Assessment	All
10:30 – 11:00	<b>TEA/COFFEE</b>	
11:00 – 12:00	Crossing a bed of lava	All
12:00 – 13:00	Vision & Mission Formulation	All
13:00 – 14:00	<b>LUNCH</b>	
12:30 – 13:00	Strategic planning Model	Facilitator / Co-researcher
14:00 – 15:00	Broad categories for goal setting per category	All
15:00 – 15:30	Goal development	All
15:30 – 16:00	Where to from here (way forward)	All
16:15 – 16:30	Closure	Researcher

### 3.3.3.5 Participant observation, field notes and analytic memos

Participant observation, field notes and analytic memos (*refer to an example in appendix 7*) were also used as research strategies with the primary aim to gain a close and intimate familiarity with the principal, educators and parents at the school over a period of time, in this case three years (Timseena, 2009). Participating in the research setting was a key aspect of this research through reflection, observation and the recording of analytical memos.

Field notes can be regarded as an objective record of observations conducted in a unique context (Newbury, 2001). Field notes (*see example in appendix 7*) were recorded as observational notes written as statements with minimal interpretation. These were therefore merely statements which were recorded during the process which I could use when reflecting. The analytical memo was the elaboration and assimilation process based on the theoretical notes and enabled me to ‘connect the dots.’ Writing memos at the end of various sessions and interactions with the participants was based on several observations and compilation of field notes and provided a means of developing categories which were relevant to the recorded data. Gorra (2007, p.94) suggested that ‘analytic memos could be used to ask questions, philosophies about potential meanings of interviewee’s statements and compare concepts identified in interview transcripts to each other and to the literature.’ Compiling notes based on my observations enabled me to reflect on the various stages in the research process and initiate the process of coding which is further explored in the data analysis. These codes were revisited and reflected upon at various stages. The use of these research strategies therefore also assisted in the verification of the different themes. The technical aspects of the research process will now be discussed in greater detail.

#### **3.3.3.6 The capacity building intervention for parents**

Based on the analysis of the data, it was found that parents experienced difficulty with the current curriculum in terms of assisting their children at home. The need for developing the literacy levels of the learners was also identified as a desperate need especially considering the fact that the demographics of the school was quite diverse and language and literacy presented a challenge. The need to assist in literacy was also related to government’s measure of school effectiveness as the Annual National Assessments (grade 3 and 6) as well as the systemic tests provide government with a gauge of school effectiveness.

In response to this, a capacity building workshop for parents was organized in collaboration with a non-profit organisation namely Reading and Writing Solutions (RWS). The organisation agreed to train 25 parents as volunteers who would be able to work with struggling learners on a one-to-

one basis in the school setting. The school assisted in sending out letters to parents to advertise the training opportunity however the response was poor. The invitation was then extended to the community in which the school was located through communicating with local churches and also advertising it on social media via the community's Facebook page. The logistical challenges were managed by approaching a church organisation that provided the venue at no charge, the project manager at RWS agreed to do the training at no charge. Materials, printing and meals were provided through the financial support of the school at the Community Engagement Unit at the University of the Western Cape. There was therefore no cost for any participant and the only expectation was for the participants to complete the two day training programme and that the successful participants would agree to volunteer one hour of their time per week at the school to assist struggling learners. The successful participants would also form part of a greater network of Reading and Writing Solutions volunteers in the Cape Metropole.

The agenda for the workshop was developed by the facilitator who had conducted the training programme several times prior to the engagement in other communities. The key objectives of the workshop were to tap into the creativity of any individual, utilise resources that are readily and easily available and to engage in effective listening skills with an emphasis on positive reinforcement. The workshop was based on the CAPS English home language curriculum and academic literacy in the foundation and intermediate phase. 24 parents received the training of which 15 volunteers are actively working at the school.

#### **3.3.3.7 Focus group / workshop with educators to evaluate interventions**

Following the implementation of the interventions, a session was held with the principal and educators. The time and date of the session was negotiated with the participants and it was requested that the session be held on the 26 September 2017. The aims of the session were to;

1. Provide feedback on the research process thus far
2. To engage in a synnovation session conducted with this group to develop skills within the organisation based on collaboration and communication

3. To evaluate the interventions which were implemented as part of the process

The researcher provided feedback to the group and allowed an opportunity for questions before introducing a colleague trained as a synnovator to facilitate the session. Synnovation attempts to resolve conflict within organisations through the three 'R's. According to Prekel, Andrews and Sobey (no date), respect, recognition and relatedness are essential to establish a climate of trust and open-mindedness to enable creative approaches to resolve conflict. The brief synnovation session was specifically arranged in response to the team building theme that came through in the interviews. According to Hummel (2006) synectics outlines the processes that people can use to help them overcome mental blocks while working on difficult tasks. Synnovation is therefore a South African adaptation of the concepts of synectics (Prekel, n.d). The latter authors developed concepts, tools & techniques that enable innovation and are also very effective in conflict resolution. The researcher had access to the synnovator through the Community engagement unit and following several discussions and planning, a custom-designed, innovation programme was designed specifically aimed at the needs identified by the participants within their context.

The goal of synnovation is building effective teams through the facilitation of the following skills sets;

1. Thinking skills and solution mind-sets to help, deliver better services and enjoy better operational efficiencies
2. The development of sustainable long-term change and innovation through collaboration. ("How we make innovation happen", 2017)

The objectives of the synnovation workshop as an intervention were to;

1. To give participants tools for creative thinking
2. To show what behaviours help creativity, in ourselves and in others
3. To make working in groups more productive and fun

The synnovation technique utilises the following problem solving approach which was found to be suited to the organisational context of the school.

## SYNNOVATION PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

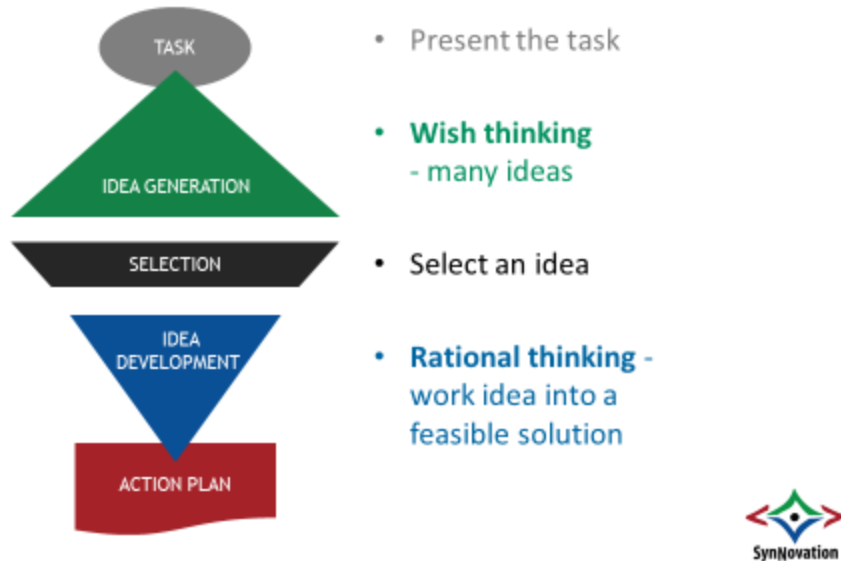


Figure 4: The synnovation problem solving process

For the purposes of the action research process, it was essential to engage in this session as it requires the group to move forward after the research process is concluded.

The following agenda guided the session with the educators;

## AGENDA

1. Welcome and Briefing
2. Introductions (All - get people to connect)
3. Setting the Scene (All - surface who we are as individuals)
4. Mapping the Course (briefly teach the principles of SynNovation)
5. Short body-break
6. Fit for Purpose (practice quick tools for working together and having fun)
7. SynNovation in Real-Time (work session)
8. Stepping Out (All - so what? way forward)
9. Reflection (All - personal reflections and insights)
10. Evaluation and Close

### 3.3.4 Data Analysis

The different instruments utilised as per the research plan required specific forms of analysis. This will be detailed in the following section.

#### 3.3.4.1 PLEQ Analysis

The Perception of Learning Environment Questionnaire (PLEQ) was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The standard deviation and Cronbach alpha statistical values were obtained using this package. The Microsoft excel software was also used to develop diagrams that would provide a descriptive analysis of the analysis as well as the scales in the PLEQ.

#### 3.3.4.2 The analysis of the semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and subjected to member checks and a thematic analysis was conducted utilising Atlas Ti (Muhr, 2004). The transcribed data were analysed using thematic analysis using the constructivist theoretical position.

Thematic analysis identified common themes in relation to the research questions that emerged from the transcribed data, and facilitated the grouping of themes in a rich and ordered manner (Aronson, 1994). The grouping of data into themes allowed for rich description and the complexities in the detail were also highlighted (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and acknowledged the ways in which the participants made meaning of their experience within their social context i.e. the school. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify a step by step guide of six steps which was employed in the thematic analysis of the transcribed data from the semi-structured interviews. The six steps include (a) familiarisation with the data (including transcribing and reading), (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes and (f) producing the report. These steps will be incorporated into the analysis section of this document.

The conceptual framework with which I commenced this research provided me with the original coding system for the thematic analysis. The Atlas ti software package allowed me to engage rigorously with each interview as it enabled me to code each response from the participants. Commencing with the initial framework was therefore a useful guide however the analysis process highlighted responses which could not be captured by the initial framework and therefore I engaged in the process of generating additional codes. Even though these codes were different to the initial conceptual framework, the generation of new codes still complied with the conceptual framework and enhanced it considerably.

The following table generated by the Atlas ti 8 software provided an overview of the final code families as well as the categories included in each family as well as the frequency with which it occurred. The software package also allowed for these code families as well as individual codes to be compared and analysed. The ability to provide a numerical relationship between codes was extremely useful to the analysis of the interviews and was used in the formulation of the themes discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Table 5: Code families

<b>HU: Criteria educators identify for establishing a learning environment</b>
<p><b>Code Family: Challenges</b></p> <p>Codes (3): [Challenges] [resources] [Suggestions]</p> <p>Quotation(s): 97</p>
<p><b>Code Family: Levels of collaboration</b></p> <p>Codes (8): [Collaboration] [commitment] [Communication] [mentoring] [parental involvement] [partnerships] [SGB] [Teachers]</p> <p>Quotation(s): 142</p>
<p><b>Code Family: Management</b></p> <p>Codes (4): [leadership] [management] [mentoring] [principal]</p> <p>Quotation(s): 87</p>
<p><b>Code Family: Perceptions of partnerships</b></p> <p>Codes (8): [mentoring] [parental involvement] [partnerships] [Relationships] [responsibilities] [roles] [Teachers] [Team building]</p> <p>Quotation(s): 121</p>
<p><b>Code Family: School context</b></p> <p>Codes (15): [CAPS] [Community context] [curriculum] [extramural] [inclusive education] [leadership] [Learning environment] [mentoring] [Mission and Vision] [principal] [resources] [SGB] [Value system] [workload] [workshops]</p> <p>Quotation(s): 251</p>
<p><b>Code Family: Teacher innovation</b></p> <p>Codes (8): [inclusive education] [Learning environment] [staff development] [Staff freedom] [Suggestions] [Teacher innovation] [Teachers] [workshops]</p> <p>Quotation(s): 130</p>



Field notes, analytic memos and observations were also coded and the following questions assisted with the coding decisions made during these processes:

- i. What are teachers doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- ii. Exactly how are they doing it? What strategies are they using?
- iii. How do they talk about the activity, characterise and understand what is going on?
- iv. What assumptions are they making?
- v. What is going on here? What do I as the researcher, learn from these notes? What strikes me?

Theron (2015, p.4)

#### **3.3.4.3 Analysis of interventions**

The workshop interventions were video recorded and various methods of interaction were employed during these sessions namely participant observation, facilitation and presentation. All the different forms of data were interrogated and used as a means of verification of themes and a subsequent coding process which assisted in linking all the themes and codes was conducted which ensured the triangulation of the research data.

Triangulation is an important research component as it assists in determining the validity of the data. A thematic analysis was employed of all the themes and codes generated from the different methods employed. The various forms of data captured of the interventions included recordings of sessions, activities during the sessions, evaluation of sessions, and participant observation notes, which were all utilised in the analysis.

### 3.3.5 Validity and Reliability

Within an exploratory action research framework the essential guide for any researcher in his / her attempt to ensure validity and reliability is to ‘do justice to the object of the study’ (Smaling, 1994). My role as the researcher in establishing trustworthiness with all the participants was fundamental to the research process.

Validity and reliability of action research exploratory research studies are enhanced through the use of multiple data collection tools in order for data to be triangulated. Triangulation in this study was ensured through the range of data collection tools utilised and complementing this data with the compilation of extensive field notes, member checks and reasoned consensus. Lincoln and Guba (1985) regards member checking as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Considering the data from various viewpoints was employed and facilitated by the thematic analysis. It is important to note that the PLEQ instrument (stage one of the data collection plan) was not tested for concurrent validity however I assumed face validity as the instrument was used to establish a baseline of information on educator perceptions of actual versus preferred learning environments.

Borkan (1999) suggested the following to be employed during qualitative data analysis process namely immersion and crystallisation. Immersion refers to a process whereby researchers immerse themselves in the data that they have collected by reading or examining some portion of the data in detail, and crystallisation refers to the process of temporarily suspending the process of examining or reading the data (immersion) in order to reflect on the analysis experience and attempt to identify and articulate patterns or themes noticed during the immersion process (p.182). This was useful to consider during the research process as the ability to go between the data, interpretation and analysis allowed me to thoroughly examine the patterns and themes that emerged from the data which was well articulated, supported and therefore significant in the

context of this research. Striving to ensure validity and reliability, is a goal which researchers should bear in mind when approaching this kind of research process.

### 3.4 Ethical Statement

I had to engage in a conscious process of establishing trust relationships with the participants that allowed them to ‘speak freely without distortion’ (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p.275). I was cognisant of the fact that I was invited into the personal, private and work spaces of the participants and therefore had to ensure that my interactions were meaningful. The need to ensure that all ethical aspects were observed was critical to the process. Creswell (2003) confirms this when he states that the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informants.

The research project proposal was submitted to serve at the UWC Faculty of Education Research and Ethics committee, the Dean of Research, the Western Cape Education Department and the school governing body of the public school to ensure that we complied with all the ethical considerations of the university, the education department and the community (*refer to appendix 8 – 10 for the documentation*).

All participants were informed about the research and its objectives and given a written consent form to sign upon agreeing to participate in the study prior to the data collection. Confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study was guaranteed to all participants. Interview sessions were recorded and where participants were not comfortable with this, no recording occurred. The rights of all participants were observed and respected at all stages of the research project and careful measures were taken to store the research documents in a computer database, which was password protected and accessible only to the researcher.

The following table provides the identifiers that were used in order to ensure confidentiality of all participants in the research process;

Table 6: Codes for participants in the research process

<b>Interviews with educators</b>	<b>Interview with parents</b>	<b>Interview with principal</b>	<b>Workshops</b>	<b>Focus group</b>
I = interview Ed = Educator 01 – 13 = numeric value per interview conducted Date on which interview occurred	I = interview P = parent 01–04 = numeric value per interview conducted Date on which interview occurred	I = Interview Pp = principal 01 = one principal Date on which the interview occurred	Int = Intervention W = Workshop 01 - 02 = number of the workshop Date on which the workshop was conducted	FG = focus group 01 = one instance Date on which the focus group was conducted

### 3.5 Conclusion

Facilitating an effective learning environment requires a multifaceted collaborative engagement process that comprises of many variables. The participatory action research design was selected as the most appropriate design that would initiate change through a democratic and social justice methodology. This chapter provided an overview of the rationale for the choice in research design and also highlighted the different forms of data collection instruments used in the process. It was imperative that the methodological aspects of the research facilitated the possibility of generating new knowledge and collected data relevant to the research questions. At the same time the technical aspects of the research, such as validity, trustworthiness of the data through triangulation as well as the ethical consideration of conducting the research, was also important to the process. The following chapter will present an in-depth categorisation, organisation and analysis of the data collected.

# Chapter 4

## Results and Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the results and an analysis of the data that was collected specifically to address the research questions identified in the previous chapter. The data collected on each of the instruments identified was subjected to various forms of statistical and qualitative data analysis. The instruments implemented in this study included the perception of learning environment questionnaire (PLEQ) and the semi-structured interviews. Specific trends in the PLEQ were generated from the findings and these were then interrogated in greater depth in the semi-structured interviews with the educators. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with the educators, principal and conveniently selected parents and the results from these were interrogated as they were key in identifying the appropriate and strategic interventions as a response. The data obtained from the PLEQ, semi-structured interviews and interventions were then examined and put through an intensive analysis utilising a range of research tools. The rationale for using a specific form of statistical analysis for each step of the research process will be presented in the following chapter as well as the findings from the analysis process. The results from the analysis thus allowed me to provide a coherent account of how each instrument was linked in the process as it attempts to address the research questions which were developed in Chapter 3. These results also provided the motivation to proceed to the different stages in the research while also linking these findings to the literature in chapter 2. The following chapter commences as per the research questions and plan identified in chapter 3.

## **4.2 What were the key role players' (educators and principal's) perceptions of the actual learning environment vs the preferred classroom learning environment?**

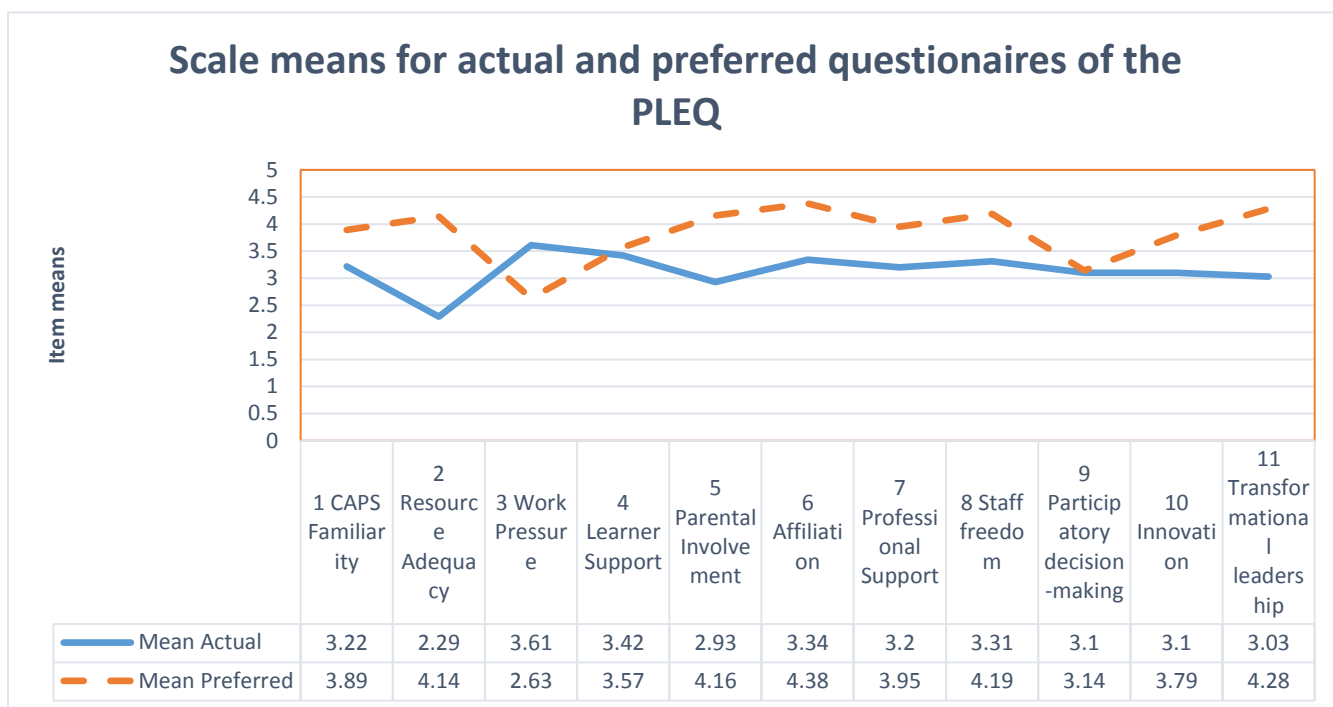
Collecting baseline information at the school regarding the educators' and principal's views of their actual versus preferred experience of the learning environment was an integral part which allowed me to gain a sense of the learning environment through the identification of trends. The perception of learning environment questionnaire (PLEQ) was developed and used to obtain this specific data. The PLEQ was an eleven scale instrument adapted from the SLEQ-SA (ten scales) and included the additional scale of transformational leadership. Two questionnaires were provided to the educators, one that depicted the actual learning environment and another for the preferred learning environment. A sample of thirteen teachers completed the PLEQ. Each of the eleven scales on the PLEQ consisted of multiple statements concerning the preferred learning environment and the actual learning environment. The participants were required to complete these questionnaires and were requested to respond to a series of statements on a Likert scale in terms of their own degree of agreement or disagreement to a series of statements. The participants were required to select one of the following five responses namely strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree or strongly agree.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used as the measure of the internal consistency and basically refers to how closely related a set of items are as a group within a scale and is therefore considered to be a measure of scale reliability. The PLEQ was essentially used to establish a baseline of information from which the interview schedule was developed. Using the SPSS Statistical computer package and generating a Cronbach Alpha report as well as the standard deviation of each of the scales produced the following data. The following table provides a representation of the Cronbach Alpha report of the PLEQ actual and preferred questionnaires.

*Table 7: Cronbach alpha scores and standard deviation for each scale for the preferred and actual PLEQ*

<b>Scale</b>	<b>No. of items per scale</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha Actual</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha Preferred</b>	<b>Standard deviation Actual</b>	<b>Standard deviation Preferred</b>
1 CAPS Familiarity	8	0.440	0.719	0.84	0.69
2 Resource Adequacy	7	0.165	0.786	0.46	0.8
3 Work Pressure	8	0.275	0.765	0.47	0.89
4 Learner Support	8	0.363	0.114	0.54	0.49
5 Parental Involvement	9	0.636	0.794	0.66	0.7
6 Affiliation	8	0.865	0.852	1.49	0.63
7 Professional Support	8	0.630	0.616	0.61	0.55
8 Staff freedom	9	0.724	0.719	0.61	0.56
9 Participatory decision making	8	-0.32	0.344	0.39	0.54
10 Innovation	7	0.191	-0.98	0.48	0.43
11 Transformational leadership	5	0.808	0.813	0.86	0.74

According to Gliem and Gliem (2003) ‘the closer Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale’ (p.87). The small sample of thirteen educators does not however make this a reliable measure and therefore we will focus of the average scores of each of the scales in order to identify trends. The mean scores of each scale is presented in the following graph.



*Figure 5: A comparison of the scale means obtained from the actual and the preferred questionnaires of the PLEQ*

The scale means for the actual learning environment ranged from 2.29 (scale resource adequacy) to 3.61 (scale work pressure) while the scale means for the preferred learning environment ranged from 2.63 to 4.38. The scales of resource adequacy and parental involvement had a mean score below 3 on the actual while the preferred state had a mean over 4. The actual state was perceived to lack resources while a preferred state would have resources available. Work pressure had the highest mean score on the actual PLEQ questionnaire and lowest mean on the preferred which indicates a high level of work pressure within the school learning environment and that a preferred learning environment does not have work pressure. Learner support had the second highest mean score on the actual however the preferred state was slightly higher than actual which also indicated that educators felt that disciplinary interventions within school learning environment is acceptable. The scales of CAPS familiarity, affiliation, staff freedom and transformational leadership also



showed a significant difference between the actual and preferred means of the PLEQ. The implications for this research therefore highlighted specific areas which were further explored within interviews with the educators. Each of these scales was interrogated in addition to the data collected from the interviews which provided substantiation for the scales as perceived by the educators and principal.

Figure 6 provides another visual representation of how the mean represents the data gathered through the administration of the PLEQ actual and preferred.

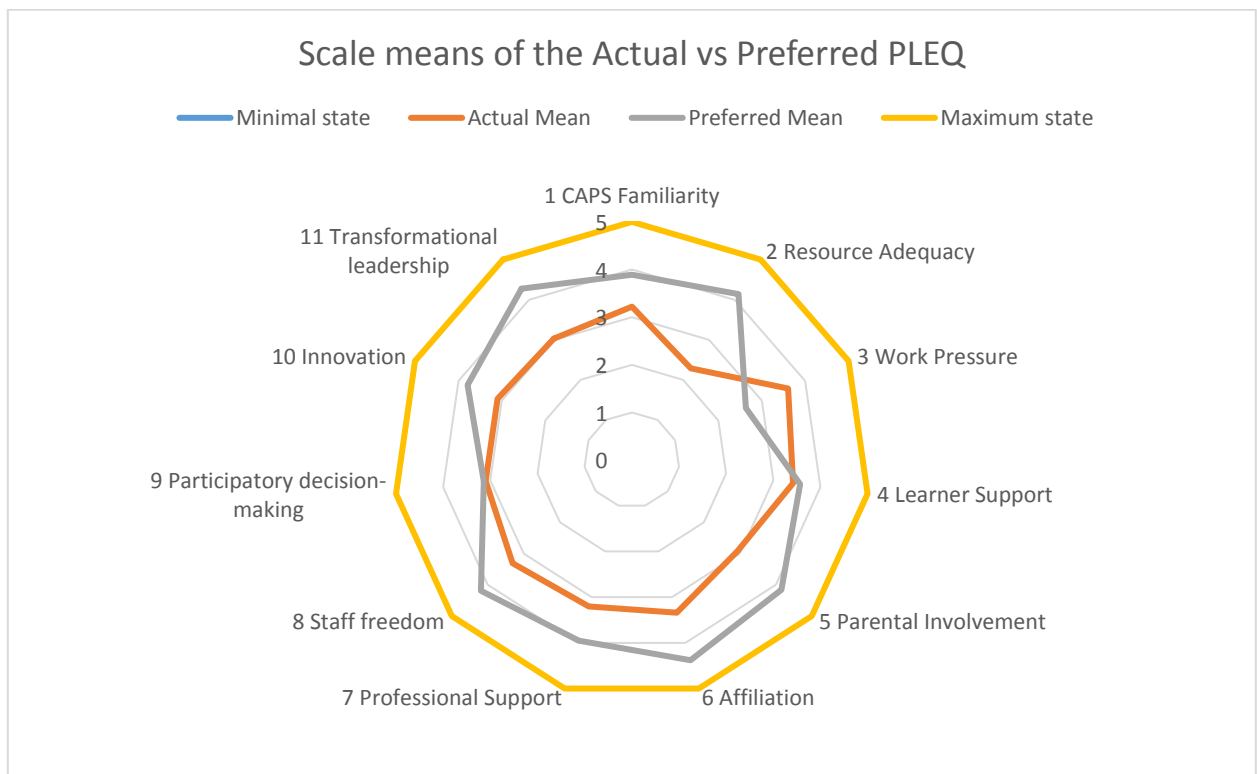


Figure 6: Scales of the PLEQ (Actual and Preferred mean scores)

### 4.2.1 CAPS familiarity

According to figure 5 and 6 in the previous section, there is a visible difference between the mean of the actual and the preferred learning environment for this scale. The educators' perception of the curriculum was vividly described within the interviews using emotionally loaded words to define their experience of the CAPS curriculum. The educators perceived the curriculum as associated with an increasing workload that was unmanageable. The following quotations clarify the trend in the PLEQ:

'I don't know if they really know about what is going on with the new CAPS and methodologies' (*IEd01:030815*)

'The admin work is very hectic and sometimes it interrupts with the teaching. Because I feel the teaching to the children should be more important, but now the admin work takes that away' (*IEd04:100815*)

'I'm telling you it's such a lot of work. This curriculum is really bombarding children with information' (*IEd08:240815*)

The following figure provides an analysis of this specific theme using the Atlas Ti software and represents it as a network that provides a visual connection between the CAPS curriculum and workload scale.

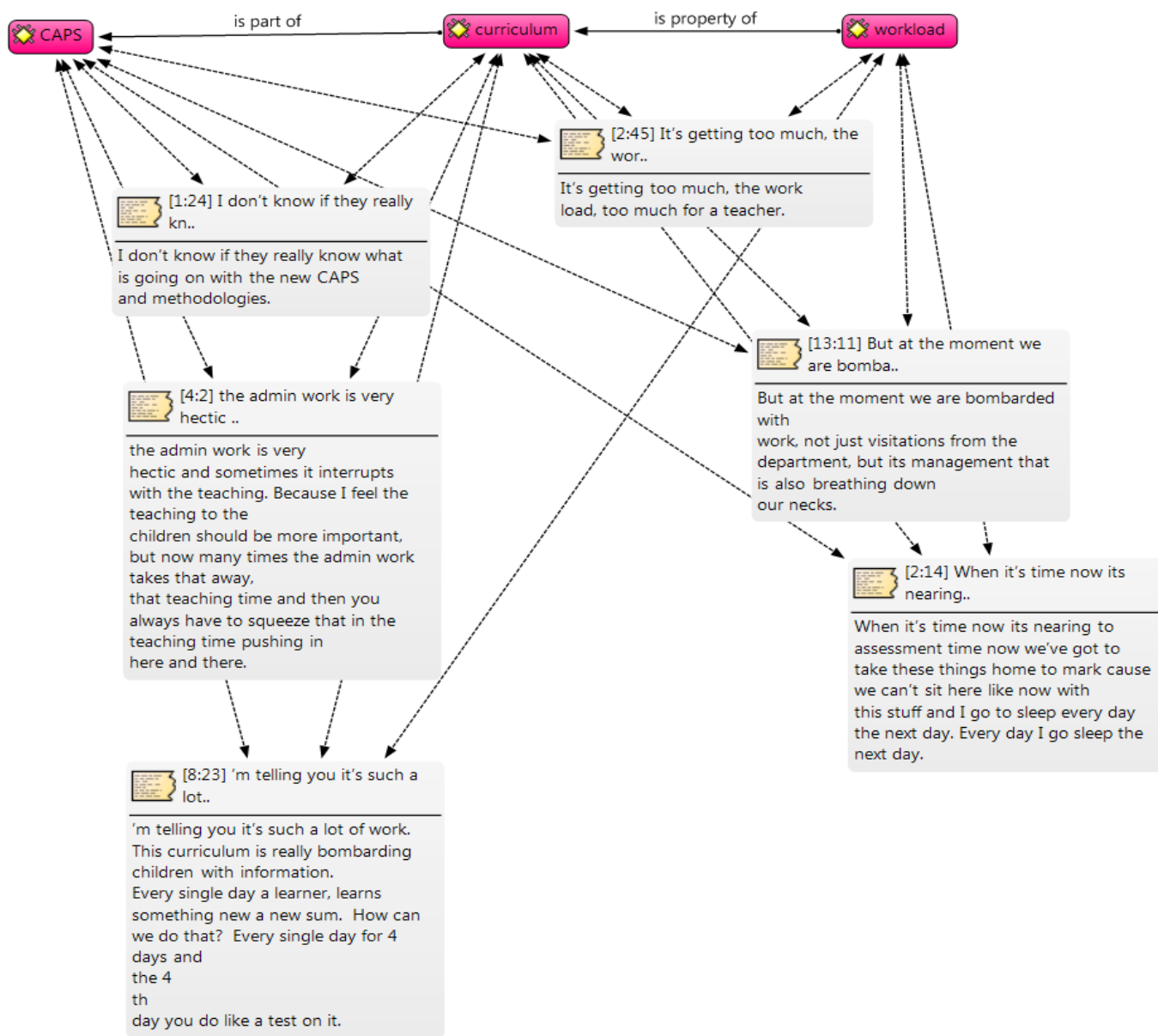


Figure 7: CAPS curriculum contributes to increased workload

The educators therefore perceived the curriculum as increasing their workload which results in significant pressure as indicated in figure 7.

## 4.2.2 Resource Adequacy

The resource adequacy scale had the lowest mean on the actual PLEQ and a mean above 4 for the preferred PLEQ. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the educators highlighted that the educators perceived that a lack of resources contributed to ineffective teaching. There were 35 quotations which were found in the hermeneutic unit of the educators' interviews which related to the challenge of resources in the learning environment. The following selections of quotations substantiate the challenge of resources in the learning environment.

‘Okay I know for a fact that there are no chemicals at school. But I mean just your little test tubes you know have a spare kettle there so that if you boil it the children can see you know while you doing the lesson. Having the mirror there so you can show them the steam and the water, small things like that would make your life easier. So if we could just have more concrete apparatus for the children it would be amazing.’  
(*IEd03:110815*)

‘We need to improvise and use yogurt tubs and a hanger and stuff like that. There are still things we are short of, like especially now in the maths where we do data or measurement things that we need to do those things.’ (*IEd04:110815*)

‘I need at certain times, I make as best as I can, but things like measuring jugs for capacities. Things that if we work together as a grade or a phase we purchase to collectively we use it fairly and freely.’ (*IEd10:310815*)

‘So we now try and improvise by doing our own, we do not always get all the resources from the department to say look here this is for your grade this is what we work with.’  
(*IEd11:070915*)

### 4.2.3 Work Pressure

The data analysis of the means of this scale indicated that it had the highest mean on the actual PLEQ and the lowest mean on the preferred PLEQ as the ideal learning environment where work pressure is not such a great challenge. This analysis highlighted that educators experienced work pressure within the learning environment which was not ideal. The analysis of the interviews also determined that the educators perceived work pressure specifically in relation to the CAPS curriculum, the increase in the assessments, the administrative aspects as well being required to meet the requirements of the curriculum with great class sizes. The following quotations specifically related to the work pressure experienced by educators and thus substantiate this scale.

‘I am grade 6-7 and we teach all six subjects and if the CA comes here they want to take account of each subject so it is difficult to do all.’ (IEd01:030815)

‘In the past I enjoyed teaching, not so much now it is too much work’ (IEd02:030815)

‘When it’s time now it’s nearing to assessment time now we’ve got to take these things home to mark... Every day I go sleep the next day.’ (IEd10:310815)

‘Our classes are so big, like last year I had 50 children and it made me sick.’ (IEd10:310815)

The principal provided an example of an opportunity provided to the educators to engage in a participatory decision process with regard to changing from teaching all subjects per grade to subject specific teaching per educator. Upon providing them with this opportunity the principal reports that they decided against this which created significant work pressure. This was captured in the following extract from the interview with the principal.

‘I had suggestions and things that I had put in place, so last year I said guys it is killing you man. You are doing class teaching individual class teaching and everything so let’s set up a system... You have to strategise. So what happens; they caucus and they convinced Mr X not to go ahead with that.’ (IPp01:140915)

Another educator acknowledged the pressure that the principal experiences as the leader of the organisation through the following excerpt from the interview.

‘I do understand, we say, we under pressure, but management is also under pressure’  
(IEd11:070815)

#### 4.2.4 Learner Support

The mean scores on the learner support scale for the actual and preferred learning environments did not show a great difference (actual 3.42 and preferred 3.57). Reflecting on the items in the PLEQ for this specific scale the statements vary from learning environments where the learners are disciplined and supportive in the classroom environment to instances where disciplinary measures are required from the educator. This scale therefore indicates that while the actual environment displays a relative measure of discipline and learner support there remains a need for this to be improved.

Educators reported that the children displayed good discipline and there was also the perception that the relationship between the educator and the learner facilitates a good learning environment particularly when these relationships are open and learners feel safe and that they can trust the educator. The following quotations support this.

‘The children at our school the learners at our school I would say are very well disciplined, obedient and eager to learn and have a lot of respect’ (IEd03:110815)

‘I would like to I don’t know what every child’s situation is at home but I would like them to feel at least this is one place they can be a child and be free but also know that work and play is great.’ (IEd07:240815)

‘I have a very good classroom at the moment. My kids are very, very good. We have a good relationship and we work well together. My kids are open to speak to me about everything and we talk confidential and if I have to report to the principal, it will be done in a way that they understand why I’m going.’ (IEd11:070915)

Another educator perceived that learners were not engaging in reading books as an activity and felt that educators and parents need to demonstrate the fun in reading books. This was evident in the following quotation;

‘Children do not have that love for reading anymore. Um, you must make it very exciting for them and play games and make it fun for them just to get their attention.’ (IEd13:140915)

#### 4.2.5 Parental Involvement

The parental involvement scale had a mean below 3 on the actual PLEQ and a preferred PLEQ mean of 4.16. The educators perceived that the parental involvement in the learner’s development was not ideal. The semi-structured interviews supported this and a query conducted utilising the Atlas Ti software provided 47 instances in the interviews which supported this finding. Educators identified that parents were not involved in the educational development of their children which was not supportive of the expectation of the current curriculum and does not facilitate an effective learning environment. The following quotations support this.

‘But then there’s another half of parents that just don’t care. They don’t pay school fees, they don’t do homework, and you never get assignments from them. You send

letters home but those parents they just don't care and then after a while you just think why I should care if they don't care. You understand, but there is, you get a few that is very committed.' (IEd10:310815)

'I would say parent involvement is very poor because many a times when I speak about foundation phase from R's to 3's. Parents' involvement are very poor with regards to, you know many parents will say they are working which some of them do, then others will say they are working but then they are off at some days but they don't use that opportunity to come and make an appointment to see the educator with regards to I couldn't make it for that meeting but can I make an appointment for another meeting.' (IEd12:070915)

'...some parents are just not interested in helping you in anyway...' (IEd06:170815)

'At the workshop I had three parent come out of the forty two parents you know so if I'm not getting help from parents and I have to do it on my own then how am I going to be more effective cause things are not getting better year by year with regards to the curriculum, you know, with regards to parent involvement you know.' (IEd07:240815)

Educators identified several reasons for the lack of parental involvement which ranged from the educational level of the parent and that parents do not have the capacity to assist their children as they were either teenage parents or children living with grandparents or with extended family members who were not literate. The following quotations provide evidence of the reasons for a lack of parental involvement as provided by the educators.

'I think a lot of the learners at our school I don't know how many they live with grandparents or they live with.... The one boy is living with his aunt and uncle and his mother lives in retreat so he goes to his mother on weekends. ... The grandparents

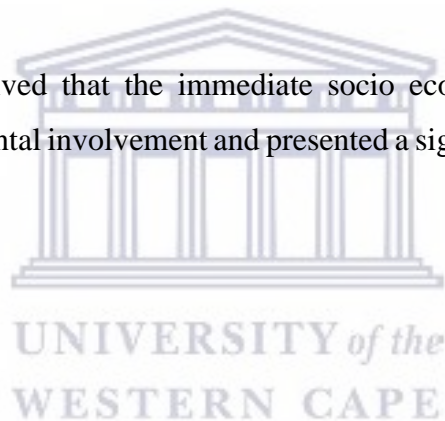


come and they show an interest, I don't always know how to help. I don't know how many of the grandparents are able to read and write.' (IEd07:240815)

'They [parents] don't and are even shy to ask because they don't understand, many of them don't understand. The activities that we send home, the children explain to them, they don't know what is going on because they don't have that much of a schooling career.' (IEd08: 240815)

'Like I got a mother of 24 and the child is 10. So how do you, so I think to involve more parents is maybe get someone to empower or have talks at school this restorative, you know, even if it is the prison wardens, coming out and motivating our woman of the community and men' (IEd09:310815)

Educators therefore perceived that the immediate socio economic context of the community influenced the level of parental involvement and presented a significant challenge. This is depicted in the following diagram;



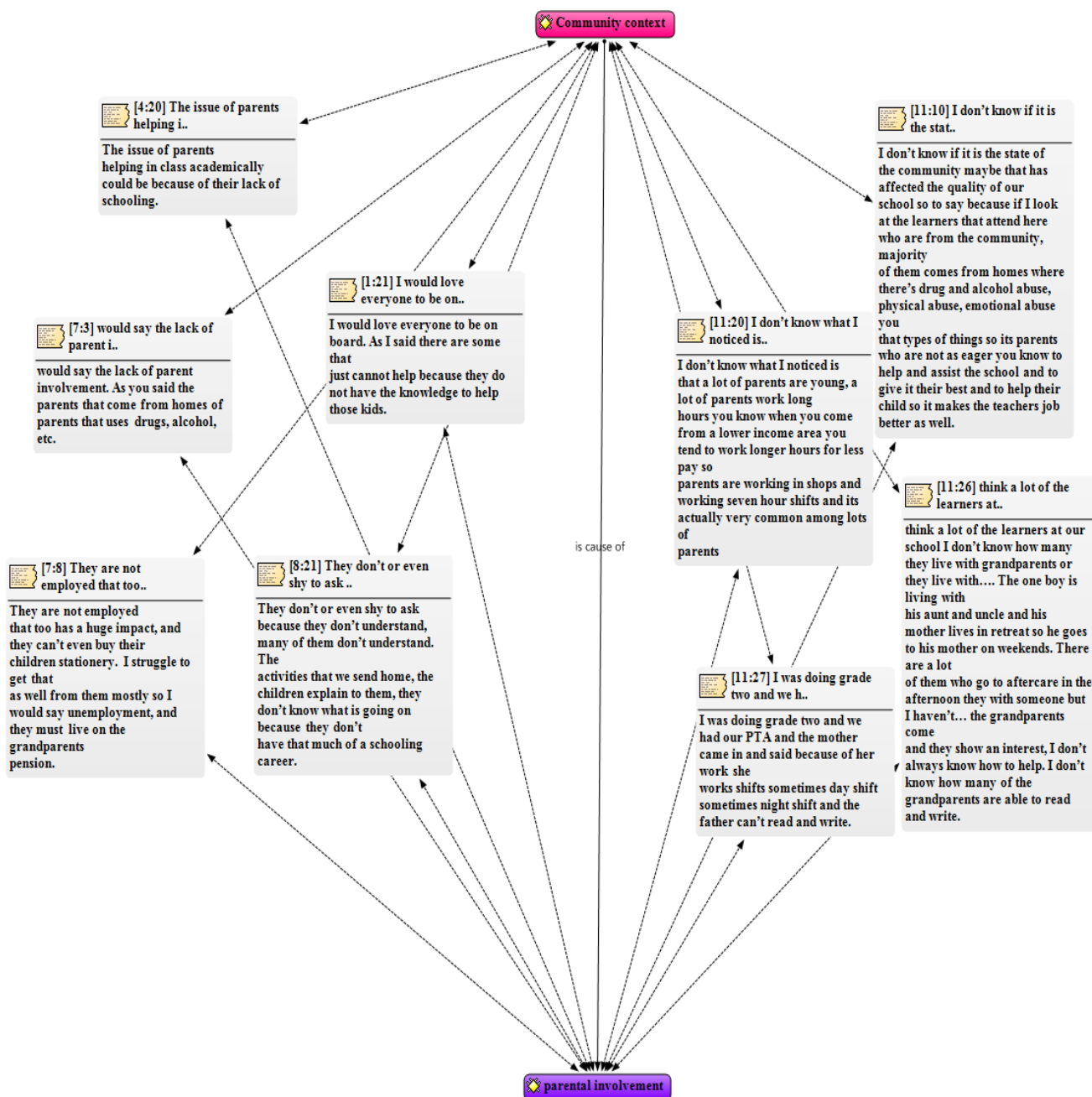


Figure 8: The community context determines the level of parental involvement in the learning environment

The interviews with selected parents corroborated educators' perceptions as the parents indicated that the curriculum proved difficult to understand and they felt inadequate acknowledging that they were unable to assist their children. One of the parents also asserted that she felt embarrassed to be more involved in the school as she was unable to meet her commitment to pay the school fees. This perspective was reflected in the following quotations.

‘There is a reason, I wasn’t financially stable and I didn’t feel that I was comfortable because I failed in paying school fees regularly because of my financial circumstances and I feel as a parent that I am not worth it to contribute in that form.’ (IP01:090915)

‘My child comes home with homework and I feel embarrassed if I cannot assist her the way that I need to.’ (IP02:111115)

#### 4.2.6 Affiliation

The affiliation scale reflected that there was a need for relationships, communication and support required between educators as this would facilitate a good learning environment. The mean for this scale of the actual PLEQ was 3.34 and the preferred PLEQ was at 4.38 which was also the highest mean reflected in the data set. The need for improved communication was further explored in the interviews with the educators and the principal. It was found that these participants perceived that communication required improvement and that educators would need to be more supportive of each other. While affiliation seems to be strong in the foundation phase, several of the educators indicated that this could be improved through team-building activities which would contribute to improved collaboration in the other phases. The following quotations from the interviews substantiate this.

‘I want a relationship between all of us and better it. I suggested that we have a weekend and getaway, I will plan and set up a programme and what we going to do.’ (IEd01:030815)

‘That is maybe one of the main roles of the school to see to a learning environment that it is good. Also motivating to come in and have a good relationship between the educators motivating them and by organizing programmes and yes work with the results, what they can do to help each other with the academics, if it’s not so good.’ (IEd01:030815)

‘Respect other people’s views; show them that your input is valuable. Trust that person’s judgment too not just because you in the management post HOD that you know everything. Be prepared to learn cause you never too old to learn always and that’s what I told my children.’ (IEd10:310815)

‘I just feel that way and I don’t feel that the value system is strong enough for the school because we can’t even stand together as staff’ (IEd11:070915)

‘What we have been doing at school now is, we confer with one another. The grade 1’s and grade R’s have meetings together with the HOD then we discuss what are they doing in their class in the year from the beginning to the end.’ (IEd12:070915)

The collaboration between educators was identified as an area of concern by the principal as he reported the following:

‘There is not much collaboration amongst teachers it is not what it should be but I promise you in the Foundation phase there is a lot of collaboration amongst teachers.’ (IPp01:140915)

#### **4.2.7 Professional support**

The professional support scale means on the actual and preferred PLEQ delivered similar results to the affiliation scale with an actual mean of 3.2 and a preferred mean of 3.95. The capacity

development of educators and sharing of skills was explicit in the statements in the PLEQ. While it appeared that the actual learning environment displayed incidences of capacity development and sharing, this would need to be improved in a preferred learning environment. The educators perceived that there were opportunities for professional support as indicated in the following excerpts from the interviews;

‘As far as learning and teaching is concerned, we do attend our workshops and we go regularly and we know that is good.’ (IEd09:310815)

‘There is always a meeting that you need to go to and there is always a workshop you need to go to.’ (IEd07: 240815)

‘If we had those tips we could share it in the learning area, that we would go to each other’s classes and take our class with for a lesson because when I came past your class I heard you give that lesson that way and I liked it so can I bring my class and then you can give the lesson so I can see and we learn from each other.’ (IEd12:070915)

The educators also perceived that the principal was supportive and encouraged them to seek opportunities to enhance their capacity through exploring opportunities for further study. This is reflected in the following quotations from the educators;

‘The principal is the only functioning component at this school, its system, the only one. Especially with encouraging you to study and I will say that.’ (IEd03:100815)

‘The principal is very encouraging to grow you know, and to go out and learn. (IEd09:310815)

#### 4.2.8 Staff freedom

The staff freedom scale had a mean of 3.31 on the actual PLEQ while the preferred learning environment mean of 4.19 portrayed the third highest mean of all the scales in the PLEQ. The data suggested that educators preferred more staff freedom which would essentially allow them more flexibility within the classroom in connection with the learning material taught and the teaching approaches implemented as per the items in the PLEQ (see PLEQ questionnaire scales on p.66 and p.86). In a preferred environment educators would prefer more staff freedom, as reflected in the higher mean, than what they were experiencing in their actual environment. This was explored in the interviews and the following quotations support this;

‘At the moment I am not really 100% satisfied at the school for many reasons. I cannot, I don’t feel comfortable to do what they want at this school and to go the extra mile, because you are cut off to a certain extent and you are stopped.’ (IEd01:030815)

‘I want to do something but I am not allowed to because they have the last say. But you can’t do anything you must wait on them otherwise they have a big issue with it if you do.’ (IEd05:170815)

‘It’s like you are limited to the things, you are eager and you want to work for the school but you aren’t given the opportunity to do it.’ (IEd07:240815)

#### 4.2.9 Participatory decision-making

The participatory decision-making scale did not reflect much difference in the actual and preferred means. The actual PLEQ mean was 3.1 while the preferred PLEQ mean was 3.14. This reflected a neutral view from the educators regarding participatory decision-making at the school. This scale was interrogated in the interviews with the educators and the perception held by an educator was that decision makers and essentially policy developers do not understand the reality of the

classroom environment as they have not been teaching within the contexts as experienced by the educators. The following quotation reflected the perception of one educator.

‘the people who make the decisions and who have the final say and who has the power to make change... it seems to me like they have been out of the classroom to long and it seems that they forget what it is like to be in that environment trying to achieve your goal...’ (IEd10:310815)

The educators perceived that management structures extending from the school management to the government restricted their capacity to engage in participatory decision which impacted their staff freedom and innovation within the classroom.

‘But we needed to get somebody that is equipped enough to fetch that child and place him somewhere somehow. We don’t have those structures in place, even in my class I have children that I can see they can’t be in mainstream. They are skilled children, it’s not that they can’t learn but they are children that must go work with their hands and yet why is the system failing them saying they can only be 14 to reach a school like that.’ (IEd10:310815)

‘It’s like the government that has never been in the class but they’re making the rules and then when things don’t work out they blame the teacher in the class. But they don’t really know what’s happening here.’ (IEd13:140915)

#### **4.2.10 Innovation**

Innovation referred to the ability of educators to implement new materials and their capacity to implement new ideas and teaching methods. The mean scores for this scale were an actual PLEQ mean of 3.1 and a preferred PLEQ mean of 3.79. Innovation was explored within the interviews with the educators and it was found that educators recognised the challenge of their context yet

attempted to work around these challenges in a manner which would benefit the learners. The following quotation substantiates this:

‘It is very difficult to cope, especially with the huge (classroom) sizes and as I say language became a problem now. But there what helps, what helps me is the strategies when I teach children I concentrate on the multiple intelligent way of teaching and I use the active response method of teaching where the children engage in the action of teaching.’ (IEd03:110815)

#### 4.2.11 Transformational leadership

The transformational leadership scale reflected a mean score of 3.03 on the actual PLEQ and a preferred mean score of 4.28. The preferred learning environment recorded the second highest mean score in the PLEQ data set. This implied that there was a need for the leadership to engage in more participatory decision-making and engage educators and parents in a more meaningful manner (refer to items on the PLEQ under the transformational leadership scale, p.66). This scale was interrogated in the interviews with the educators and parents. Educators perceived that they were being strictly managed and that they were not provided opportunities to participate more meaningfully within their learning environment. This was displayed in the following quote from selected interviews with the educators.

‘It’s like you are limited to the things, you are eager and you want to work for the school but you aren’t given the opportunity to do it.’(IEd07:240815)

‘I feel that we must, we are policed too often, you can’t come two minutes late your name goes into a black book, three times you get called in, do you know what I mean, two minutes late.’ (IEd11:070915)



The principal reflected on his leadership style as one where educators were encouraged to participate through the creation of a learning environment which will facilitate optimal learning. He also perceived that educators need to exhibit discipline in order for the learners to reflect discipline. He stated the following:

‘I focus on things that we can change and that should be in place if you want to create an environment that is conducive to learning, then those basics must be in place’  
(*IPp01:140915*)

‘I have to remind the teachers in my biggest class all the time. If you lack the discipline then the child would.’ (*IPp01:140915*)

### **4.3 How could stakeholders work towards facilitating an effective school within their specific context?**

The research question aimed to explore the significant trends identified in the previous research question. The data collected and analysed presented the perceptions of the key stakeholders and identified how these role players could work together towards facilitating school effectiveness within their context. A combination of the scales of the PLEQ guided the reporting of the findings pertaining to this research question as it attempted to address this specific question.

#### **4.3.1 CAPS familiarity and Work Pressure**

The educators, parents and principal recognised that the new curriculum posed several challenges and that it was a key contributor to the work pressure that educators experience as highlighted in the previous section. Parents identified the curriculum as a challenge. These stakeholders identified numerous ways in which this challenge could be addressed in order to ease the pressure namely through collaboration and acknowledging the level of your contribution, the facilitation of workshops, motivational speakers to boost the morale of educators struggling within their contexts

and to engage optimal communication. The following quotations provide evidence on how the stakeholders could potentially work towards facilitating an effective school disregarding the influence of their community context.

‘Share amongst each other, give us the information. They can’t control everything, shift it around a bit.’ (*IEd05:170815*)

‘Attending meetings and giving feedback on meetings and things like that. Also with protocol, you know keeping us informed with any changes that has happened.’ (*IEd07:240815*)

Parents also indicated that there was a need for support and capacity building in the CAPS curriculum and that this would assist them in assisting their children.

‘I feel having a little workshop to assist parents then we can assist teachers better, draw the parents closer and they can get to know each other and each other’s’ circumstances will stabilise the child. If this is put in place it will assist in understanding and coping with the curriculum.’ (*IP02:111115*)

‘Last year I requested the teacher to explain the work to me and then I can explain it to my child. At the last parent meeting, a lot of parents complained that the work is very difficult’ (*IP03:181115*)

An educator also emphasised that he was weary from being in the educational environment for too long and would require motivational talks which could revitalise and rekindle his passion for education. This was evident in the following quotation;

‘Just to have more motivational talks, just to motivate you because at the moment my morale is low, I need to build it up a bit, but I think for me maybe I am too long at the school and I have actually given my best in the years passed so I have been through the system ...’ (IEd02:030815)

#### 4.3.2 Resource Adequacy

The challenge of resources within the school’s context was highlighted by educators, parents and the principal. The manner in which these stakeholders responded to this challenge required educators to improvise in the way they deliver lessons and use their own resources and practical and available items in households which would enable them to teach specific concepts to their learners. These perceptions were identified in the following quotations with stakeholders.

‘I spend so much money on the internet, on writing sheets and this and that, I take images from the internet and show them in the classroom, but it would be even better if the internet is working at school because then you can bring the world to the children, you know what I mean’ (IEd09:310815)

‘So we now try and improvise by doing our own, we do not always get all the resources from the department’ (IEd12:070915)

‘We need to improvise and use yogurt tubs and a clothes hanger and stuff like that. There are still things we are short of, like especially now in the maths where we do data or measurement things that we need to do those things.’ (IEd13:140915)

Educators also implemented Saturday morning workshops for parents where the teachers would go through aspects of the curriculum with the parents. Opportunities to build capacity were therefore identified through sharing resources.

‘The workshops where we have called in all the parents in the foundation phase teaching them grade 1 work.’ (IEd10:310815)

A parent felt that workshops were needed and that the workshops that were presented were appreciated by the parents as stated in the following quotation.

‘Workshops work well with parents and teachers as now parents know what is expected.’ (IP03:181115)

A parent also identified that they had to use available community resources in order to assist her child with additional classes. The following extract shows this;

‘So I sent her to SHAWCO but the renovations that have been going on have resulted in there not being classes offered to our children.’ (IP04:151017)

#### 4.3.3 Parental involvement

The educators perceived that parent involvement was poor and felt that there should be specific programmes aimed at capacitating parents in order to provide them with relevant information and skills that would increase their involvement and participation in the school and their children. Increasing opportunities for parents and children to participate in fund raising events at the school was also perceived to increase the involvement of parents in the educational development of the learners. The following excerpts highlighted this;

‘Like I got a mother of 24 and the child is 10. So I think to involve more parents is maybe get someone to empower or have talks at school that is restorative, you know, even if it is the prison wardens, coming out and motivating our women of the community and men’ (IEd09:310815)

‘More fund raisers at the school where the children and the parents, they can get involved like a family or youth day or anything so that the parent and the child can get involved.’ (IEd13:140915)

‘In August we had a workshop for the parents, the parents can assist at home and it was very nice, it was an opportunity for the parents and some grades didn’t have a good turn out and that I think was a very good opportunity...’ (IEd13:140915)

Educators felt that the parents would gain a better understanding of the role of the teacher if they would volunteer to spend a day at the school to experience the educator’s reality. The following quote highlighted this;

‘I think parents sometimes need to come in and experience what teachers are experiencing on a daily basis.’ (IEd10:310815)

The principal provided another insight into his vision for parental involvement and how the introduction of parent committees would be able to facilitate increased parental involvement within a school that was growing in numbers.

‘So yes, the relationships are good, fairly good, there is the odd but we are talking about a school with 650 learners. We started out with 400 and odd learners. Next year we will be 740, I had 13 teachers this year, next year I will have 20, you know growth is not always a good thing but it is something that is happening so getting parents together and getting teachers, I think that will only start about getting when we get the parent involvement committees’ (IPp01:140915)

The parents envisaged an improved school environment once there was increased collaboration between educators, parents and principal as indicated in the following quotation;

‘To improve the school learning environment would be for the connection between parents, teachers and principal to be improved.’ (IP02:111115)

Parents perceived that the school learning environment would be improved through partnerships and effective communication.

‘To have an effective strategy in place, I would say yes you have to have a good educator, he or she needs must be able to identify immediately; I have got a problem learner in my class which I need take a little bit longer, maybe he or she doesn’t want to put up their hand to say teacher I do not understand to explain, so the teacher please explain again. So I would when that kind of combination is present between a learner and an educator then it should be a good learning environment.’  
(IP02:111115)

‘There is lots of improvement at the school, like extra classes on a Tuesday which my daughter attends and the cleaning of the grounds and so forth. Parents and teachers need to work together more.’ (IP03:181115)

The educators perceived that parents who are involved in school management structures should receive capacity building and that the role of school governing body needed to be clarified before parents commit to serve on governance structures. The following quotations substantiated this perception.

‘I think to choose wisely, to choose people whom are knowledgeable, literate and that know what is going on, to step in and then from there , because they... the choosing of the members, the choices is not good. It is parents that are just there as a member

but is not actually doing what they supposed to do. So maybe the roles should first be explained and then selection can take place.’ (IEd01:030815)

‘I think they need to be trained more about Governance and what it is about.’  
(IEd03:110815)

‘It depends on the team itself, for me if you have to be part of a team, then I need to know what you did. The function on the team is to support but it seems as if you are actually uh, say you are a HOD or whatever and you are not there where help is needed, if you are serving on a committee then you must actually know why you are there and what is the function of that committee.’ (IEd06:170815)

This was confirmed by the interviews with the parents as they identified that they were not clear of the role of the school governing body and that they would require more information regarding the role and function of this structure. The following quote substantiates this;

‘I am not sure of the role of the governing body role, but this is now here say, some people say they have a big responsibility involved in making choices.’  
(IP02:111115)

#### **4.3.4 Affiliation and Professional support**

Affiliation and developing a brand for the school through mentorship and collaboration was a priority for the principal and he perceived that this would only be possible if educators identify with a particular value system and educational identity. Developing a mission statement that would be collectively owned was identified as a possible way in which to facilitate collaboration.

‘So, teacher has to come to the party, but that is where the mentorship comes in. I am saying HOD when visiting the teacher are you looking at these things...’  
(*IPp01:140915*)

‘I don’t know anybody who has bought into the existing vision and essentially when an institution has to move forward, before you can even think in terms goal setting, you must have a common vision, where is it that we want to go’ (*IPp01:140915*)

Educators pointed out that the school’s vision was not clear to them and that it was stated in very general terms. They wanted the vision to be more dynamic and relevant to their situation so that could identify with what needed to be done at school. For example one teacher pointed out;

‘I think our vision is mainly all of those things and the fact that we try to better our school for our learners with regards to getting the things like technology, library, getting people in for them to read for them, improving reading, improving maths, improving life orientation you know.’ (*IEd04:110815*)

There was also the perception that communication was not always filtering to the necessary stakeholders and that this contributed to mistrust. The intricate nature of communication leading to collaboration through the formation of relationships is evident in the following network.



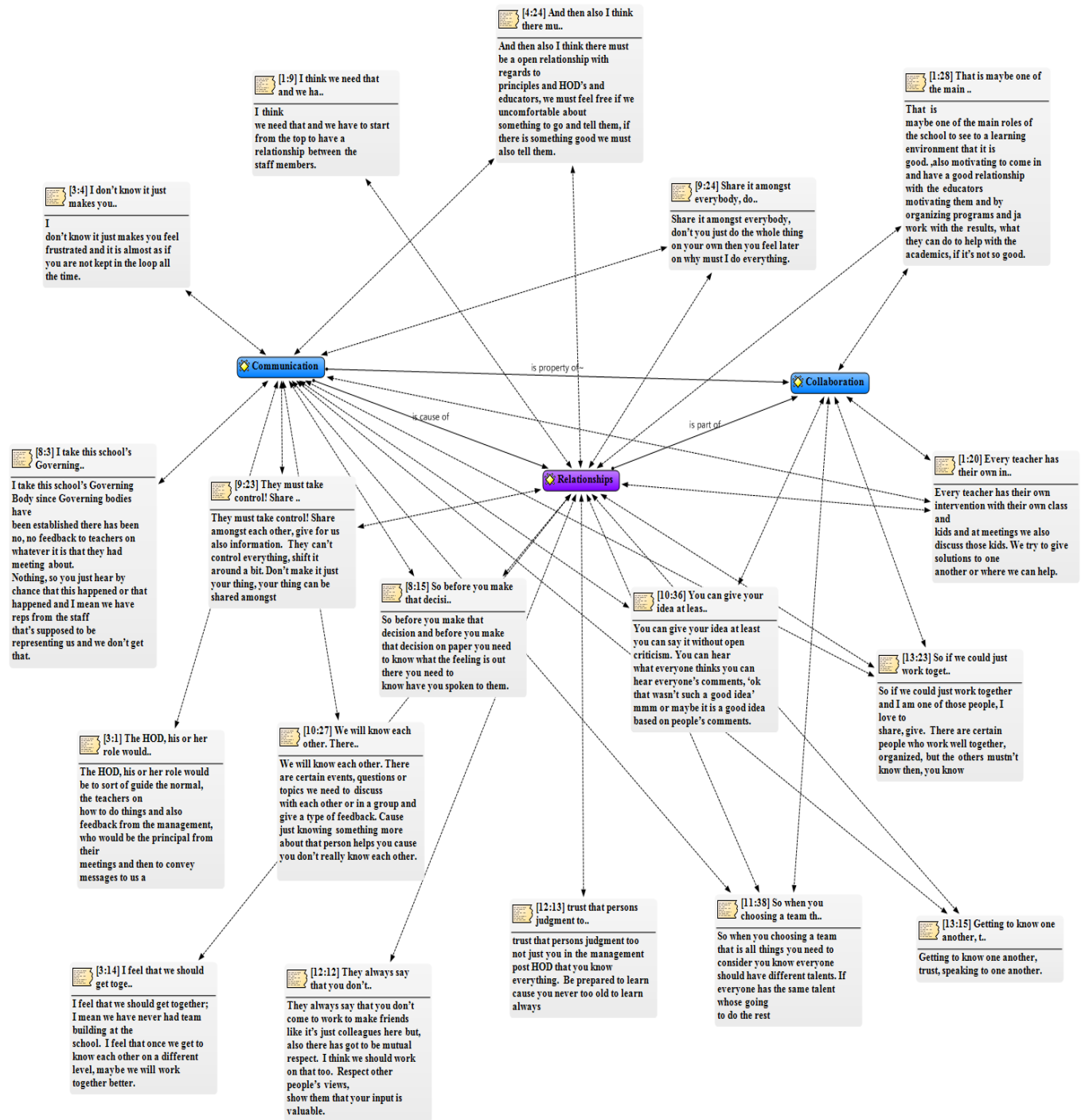


Figure 9: The connection between communication, collaboration and relationships were perceived as important within the learning environment

Many of the participants highlighted a need for team building exercises that could address the issues around affiliation and professional support in order to encourage collaboration, support and communication at the school. This was evident in the following extracts;

‘I want a relationship between all of us and better it. I suggested that we have a weekend and a getaway, I will plan and set up a programme and what we going to do.’  
(*IEd01:030815*)

‘Firstly to get away from the school situation, maybe somebody get a corporate company that do a team building with the teachers so we get to know the people, we hardly know each other.’ Okay there are people who are friends; they will go often to each other’s houses. But we got to get to know, not the personal stuff about the staff but, also about their capabilities.’ (*IEd02:030815*)

‘I feel that we should get together; I mean we have never had team building at the school. I feel that once we get to know each other on a different level, maybe we will work together better.’ (*IEd03:110815*)

#### **4.3.5 Staff Freedom, Participatory decision-making and Innovation**

The ability to engage in staff freedom through participatory decision-making was perceived to create opportunities for innovation. This was indicated in an instance where an educator engaged in an example of flexible teaching methods to focus on current news through theatre and drama. This was highlighted in the following excerpt;

‘I love drama so every year I take a group and try to take whatever is prominent in the news and last year we had a little play about it...’ (*IEd04:100815*)

Educators also recognised that they needed to invest extra time in the learners in after school activities as well as with parents as reflected in the following extract;

‘I am busy with, meetings and coming together and our relationship between all of us and also motivating them and also use new teaching methods to work with, teaching methodologies go together to workshops, plan together...’(IEd01:030815)

‘I sit sometimes a half an hour after school, during intervals and in the class where I am where I will work with them individually. We also have Mrs. X the LO teacher who works with the foundation phase especially and the parents.’ (IEd03:110815)

‘I also do extra in my class; I keep learners after school, which is also one of my strategies that I use. There is weak ones, middle ones and strong ones so they all stay after school. I let them stay till the big ones finish and then we do some extra work.’ (IEd13:140915)

One of the educators perceived her role to be important to learners’ educational progress and development and indicated that the influence of the educator could facilitate the learner to succeed despite the constraints and challenges within their community. This was indicated in the following quotation;

‘I always maintain to my family it is not about where a school is situated it was what that teacher could what I could leave here with those learners what they can take back out into their communities into their homes or wherever in their lives.’ (IEd04:100815)

#### 4.3.6 Transformational leadership

The principal was newly appointed at the commencement of this research process and highlighted that he engaged in a thoughtful activity where he identified the strengths of each staff member and indicated how he spent a significant amount of time engaging in this process. This was evident in the following extract;

‘For the first few weeks I just sat down and wrote notes and notes randomly. Ms X’s positives, who is this person? What makes this person tick? Is it the backpack she uses, is she chatty. Does she like taking children; responsibility? What? Going in there, Writing? Typing up whole sets of notes, trying to find out then what should my attitude be?’ (IPp01:140915)

He also perceived that he needed to work together with his staff in order to progress as indicated in the following excerpt;

‘As long as we can get together on some commonalities that this is what we need to achieve and so from now on what’s on there we work on.’ (IPp01:140915)

The educators identified various ways in which the leadership structures operated and how it differed from a structured and rigid approach to one where educators felt that they were able to contribute in meaningful ways to positive change in the school and essentially an effective school. There was also the perception that not all educators prefer to lead but will choose to respond effectively to leadership. This was evident in the following;

‘I am not the in charge person so if the other one takes charge then I will follow. If they lead I will follow. So if the in charge person needs someone I am there I will do this, do that. But I am not the leader type of person I won’t take charge of a situation; I am that type of a person.’ (IEd05:170815)

‘I think it’s correct you can police but it’s the way you police and if you cannot light the fire under the person but within then there will be a change’ (IEd09:310815)

‘The principal is very approachable and we can go to him and he will assist you where he can, as for the HOD, they are very supportive and I can go to her, she will be there and make things clear to assist you.’ (IEd13:140915)

One of the parents identified that it was imperative that the principal was a visionary and that he directed his staff in accordance with this vision. This was indicated in the following extract;

‘Your leader must have a vision and mission and your leader must take that vision and mission and drag his educators with him and tell them, this is what I foresee at X Primary, this is what I see and they need to grasp that vision as well’ (IP01:090915)

#### **4.4 What kind of interventions will facilitate partnership development between the key role players / stakeholders at primary school level?**

In response to the data from the PLEQ and the semi-structured interviews, I embarked on a process of reflection from the vantage point of my experience and circle of influence. This facilitated the implementation of four interventions for educators, parents and the school. The following workshops were coordinated in response to the findings from the previous research questions.

##### **4.4.1 Intervention 1: Workshop on developing a collectively owned mission statement**

The workshop was developed as a response to the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the PLEQ instrument. The data collected at this intervention was from the different activities that formed part of the programme. Furthermore, the participants were requested to work in groups

and report back to the plenary. These presentations were written on newsprint and typed up. Photographs, video recording of the final activity and an evaluation request formed part of the data which was analysed in Atlas ti.

The workshop was arranged during the vacation period of the educators and was facilitated according to the programme in Chapter 3. The key results from the programme activities will be presented below. Thirteen educators and the principal were in attendance. Apologies were received from three educators. The researcher proceeded to welcome the group to a venue at the University which was available as the vacation period of the university and the school coincided. The venue selection was intentional in order to provide a neutral setting in which to encourage optimal collaboration. Observations and recording were the main data collection tools in this intervention.

#### 4.4.1.1 Activity 1: Smiley face exercise

The aim of the first activity was as an ice-breaker exercise with the instruction given to each participant to select a smiley face card which best described their feelings at that moment in time. My observations was that the educators were animated which was clear from their descriptions and that the activity appeared to decrease the apprehensiveness at the beginning of the session.

#### 4.4.1.2 Presentation: Why are we here?

Displaying the following quotation; “If you fail to plan – you plan to fail!” a presentation was delivered to the participants focusing on mission and vision statements. The following points were key points from the presentation;

- Once they (*mission and vision statements*) are put out there, people should be able to see you living it. Missions must be known to people because they should be able to see it.
- Making a change in the lives of a family through impacting a child (video clip).

I observed that the educators were interested in the presentation and engaged in questions to the facilitator. In the presentation the existing mission statement was intentionally included to

determine whether the educators recognised it however none of the participants aside from the principal recognised this intentional inclusion.

#### 4.4.1.3 Activity 2: Do you understand what this organisation values, believes in and hopes to be?

The participants were split into three groups and requested to engage critically on the following question: “What the organisation is currently doing and where it is going to take us?” The responses will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Each group presented their feedback to the plenary and the responses varied from the importance of partnerships, holistic development of the learner, the importance of providing a quality education with community support through active collaboration and partnerships and recognising the good in the previous curriculum and implementing it in our contexts.

#### 4.4.1.4 Activity 3: Develop a slogan based on your idea of your specific brand as a community school

Using the groups which were formed in the previous activity, the groups were given the task to develop a slogan that highlighted the brand they envisioned for an effective school and the following responses were received’

Group 1 slogan

- ‘Paying it forward’
- ‘Equipping the learners with the skills necessary to be productive members of society’

Group 2 slogan

- ‘Developing a school of quality education through active participation for the growth of a holistic learner.’
- Group 3 slogan
- ‘Live your brand’

#### 4.4.1.5 Activity 4: The collaborative mission

The fourth activity required the group of educators to identify key words which they reconstructed it into a mission and vision. This activity resulted in the following formulation of a mission and vision for the school.

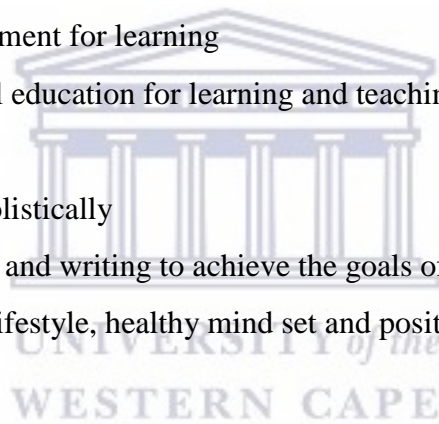
##### Agreed Vision

The X Primary School agrees to holistic development of skilled learners to the benefit of stakeholders through active participation and quality education.

##### Agreed Mission

Aspiring to provide education that:

- Empowers learners to be responsible and productive
- Provides a safe environment for learning
- Provides an exceptional education for learning and teaching
- Promotion of the 3 R's
- Develops the learner holistically
- To enhance the reading and writing to achieve the goals of success
- Encourage a balanced lifestyle, healthy mind set and positive and unwavering set of values





#### 4.4.1.6 Activity 4: A team building exercise called 'Crossing a Bed of Lava' was conducted with all the participants.

The penultimate activity of the day was a team building exercise. This was a time-based activity which was video recorded and required participants to follow their leader in a sequential manner without disrupting the order of progress. The objective was for the leader not to go ahead unless the person who follows is ready to fill the space that was vacated by the principal as indicated in the photograph taken of the activity. The lava was represented by the green board and the principal lead the group of teachers (please refer to the photograph below which provides a visual representation of the activity described). The group progressed carefully however when the end was in sight, the principal took a huge step in order to get to the 'safe' side, in so doing, the one who followed missed her step and stated 'Sir, you went to fast'. The collective took 3min 27s to complete the exercise.



Educators crossing the bed of lava (represented by the A4 green colour boards)

#### 4.4.1.7 Evaluation of the workshop session

As a final activity, the educators were required to provide an evaluation of the session. Each participant was given four coloured cards (one white card, one yellow, one blue card and one green card) requiring each participant to identify what stood out, what they disliked, what should there be more of and what was achieved / not achieved. This exercise was entirely anonymous as identifying participants was critical to this exercise.

The following aspects were identified by the participants

‘We worked in a team and everybody worked together, which was an Aha moment for me’ (*IntW1.W01*)

‘We all came to the training feeling miserable – but at the end we ended up laughing – feeling lighter’ (*IntW1.W02*)

‘Maximum participation, I was impressed!!’ (*IntW1.W03*)

‘What stood out the most was the development of the V+M statement. In addition how to achieve it’ (*IntW1.W04*)

‘The team effort involved in getting to the end result’ (*IntW1.W05*)

The following aspects were identified as the things which they disliked;

‘Nothing in particular with regard to the workshop; only the fact that I had to offer up one day from my holiday. That idea sucked!’ (*IntW1.Y02*)

‘Most of the time we had to sit. More fun activities would be best. More physical doing of movements’ (*IntW1.Y03*)

Participants requested the following to be increased in future workshops;

‘Exciting games e.g. team building things’ (*IntW1.B01*)

‘More sessions like these – I feel it is important for others in the team to understand what your aims / objectives are’ (*IntW1.B12*)

‘More activities would be best. Less talking, more doing. Yes, yes, yes.’ (*IntW1.B10*)

‘More productive team efforts with regard to all staff activities.’ (*IntW1.B09*)

Participants were requested to identify what they came with and what they achieved in the process. The following responses were recorded;

‘The vision and mission statement’ (*IntW1:G01*)

‘The idea that we will have a complete vision and mission which we got’ (*IntW1:G09*)

Participants were also requested to identify what they arrived with that they didn’t get and identified the following;

‘We achieved everything, there was nothing I did not get’ (*IntW01:G05*)

‘The idea that I would be bored and fall asleep, which I did not as it was really interesting and informative as well as fun’ (*IntW1:G07*)

## 4.4.2 Intervention 2: Mastering the art of reading and writing: Workshop for parents and volunteers

### 4.4.2.1 Overview of the workshop

The second intervention was aimed at providing parents with capacity building training that would assist them with the curriculum challenges they identified as it related to reading and writing. Parents and volunteers were taken through a structured training programme which was facilitated by the Reading and Writing Solutions non-profit organisation. This NPO has close ties with the Community Engagement Unit which ensured that the researcher was able to negotiate a capacity building training session specifically geared for the training needs of the parents and volunteers. The researcher attended the workshop as a participant observer and engaged in the activities alongside the group. The key objectives of the workshop were to tap into the creativity of any individual, utilising resources that are readily and easily available and to engage in effective listening skills with an emphasis on positive reinforcement. The emphasis of learning these skills utilising the CAPS curriculum as a foundation was stressed over the three days.

### 4.4.2.2 Programme Day 1

The programme of day one included a welcome and introduction and the facilitator requested participants to introduce themselves by describing themselves using an adjective starting with the first letter of the name and then state their names. I observed that there was a sense of enjoyment and fun evident from the laughter and buzz in the room. Identifying an adjective was observed as difficult for some participants as when they were required to identify themselves, nouns instead of adjectives were used. Day one proceeded with several activities which included presentations from the facilitators following group work which allowed the participants to engage in creating a poster as well as requiring the participants to write a story and present this to the group on the second day. The purpose of day one of the parent workshop was to allow participants to become comfortable in the group.

#### 4.4.2.3 Programme Day 2

The second day proceeded with a check-in process where the group were required to share their expectations of the day. The buzz with which the group left the previous afternoon continued into the morning session particularly as they would have the opportunity to share their written stories.

The programme for day two was structured according to the following agenda:

### **Changing lives and empowering people through reading and writing**

#### **Level 1 Training Workshop for Volunteer Tutors**

**25 February 2015**

#### DAY 2: AGENDA                    “THE POWER OF READING, ONE WORD AT A TIME”

08h30- 09h00(30 min)	Registration/ Tea, Coffee
09h00- 09h30(30 min)	Welcome/ Formalities/ Agenda Preview
09h30-10h00(30 min)	Our Stories: Homework Feedback
10h00-10h15(15 min)	Weekly Homework: Relevant to my Lesson
10h15-10h45(30 min)	Motivation/ Partnership: The work still to be done
10h45-10h55(10 min)	Sharing my RWS experience (volunteer)
10h55-11h00-(5min)	Teach me to Love
11h00-11h15(15min)	The importance of affirmation
11h15-11h30(15min)	TEA, COFFEE
11h30-11h45(15min)	Sharing my RWS experience (Volunteer)
11h45-11h55(10min)	How do I discipline/handle learner problems at the schools?
11h55-12h10(15min)	Sharing my RWS experience (Volunteer)
12h10-12h20(10min)	Light and Lively- Affirmation Exercise
12h20-13h10(50min)	Group Exercise- The Role Model that Inspires
13h10-13h30(20min)	Effective Listening Exercise/ the Alphabet
13h30-14h30(60 min)	LUNCH
14h30-15h00-(30min)	Colour Block Exercise: Making a difference one child at a time
15h00-15h20(20min)	Effective Listening Exercise
15h20-15h30(10min)	Reading builds Vocabulary- One word summary

The second day of the workshop further explored elements of the CAPS curriculum and to provide volunteers with skills and knowledge with regard to parental support and to promote learners' literacy. Current participants were exposed to a presentation from previously trained volunteers. These volunteers shared their experiences and stressed the importance of building meaningful relationships with learners. The facilitators expressed the significance of effective listening and affirmation of the learners within the school context. The second day involved several moments of teaching following by active work in smaller groups. The excitement and energy in the groups was evident in the laughter and the poster presentations. At the end of day two, the graduation scheduled for the third day was a particular focus as participants stated that they were going to dress up and needed to do their hair in preparation.

#### 4.4.2.4 Programme Day 3

The third day involved a brief morning session where the facilitator used marketing flyers from several commercial enterprises and showed the participants how these flyers could provide tutors with a free resource to teach learners. The participants were smartly dressed and prepared for the graduation however had to engage in an active exercise where they affirmed every participant in the training programme by writing a positive message on a colour board. On completion of the training, participants who had successfully completed the three day training became Reading and Writing Solutions Volunteers. These volunteers were placed in the primary school, where they engage with struggling learners on a one-to-one basis. The principal at the primary school thanked the volunteers for their service and stated: 'What you do makes a difference. You are infecting and affecting a lifetime for that child. That's how powerful what you are doing, is – so thank you'.

#### 4.4.2.5 Evaluation

Participants were also required to evaluate the session through providing a word that summarised their experience of the training session. Words that were mentioned were 'blessed', 'empowered',

‘equipped’, ‘excited’, ‘valued’ and there was one of the participants that used the opportunity to say more than one word and she stated the following;

‘I am extremely blessed to be part of this training programme as I have learnt so much which I can apply with my own children. I am amazed by the commitment of the University to engage in such training for the community and hope that I can be considered for any other opportunity to empower me. Thank you for the time and effort you have made in this community’ (*Int2:V01*)

Following the graduation, individual participants approached the researcher and thanked me for the opportunity and they also indicated that they would appreciate invitations to any additional training opportunities that I am involved with. The following picture was taken after the graduation ceremony.



Group Picture of the Volunteers, Organisers and Facilitators

### 4.4.3 Intervention 3: SynNovation – team building

The planning of the synnovation team building session was in response to the need identified by the educators to have sessions where they would facilitate the development of team building skills. The aim of this session was therefore to provide the educators with a brief organisational development capacity building opportunity and the introduction of skills which could be used in their educational setting. There were 16 participants out of a complement of 20 educators. The following agenda guided the session and my observations, recording and reflections as participant observer will be presented.

#### AGENDA

1. Welcome and Briefing
2. Introductions (All - get people to connect)
3. Setting the Scene (All - surface who we are as individuals)
4. Mapping the Course (briefly teach the principles of SynNovation)
5. Short body-break
6. Fit for Purpose (practice quick tools for working together and having fun)
7. SynNovation in Real-Time (work session)
8. Stepping Out (All - so what? way forward)
9. Reflection (All - personal reflections and insights)
10. Evaluation and Close

#### 4.4.3.1 Welcome and briefing session

The venue for the workshop session was arranged in a specific way. As the educators entered the venue, no instruction was given and it was observed that the chairs were moved in a manner which represented a large semi-circle with the educators facing the front of the venue and not the intended smaller semi-circles.



The researcher welcomed the educators to the session and briefed them about the research process over the last four years. I acknowledged the participants and affirmed their role in the process. The briefing presentation provided the setting of the scene as well as the purpose for the session planned in response to the interviews previously conducted. An opportunity for questions was allowed however there were no questions from the group. The facilitator was introduced and was then allowed to engage with the group in accordance with the planned agenda.

#### 4.4.3.2 Introductions and setting the scene

The facilitator proceeded to introduce herself and requested the group to engage in a process of formal introductions. She also mentioned how the group responded to the original seating arrangement and stated that if this is where the group is then she will meet them at this point. The introductions were done according to the following instruction; *'Select a partner and please state your first name and tell your partner why you were given that particular name'*. The interaction levels of the educators increased in accordance with the nature of the exercise and I observed and heard laughter in the group. The participants were then provided the opportunity to share their experience. I observed that the participants were more relaxed after this activity and the facilitator went into a brief setting the scene activity which engaged participants with partners again and allowed each one to indicate their passion to the other. The energy levels of the educators visibly increased when they were involved in activities that required them to partner with a fellow educator as there was laughter, the volume of the exchanges rose while the facilitator went around the room to get a sense of her audience.

#### 4.4.3.3 Synnovation skills

The session included a teaching activity where the facilitator provided the educators with an overview of synnovation; the underlining theory and implementation of the tools as well as the practicality of utilising specific tools within the organisational context of the school. The educators appeared to engage in attentive listening, while a few left the venue and returned after an extended period of time.



The teaching session

Following the teaching session she invited the group to participate in an exercise called the most ridiculous idea. This activity involved requesting the group to select an everyday object, think of the craziest ways that you could use that object and identify the benefits for using the object in that specific way. The aim of this activity was to acknowledge the value of collaboration through this activity.

#### 4.4.3.4 Open-mindedness exercise

During this activity, the facilitator presented the open-mindedness exercise. The exercise allowed two people to engage in a conversation where one person indicated his/her wish which was met by an outrageous and often unreachable solution from your partner. Once the unreachable solution was provided both then engaged in innovative thinking where they constructively evaluated the solution and generated a modified version of the idea, which was more attainable. I participated in this exercise and exchanged an outrageous idea with the principal. The principal's wish involved accessing an abundance of resources. My extreme response was to request funding from Bill Gates. Following the open-mindedness process as outlined in the appendix 9, the discussion

generated a workable solution to the wish expressed by the principal and resulted in the consideration of approaching local community businesses.

#### 4.4.3.5 Closing session

As a concluding session to the synnovation session, the facilitator provided the group with a transparent zip-lock plastic bag filled with puzzle pieces and the instruction was for the group to work together to complete the puzzle. The group was given seven minutes to complete the task.

#### 4.4.4 Intervention 4: Science learning centre built for the primary school

The lack of resources was highlighted throughout the interviews with the teachers. The need for equipment that would assist educators to engage in visual science experiments that would assist learners was identified. As it was within the ambit of the researcher to highlight the challenge of resources to key people at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), specifically to the Director of the Science Learning Centre for Africa (SLCA), Professor Shaheed Hartley who responded by including the primary school as a recipient of a science learning centre in a proposal to key funders for 2017. The science educators at the school were also invited to embark on a learning process with the SLCA and attend a series of capacity workshops that assist them in teaching science at their school. The purpose of the training is to enhance the teaching of science and mathematics in schools and provide teachers with creative ways in which to facilitate a love for science and mathematics in learners. The need for an adequate space and laboratory where educators can demonstrate science experiments is critical to facilitating a culture of science (Hartley, 2017). The educators at the school responded by attending several workshops offered by the SLCA and this commitment contributed to the approval of the proposal and the science learning centre was constructed and officially launched on 19 October 2017.

## 4.5 What were the teachers' perceptions of the interventions implemented?

The preceding section provides an in depth presentation of the data from the interventions implemented in response to the PLEQ and the semi-structured interviews. Following the synnovation session there was an opportunity provided to the group to engage in a focus group session which evaluated the interventions implemented at the school. This session was transcribed and analysed using the Atlas Ti software package.

### 4.5.1 Intervention 1: The collectively developed mission statement

The group highlighted that the collective development of the mission statement was a useful exercise and that it could add value to the learning environment. Twenty-eight quotations were identified in the evaluation of this intervention, from which the following quotations were extracted.

‘Everyone should take ownership of their part in the mission statement’

*(FG1:P01:260917)*

‘The mission statement which was done collaboratively by all the staff at our school enabled the educators to create a suitable environment for teaching and learning.’

*(FG1:P02:260917)*

‘It helps to galvanise the staff (teachers) and learners in order to reach optimal outcomes’ *(FG1:P02:260917)*

‘Mission statement allows learners to understand what is expected of them.’

*(FG1:P03:260917)*

‘It gives me more insight on how to go about our vision, how to implement it to ensure that the expectations of our mission statement are met.’ (FG1:P06:260917)

‘The collective mission statement allowed a sense of direction for one common goal and purpose for teachers and learners, what is expected of both’  
(FG1:P10:260917)

#### **4.5.2 Intervention 2: Mastering the art of reading and writing**

The capacity building training programme for the parents and volunteers were perceived as useful to the school learning environment as it reduced the pressure on educators as volunteers would work with struggling learners on an individual basis. The educators perceived this as great assistance and reinforced the community contribution to the learner’s development. The following excerpts from the focus group support this.

‘Volunteers encourage and support learners and teachers.’ (FG1:P03:260917)

‘The role of volunteers also assisted teachers e.g. reading volunteer and as teachers we don’t get those one on one contact time with each child as we would like to.’  
(FG1:P09:260917)

‘Volunteers support the school environment and helps teachers as well as learners for better learning results’ (FG1:P16:260917)

#### **4.5.3 The SynNovation – team building exercise**

The evaluation of the session was conducted at the end of the session where participants were provided with an opportunity to reflect on the session. The responses were recorded as notes.

The educators and principal perceived that the SynNovation team building exercise was conducted at an appropriate time of the year (end of the third term) and would allow the educators to reflect on the tools that were provided in the session. The principal also indicated that the connection they shared with the facilitator would be beneficial to the school in future. The educators stated that they enjoyed the session as it allowed them the opportunity to liaise with their colleagues in a different manner. The educators also felt that the skills they had gained through the exercise would be useful to implement within their school environment.

#### 4.5.4 Intervention 3: The science learning centre

The educators perceived that the existence of the science learning centre would allow them to engage in different ways of teaching and learning and which would allow them to be more creative in demonstrating science to the learners. They perceived that this would be beneficial to the learners. This was evident in the following responses;

‘Science teachers will help learners enjoy science more’ (FG1:P01:260917)

‘Effective teaching and learning of science involves seeing, handling, manipulating real objects and materials.’ (FG1:P05:260917)

‘The science lab will allow different learning through different ways, physical and practical learning is what normally sticks with learners.’  
(FG1:P05:260917)

‘Access to the science lab allows learners to interact actively with real objects and materials.’ (FG1:P10:260917)

‘The science laboratory provides a different approach to learning and teaching.’  
(FG1:P03:260917)

‘The science lab allows learners to learn through being active, for those who need to work with physical materials in order to learn.’ (FG1:P06:260917)

‘The science lab can tap into our future scientists. It will not only develop their critical thinking but reasoning as well.’ (FG1:P08:260917)

The following photographs were taken at the launch of the science learning centre on 19 October 2017.



Plaque at the entrance of the lab



Science learning centre at the school

## 4.6 Conclusion

The data presented above provides the reader with an in depth view of how the data was interrogated during the different stages of the action research process. The next chapter will engage in an in depth interpretation and discussion of the results in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2.



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE



# Chapter 5

## Discussion of findings

### 5.1 Introduction

This action research project involved a process that is cyclical and where continuous assessment and reflection is required in order to effect change within the school and essentially contribute to school effectiveness. The nature of this project was to respond to needs identified by the participants in the study and work collaboratively towards facilitating school effectiveness. I was cognisant of the social experiences of the participants and that any interventions resulting from the process should be useful to all participants. This action research project should be seen as a process where the participants were actively engaged in the identification of the challenges based on their experience and that they shared commitment to effect change based on the lived experience within their specific context. The systems model identified by Scheerans (2013) was a useful tool in developing the themes as it highlighted that the context of the school and the distribution of the inputs and support that the school received, influenced the outputs. The cyclical interaction between context, inputs and outputs ultimately determines the manner in which the school can respond to the demands of its context. The following chapter therefore represents the discussion of the findings with regard to the four research questions and the identification and discussion of specific themes from the data as it relates to the literature in Chapter 2.

## 5.2 What were the key role players' perceptions of the actual learning environment vs the preferred classroom learning environment?

### 5.2.1 The school learning environment was influenced by the school context

In addressing this question a main theme which developed from findings was that the school learning environment was essentially influenced by the school's context. School context was found to be significant on different levels or sub-themes namely 1) the school context with regard to the pressure experienced by implementing a new curriculum; 2) school context with regard to the availability of resources to engage in effective teaching, 3) school context and parental involvement, and 4) school context with regard to management. These sub-themes will be discussed in greater detail.

#### 5.2.1.1 The key stakeholders experienced significant pressure due to the implementation of a new curriculum

Implementing a relatively new curriculum posed a significant challenge to all stakeholders and the associated pressure experienced by educators and parents were evident in the interviews. Educators repeatedly identified the increase of assessments and the related administrative responsibilities that they had to engage in. The perception was that the contact time of teaching was decreased due to the increase in assessments. The following quotation highlighted this;

‘Because I feel the teaching to the children should be more important, but now many times the admin work takes that away, that teaching time and then you always have to squeeze that in the teaching time pushing in here and there.’ (IEd12:070915)

‘Every single day a learner, learns something new a new sum. How can we do that? Every single day for 4 days and the 4<sup>th</sup> day you do like a test on it.’ (IEd04:110815)

Geldenhuis and Wevers (2013) asserted that the CAPS curriculum was inflexible and that it called for educators to teach specific content and complete specific curriculum requirements. Educators also identified that elements in the previous curriculum which were useful, were not being utilised in the CAPS curriculum. This was reflected in the following excerpt from an interview with educators;

‘We have done away with that where we drill and drill, repeating, repeating. There’s not even a chance for that because what happens is, there are so much content that you have to teach and you want to get it done because there is a certain limited time that you get to finish it.’ (*IEd04:100815*)

The educators clearly perceived the curriculum as a negative experience which according to Strydom et al., (2012) affects job satisfaction. Several researchers have highlighted that an elaborate strategy is required to address teacher morale due to work pressure and minimal support in lower socio-economic communities (Strydom et al., 2012; Peltzer, Shisana, Zuma, Van Wyk & Zungu-Dirway, 2009). The teacher morale at the school was a concern as there were several instances where teachers were despondent and I perceived a lack of passion for teaching, this was notably the educators who had more than 15 years teaching experience. This was reflected in the following quotations;

‘I am not happy with the system as it is now, because for me it is just coming to school. At that time I still enjoyed it, coming to school but now it is actually becoming a burden for me... It is a burden for me, because I am not actually happy with what I am doing now. That is why the main thing for me is just to come to school, do my work and go home.’ (*IEd02:030815*)

‘I’m not used to working in an environment like that. That is why, I just do what I must do, what I have to do and that’s all. I don’t feel like, like going the extra mile’  
(*IEd10:310815*)

The curriculum also required that significant relationships and collaboration occur between educators and parents; it also presupposes a level of educational competence of parents as parents are required to assist their children in achieving certain educational outcomes. Parents identified the curriculum as a challenge and felt inadequate when they were required to assist their children as indicated in the following quotation;

The new curriculum is very difficult for old people to understand. I cannot even begin to offer my help to my grandchild. The maths, I don’t understand the way they do the sums these days. It makes me feel very stupid (*IP04:151017*)

This inadequacy expressed by parents was clarified by McDermott and Rothenberg (2000:1) where they state that education marginalises families from school life due to poverty, racism, language and cultural difference. The socio-economic variability of communities and the educational level of parents within a South African context needed to be considered when implementing the new curriculum. This was evident in the responses from the key stakeholders during the interviews. The need for review of the South African Schools Act and essentially a reinvestigation of education is required was emphasised by Prew (2009b) as he stated that the Schools Act did not focus on the key stakeholders within the school (educators and principal). I believe that parents and learners also need to be recognised as key stakeholders particularly considering the importance of parental involvement in the current national educational policy in public schools in South Africa.

### 5.2.1.2 The lack of resources within the school learning environment does not facilitate effective teaching

The availability of resources in this particular school's historically disadvantaged context was lacking. The experiences perceived by the educators highlighted that they were working in an environment which required them to use a range of recyclable materials in order to effectively teach specific concepts as required by the curriculum. Educators used household items and often had a personal expense attached to some of the items which they required in order to teach due to the lack of resources at the school. This was clear in the following quotation;

'The children do not have resources like colouring in pencils and I cannot buy anymore as I bought at the beginning of the year and that is making it very difficult as the one child has his stuff and the other doesn't and this makes it difficult in the class' (*IEd13:140915*)

Science educators in the intermediate phase had a particular difficulty in participating in active learning experiences for their learners and voiced their frustration accordingly in the interviews. Educators also highlighted the challenges in reading, literacy and comprehension due to language barriers, as the learners in their classes were not only from the surrounding community but also from the townships, while some learners are from neighbouring African countries. This is clear in the following extract;

'You got Xhosa's, Zulu, Tshona, English, Afrikaans, French; you get all these languages that is also adding to it. It's getting too much. You've got to teach English and Afrikaans. Afrikaans you must, you teach Afrikaans in English. You've got to continuously translate Afrikaans into English for that Tshona child or that French speaking child for that child that just comes now from the Eastern Cape - don't understand Afrikaans at all.' (*IEd10:310815*)

Education is a resource and providing a substandard education due to a lack of resources will not improve the socio-economic status for the majority of South Africans. According to Spaul (2013) the economic consequences of a sub-standard quality of education due to a lack of resources is severe. I reflected that the educators have the needs of the children and their best interest at heart as they tend to go the extra mile in order to ensure that the learners achieved and mastered a learning area. This was reflected when an educator indicated that the reality of the learners' context are communicated to her family, friends and social media and that she accepted donations of stationery and treats which enhanced her specific learning environment.

'I get sponsored by people and then they go and get something out of there... I ask people, Facebook, family and whoever yah. I buy cheap pencils and then they can buy the pencils from me because they never have pencils. So I do that just to make my life easier' (*IEd06:170815*)

The school is situated within a historically disadvantaged community and displays the associated socio-economic reality where poverty, unemployment and societal challenges such as gangsterism and substance misuse were the norm as reflected in the following quotation.

'I don't know if it is the state of the community maybe that has affected the quality of our school so to say because if I look at the learners that attend here who are from the community, majority of them comes from homes where there's drug and alcohol abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse you that types of things so its parents who are not as eager you know to help and assist the school and to give it their best and to help their child so it makes the teachers job better as well.' (*IEd07:240815*)

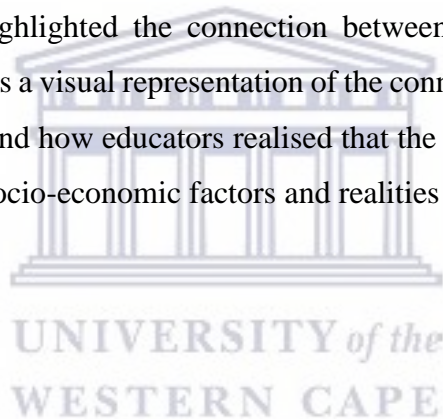
The principal, educators and parents were trying to do the best within these parameters to forge collaborative enterprises often using personal resources that they have at their disposal. This was in line with the argument presented by Crosnoe (2004) that identified the school and families as

the primary source of social capital in the early life of learners. The intricate systemic relationship between families, schools and the community is highlighted here and if the quality of education and the social capital that learners are exposed to at those levels within society is not optimal, then education cannot possibly facilitate development for this country.

#### 5.2.1.3 Parental involvement was not ideal within the school context

The South African Schools Act (1996) calls for increased parental involvement. The educators however perceived parental involvement at the school as not ideal neither conducive to facilitating an effective school. Educators assigned this lack of involvement due to apathy however others provided reasons such as educational level of parents, literacy levels of grandparents who are primary care givers to learners and irregular working hours of parents.

The following network highlighted the connection between community context and parental involvement which provides a visual representation of the connection between community context and parental involvement and how educators realised that the lack of optimal parent involvement is attributed to a range of socio-economic factors and realities of the parents.



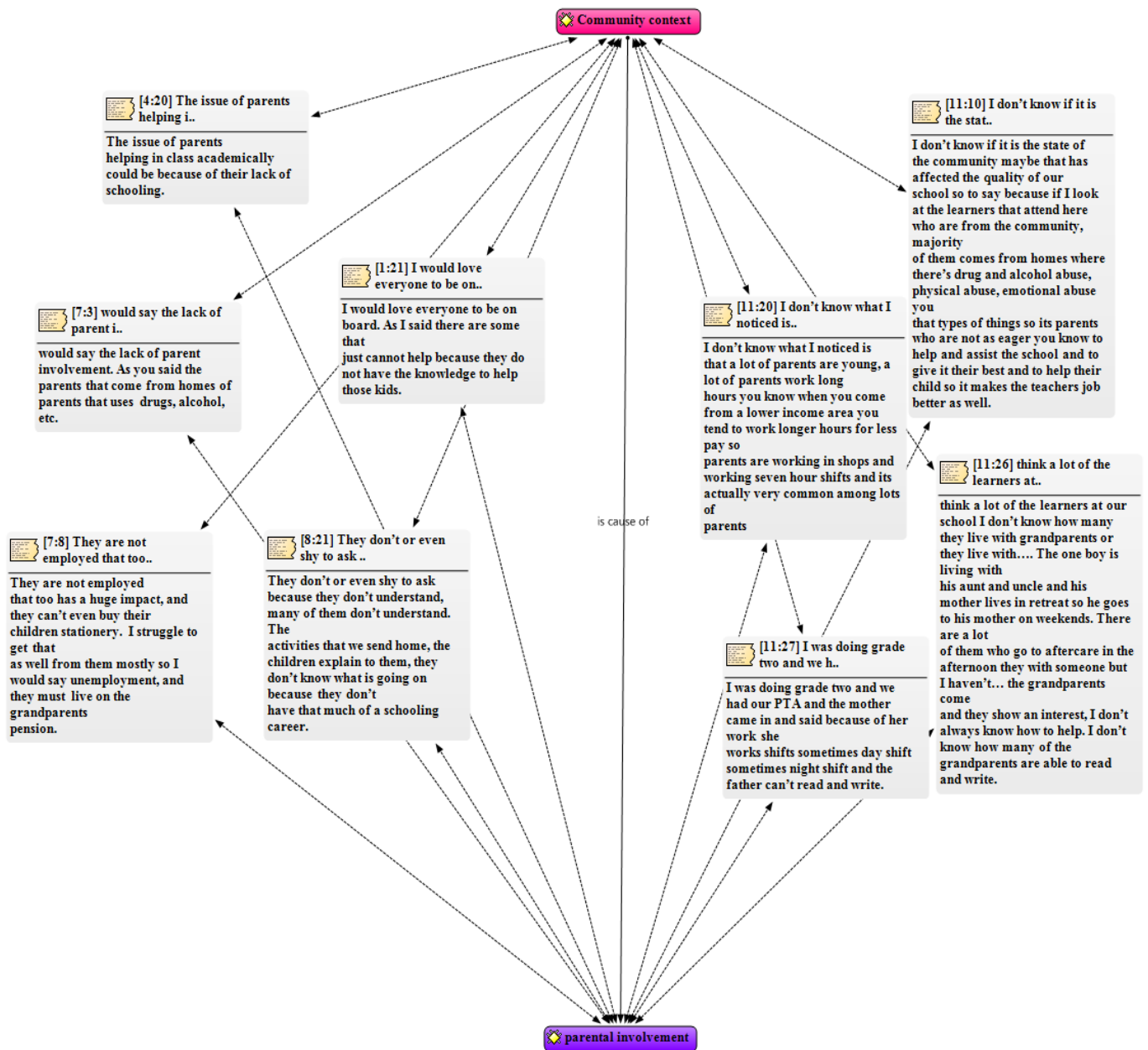


Figure 10: Parental involvement in relation to the community context



The CAPS policy statement assumes that a community is well-equipped, that schools are well-resourced and that parents have a particular educational level, yet the Statistics South Africa (2010) results indicate figures that only 40.3 percent of people older than 20 years of age have completed primary education and 30.8 percent have completed secondary education. Within this specific school's context, the socio-economic realities of parents and care givers of learners are critical to understanding the lack of parental involvement. Parents also confirmed that they did not engage with the school as per the requirements of the curriculum. A view provided by one parent in particular was her inability to adhere to the financial obligation towards the school how she felt that not paying school fees did not afford her the right involved. This was evident in the following quotation;

‘There is a reason, I wasn’t financially stable and I didn’t feel that I was comfortable because I failed in paying school fees regularly because of my financial circumstances and I feel as a parent that I am not worth it to contribute in that form.’ (IP02: 111115)

Mafora (2013) stated that parents in disadvantaged contexts feel marginalised and do not get involved in the school because they feel marginalised and disempowered. An educator suggested that the lack of parent involvement was that parents within the school's immediate context were just trying to survive their circumstances.

‘Maybe the parents are too busy trying to survive, you know.’ (IEd06:170815)

5.2.1.4 The school learning environment is influenced by management, leadership and team building.

The need for relationships between key stakeholders based on communication and professional support was perceived to be critical to ensuring an optimal school learning environment which would contribute to school effectiveness. Educators perceived that communication and collaboration would be improved if opportunities to engage in team building exercises were

improved. Educators also felt that they should be developed and share opportunities to engage in leadership roles within the school. Furthermore, they were not instrumental in decision-making processes of which they perceived to be on the receiving end as they were expected to implement policy changes within contexts which they felt they understood the best. The indifferent acknowledgement of the role of teachers within our society could therefore be an indication of a country in dire straits.

‘There are certain events, questions or topics we need to discuss with each other or in a group and give a type of feedback. Because just knowing something more about that person helps you because you don’t really know each other.’ (*IEd06:170815*)

‘I feel that we should get together; I mean we have never had team building at the school. I feel that once we get to know each other on a different level, maybe we will work together better.’ (*IEd11:070915*)

The organisational context of the school is evident in this perception as it requires managers to engage in shared agency, division of labour and responsibility and essentially seeks to empower educators in the process. The management style would therefore need to exhibit distributive and transformational leadership qualities (Spillane et al., 2001; Mafora, 2013) which could possibly facilitate an effective school. The principal highlighted the importance of getting to know the strengths and challenges of each staff member and engaged in a process where he examined these characteristics of each staff member. He recognised that the staff had to work together as a team and identify a common vision which would facilitate the collaboration. He stated the following;

‘As long as we can get together on some commonalities that this is what we need to achieve and so from now on what’s on there we work on’ (*IPp01:140915*)

I reflected that school managers in a South African context are required to be innovative and facilitate the policy changes and implement it accordingly within their resource strapped contexts. The ability to manage, lead, adapt and cope with change caused by policy reforms requires strong leadership coping and adaptation skills which are confirmed by Bhengu and Myende (2016). It was evident from the data that there was a varied perception of leadership. While educators perceived the management to be rigid and often regarded it as a form of policing, the educators also appreciated aspects of the leadership displayed while at the same time highlighted that management would need to understand the classroom context and engage in more information sharing. The context of this specific school, with a principal who was in leadership for three years, a time period which corresponded with the data collection and interventions conducted at the school, clearly highlighted that the leadership recognised the challenge associated with a change in leadership and the need to engage in a process where educators would feel that they could be heard in a non-threatening environment in order to initiate and facilitate team building alongside a new leader.

### **5.3 How could stakeholders work towards facilitating an effective school within their specific context?**

#### **5.3.1 Collaborative efforts with all stakeholders contribute to school effectiveness.**

The main theme identified in addressing this research question was that collaborative efforts with all stakeholders would contribute to school effectiveness. The data revealed that the teachers, parents and the principal identified the need for additional interventions with parents and educators in order to work together towards facilitating an effective school. Phase meetings, workshops with parents around the curriculum, extra mural activities with learners, were also identified as concrete ways in which stakeholders collaborate. The main theme was divided into three sub-themes which were pertinent to the research question namely; 1) There were different levels of collaboration evident within the school context; 2) The school learning environment would be improved through

partnerships and effective communication, and 3) Capacity building leadership skills for stakeholders were required within school governance structures in order for it these structures to understand their roles and functions. These will be discussed in greater depth.

#### 5.3.1.1 Different levels of collaboration were evident in the school context

There were various levels of collaboration that would prove beneficial to the learning environment and educators indicated that this involvement varied from great involvement of principal, teachers, parents and the school governing body, to some regarding the level of collaboration with these key stakeholders being ineffective and not in the interest of an effective learning environment.

‘I would love everyone to be on board. As I said there are some that just cannot help because they do not have the knowledge to help their kids.’

*(IEd01:030815)*

The SGB was also perceived to be non-functioning within the context of the school and educators and a parent identified the lack of involvement from the parents on the SGB.

‘At the moment the governing body is not so visible, I’m the only person that is almost 99 per cent visible at the school. The other members is not always available, sometimes their work conditions or sometimes they don’t attend workshops man, so the passion that was there from the start is no longer there.’ *(IP01:090915)*

The educators have embarked on a series of activities in order to improve the collaboration between stakeholders at the school. Foundation phase educators indicated that the workshops that were conducted for parents on a Saturday attempted to clarify what the children were learning and assisted parents in assisting their children. This was confirmed by parents as they valued these workshops and regarded it as important to them as they could understand what the teacher was trying to achieve.

‘Workshops work well with parents and teachers, as now parents know what is expected.’ (IP02:111115)

Collaboration between parents, educators and principals is a requirement of the curriculum, but how this engagement occurred outside of parent involvement within in the school governing body, is not clear. Facilitating collaborative opportunities were initiated by the educators and this confirmed that educators were essentially the drivers of policy within the educational system (Conner & Sliwka, 2014). The teachers at the school saw the need to engage parents and the following suggestion was made in order to increase collaboration while also providing a financial benefit to the school.

‘More fund raisers at school where the children and the parents, they can get involved like a family or youth day or anything so that the parent and the child can get involved.’ (IEd13:140915)

#### 5.3.1.2 The school learning environment will be improved through partnerships and effective communication

Establishing effective lines of communication is essential to establishing and improving collaboration and partnership between stakeholders at the school. There was a perception that communication was not always filtering to the necessary stakeholders and contributed to mistrust which was not conducive to partnership. According to the principal, building trust through communication was also important to establishing relationships with parents. He asserted that;

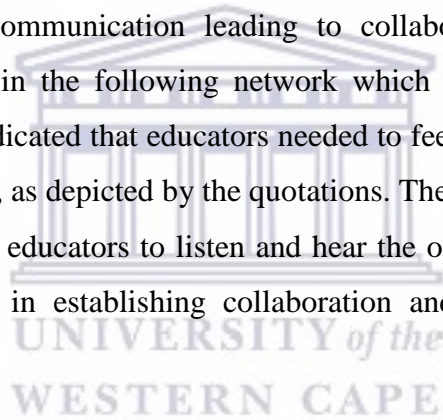
‘My meetings always start on time, I never lie to them, if I say I am going to speak to you for 5 minutes, then that is it...So when they are invited to a meeting, when they are invited into the office, when I engage them then it’s that. This is my heart, this is what I, I won’t lie to them about their child, I’m painfully honest so establishing that

relationship, it automatically means that they foster a better relationship with the school and I can see that over a period, the attitude towards teachers have also changed.’ (*IPp01:140915*)

Educators also perceived that parents and educators who were involved in governance structures should engage in effective communication strategies between the various governance structures and the educator body. This was reflected in the following quotation;

‘You know especially, we have got a few teachers that are on the SGB, I think one or two but we never ever get feedback of a SGB meeting, we don’t get told that this is what took place.’ (*IEd03:110815*)

The intricate nature of communication leading to collaboration through the formation of relationships was evident in the following network which was generated using the Atlas Ti software. This network indicated that educators needed to feel valued and that their contribution is valuable and holds merit, as depicted by the quotations. The importance of sharing information and allowing the space for educators to listen and hear the opinions of their colleagues without judgement was important in establishing collaboration and facilitating partnership between educators.



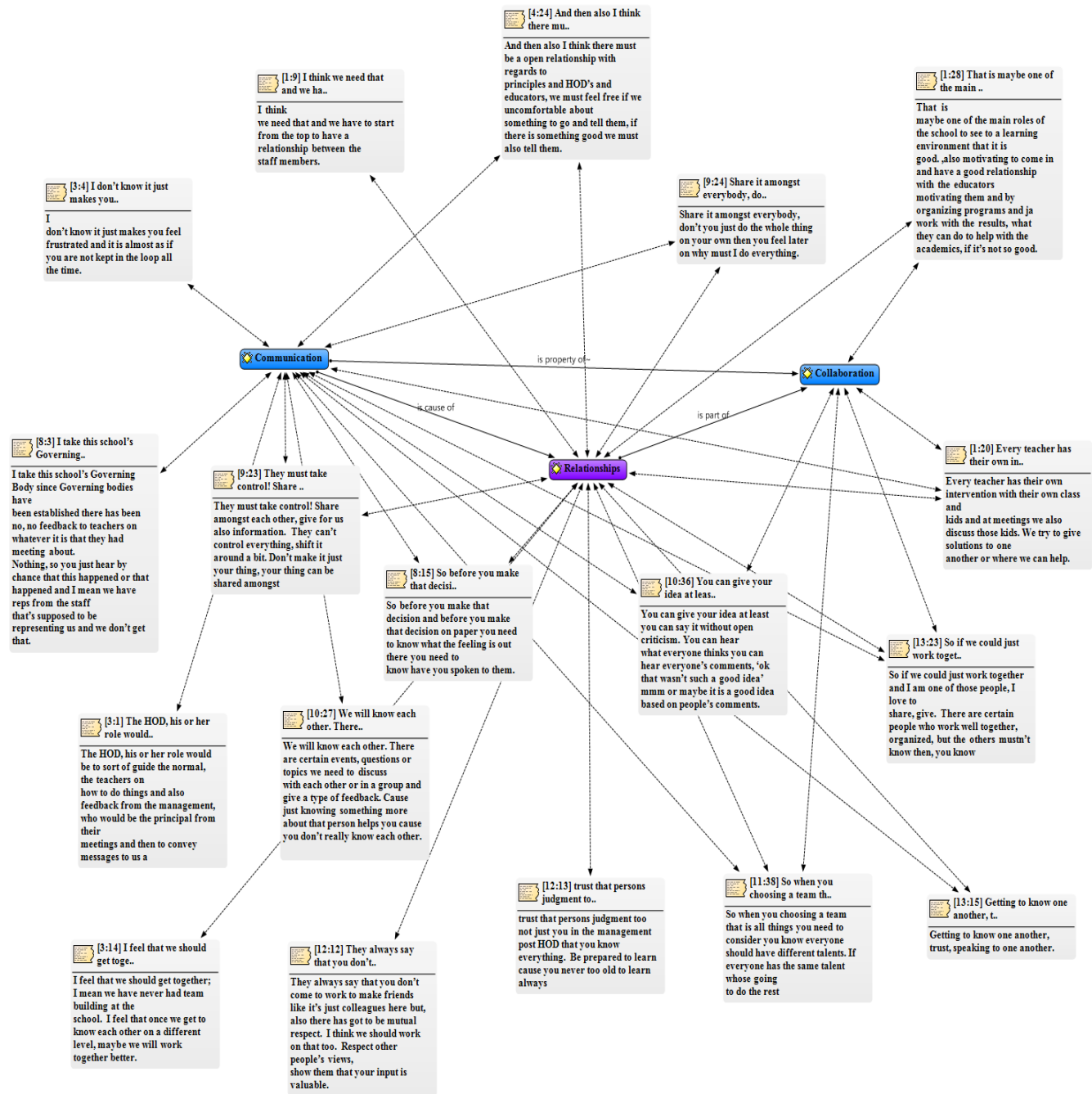


Figure 11: The connection between communication, collaboration and relationships were perceived as important within the learning environment

The following quotation also highlights the importance of engaging in meaningful ways with educators;

‘For me, I think that we as a staff, we as a staff need to sit down and we need to find out how can we actually make our lives here at school more, more, easy, because the staff at the moment, each one is just doing their own thing.’ (*IEd06:170815*)

Comer (2015) used the analogy of the school as a ‘relationship hothouse’ and this analogy is particularly inherent in this theme as the ability to manage the complex relationships between stakeholders is critical to school effectiveness. Southworth (2014) also identified the importance of communication as a fundamental requirement within the organisational context of the school.

5.3.1.3 Capacity building leadership skills for stakeholders were required within school governance structures in order for it these structures to understand their roles and functions.

The stakeholders repeatedly identified the need for capacity building which would assist each of them in collaborating with the teacher in order to contribute to the learning environment and school effectiveness. The acknowledgement that they would require additional skills highlighted the need that stakeholders have in order to be involved and that they had a contribution to make to the learning environment through collaboration. Parents perceived that if they were equipped with the necessary skills and understanding, they would be able to assist teachers in achieving the learning outcomes. This was evident in the following quotation from a parent;

‘I feel having a little workshop to assist parents then we can assist teachers better, draw the parents closer and they can get to know each other and each other’s’ circumstances will stabilise the child. If this is put in place it will assist in understanding and coping with the curriculum.’ (*IP02:111115*)



Policy requires that parents actively participate in the governance and financial management of public schools yet parents reported different views of the roles and responsibilities of the school governing body. This ranged from fund raising to assisting the school in management duties. One parent responded as follows;

‘I am not sure of the role of the governing body, but this is now here say, some people say they have a big responsibility involved in making choices.’ (IP02:111115)

This parent’s perception was unclear and vague and educators confirmed that parents were not really knowledgeable about the role of the school governing body and suggested that roles and responsibilities of this governance structure needed to be clarified. This was evident in the following quotation;

‘So maybe the roles should first be explained and then selection can take place.’ (IEd01:030815)

Heystek (2006) and Mncube (2009) reported that parental literacy levels, their experience of management and their time availability to attend meetings were some of the challenges that limited parental participation and contribution at governing body meetings. The challenge of educational levels of parents was raised by an educator who felt that parents who were suitably skilled and knowledgeable should be appointed on the school governing body.

‘I think to choose wisely, to choose people that are knowledgeable, literate and that know what is going on, to step in and then from there, because they... the choosing of the members, the choices is not good. It is parents that are just there as a member but is not actually doing what they supposed to do.’ (IEd01:030815)

The challenge experienced by educators, principal and parents was the fact that the parents who were democratically elected to serve on the governing body were invited to workshops which were offered by the department of education, but these opportunities were not utilised.

‘Every year they have the workshops for the members but they just don’t attend.’  
(*IEd05:170815*)

‘The other members (of the SGB) are not always available, sometimes their work conditions or sometimes there, they don’t attend workshops man, so the passion that was there from the start is no longer there so it puts a strain on me’ (*IP01:090915*)

The need for capacity building was identified by the educators as they felt that their professional development, especially when they would be required to fulfil a leadership role, was important. This was clear as the perception held by an educator was that leadership responsibilities should ideally be rotated between staff so that they would be able to learn how to deal with management issues. This was evident in the following extract;

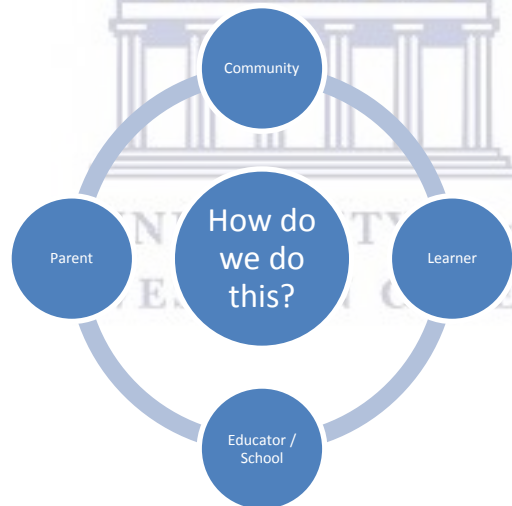
‘We are four or five educators in a phase. Give each one that chance to grow, say take the HOD position for three months and see how it goes, and then you take it for three months.’ (*IEd11:070915*)

## 5.4 What kind of interventions will facilitate partnership development between key role players / stakeholders at primary school level?

### 5.4.1 The school as an organisational system was recognised in the development of a collectively owned mission and vision statement.

The strategic workshop was planned according to the outline provided in Chapter 3 and 4. The educators were primarily involved in this intervention and in the group work sessions, the creativity of the group was evident as they critically engaged with the following question: “What the organisation is currently doing and where it is going to take us?” The theme that was generated during this session was that educators realised that the school would only be effective if each of the component parts within the school system, namely the parents, educators, principal and learners identified and shared a common goal and worked collaboratively to achieve it.

The following diagram was developed by this group:



*Figure 12: Components in the school system*

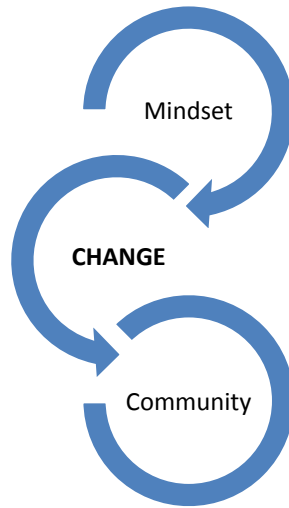
The goal of the school according to this group was stated as the holistic development and enrichment of the learner and the educators emphasised the role each stakeholder plays in the

holistic development of the learner. The systems thinking is evident in the model generated by the group as it involved an integration and connection between the parts of the system as a continuous cycle. The educators embraced the organisation (school) as a context which was characterised by relationship and connectedness (Price-Mitchel, 2009). The following picture was taken of their thought process which they presented on a newsprint sheet. The terminology used by the group was aligned with a system's perspective which was useful to the purpose of this exercise.



Newsprint of group one feedback

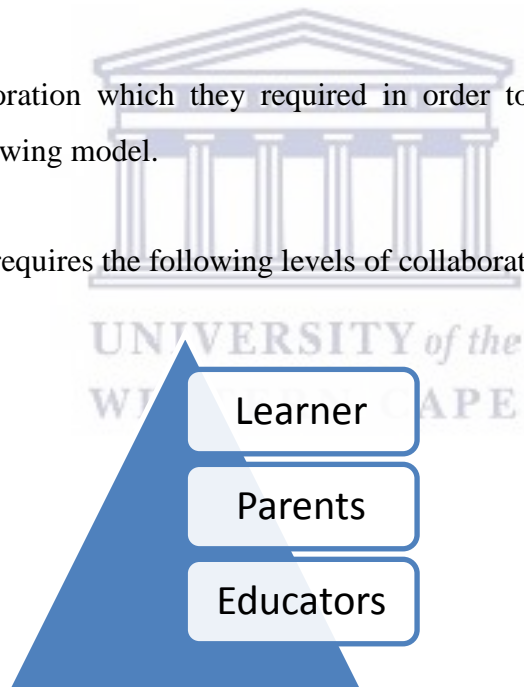
The second group's feedback was significant as it recognised the transformation that was required within their specific context. They believed that the ability to provide a quality education would generate a ripple effect and change the community irrespective of the context of the children. The educators perceived the work to be with the learners and that the objective would be to change the mind-set of the learners as this would facilitate the change of the mind-set of the community. The group relied on a visual representation of their response and the following diagrams indicated the view of this group.



*Figure 13: Elements in transformation in the school*

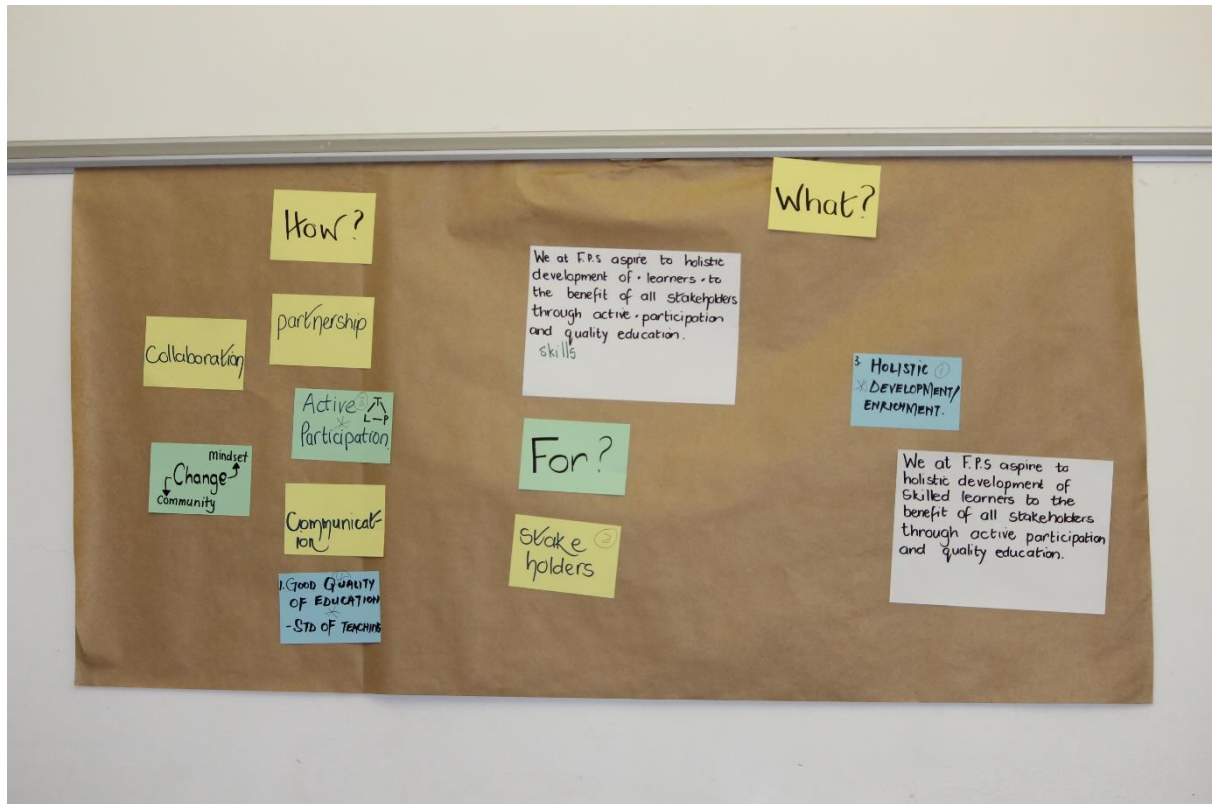
The level of collaboration which they required in order to achieve this transformation was portrayed in the following model.

Active participation requires the following levels of collaboration:



*Figure 14: Levels of collaboration in the school*

The objective would be to create an atmosphere conducive to active learning reflecting the levels of collaboration. The notion of change and transformation was imperative for this group.



Newsprint of the group 2 feedback

The third group of educators focused on specific words that the school as an organisation would need to embrace as it sought to be an effective school. The fundamental purpose of the school was to be an institution of learning where educators would recognise the elements that worked in previous curricula and use these to ensure that the learner would be able to function optimally in a community. The group recognised that collaborative leadership and communication was essential to ensuring quality in education. The role of the teacher was recognised as a lifelong learner and that this quality should be conveyed to the learner. They identified the following as key aspects that would ensure what they would need to do to get there?

- Knowledge

- Hard work
- Sacrifice
- Partnership
- Attitude
- Skills
- They envisioned the following for the school;
- Holistic development
- Involving all stakeholders
- Creating unity
- Making a difference

The intervention was the initiation of a team building exercise and the main outcome of this intervention was the culmination of a mission and vision that the educators contributed to in a meaningful and participatory way. The final activity of crossing the bed of lava provided me with great insight regarding leadership within the organisational context of the school. The principal had to take the lead in the activity and navigate his way across a fictitious bed of lava and ensuring that his staff was with him all the way. As he neared the end, he was faced with the excitement of completing the task and he took a double step. The educator that followed obviously missed her step and the ripple effect that this caused was that everyone that followed also missed this step. The lesson in the activity was immense as the principal realised that even though the end goal was in sight, he would still need to go according to the pace of the educators that were in his shadow. Lee (2008) indicated that while power struggles could occur, building open, trust-based relationship is the key to successful and sustainable partnership development which is critical to successful collaborations at the school. Utilising a leadership style and managing a group of educators is not an easy task within the context of South African schools and Bhengu & Myende (2016) identified that the coping and adaptation skills of leadership in these contexts, are a necessity.

The mission and vision intervention workshop report was compiled and shared with the school as well as a celebratory video including all the photographs and videos taken during the day. The mission and vision was also laminated and presented to the principal on the school's letterhead. The mission and vision was subsequently displayed in the principal's office and school corridors.

In several subsequent informal discussions with stakeholders, the importance of re-evaluating the mission and vision statement for the school would be an activity that needs to be scheduled in planning calendars at least every three years. The participation of parents in subsequent sessions to interrogate the mission statement was also emphasised as this would underline the importance of the role of parents in facilitating the achievement of the mission and vision statement.

#### **5.4.2 The reading and writing volunteers assist the educators in meeting the needs of the learners and communities we serve.**

The capacity building workshop for parents and community volunteers was perceived as a valuable experience and opportunity for the participants. In my observation and discussions with the participants, the participants were initially uncertain of what to expect and assumed that it was another community activity which they were able to attend as they were not working. They also expressed disbelief in the quality of the workshop and the fact that they were learning so much in the process. The facilitator was an ex-principal and his passion for enhancing the literacy levels in disadvantaged schools was evident in his interaction and facilitation skills. The outcome of this intervention was the agreement that several of the participants had with the school as they indicated that they would assist the primary school and volunteer an hour of their time per week and engage individually with a struggling learner. These volunteers are still actively working with grade 3 and 6 learners.

The reading and writing workshop was perceived as an empowering experience for the parents and community volunteers as they expressed how they would use the information that they had gained in order to assist their own children. They also indicated that they would be able to add



value to the learners at the school and therefore were investing in the educational development of the community. While the value for the parent and community volunteer was evident in the discussions and evaluation, the educators also perceived the value that the community volunteers were adding to the school learning environment. This was evident in the following quotation;

‘With the help of the volunteers at the school the task of the educator became less because the learners have the best ability to become a healthy adult if the entire community or volunteers plays an active role in contributing to the learning and rearing of a child’ (FG01:260917)

‘Volunteers add value as they help teachers allow learners to reach their full potential’ (FG01:260917)

The contribution that the volunteers have made to the development of the learning environment was affirmed in these statements. The value it had for the volunteers was also great as these volunteers were unemployed housewives and they perceived that the time that they spent with the learners was both meaningful to them and worthwhile for the learner. The intervention for parents was therefore a different way of attempting to increase parent involvement at the school which benefits not only the learner but also teacher’s self-perception and job satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). It should be reiterated that the parent participation in this workshop was limited however the support from the community displayed the level of collaboration and influence within the ecological system’s perspective of the macro environment on the micro environment of the school / family. The involvement of the community displayed indicators of social capital namely social support networks and civic engagement (Le Menestrel, 2013).

### 5.4.3 Developing skills in synnovation techniques will assist educators in creative thinking and collaborative decision-making

The synnovation session included a teaching activity where the facilitator provided the educators with an overview of synnovation; the underlining theory and implementation of the tools as well as the practicality of utilising specific tools within the organisational context of the school (see chapter 4). The concepts that were shared during the teaching session included, creativity within the school setting, the worlds that are present within this setting, creating the climate and the aspect of associative listening. The ground rules of synnovation were also shared as per the following slide;

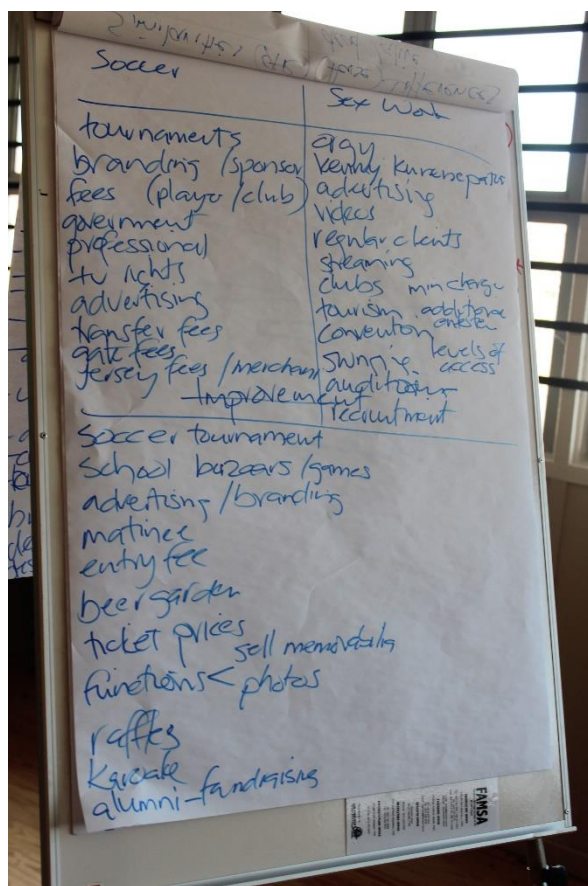
**Synnovation Groundrules for creative problem solving**

- Assume positive intent**
  - When people make comments + suggestions or ask questions, assume that they mean well.
  - Use **AND** rather than **BUT**, leaving space for other people's viewpoints
- No questions in early stages**
  - Questions can make people defensive
  - Questions can hide ideas
  - Questions can get you into the problem
  - Turn your questions into ideas
- Listening for ideas**
  - Use notepads, clipboards to remind you of connections and associations made
  - Listen for some understanding - **IN**
  - Listen for ideas - **OUT**
- Speak for easy listening**
  - Phrase ideas + thoughts as a headline followed by a brief background
  - Use I wish headlines during idea generation to encourage speculative ideas
  - Use **How to / How** can we headlines for task statements and concerns
- Share airtime**
  - Let others have their say and have your say
  - It's not always the most talkative people who have the best ideas
- Suspend judgement**
  - Don't comment on ideas in the wishing phase
  - Don't evaluate your ideas as good or bad
  - Suspend judgement in your own mind.
- Generate many ideas**
  - Quantity leads to quality
  - Use excursions to generate more ideas
- Check understanding**
  - Paraphrase** rather than question
  - Don't evaluate until you have correctly understood what has been said
- Find value in ideas**
  - Look for positives, that will help us to value even way out ideas
  - Build on others' ideas - crediting also builds relationships, people feel valued
- Use concerns to give direction**
  - When developing ideas use **How to...** or **How can we...** to voice concerns
  - Then think of practical actions to overcome each concern and build feasibility

Figure 15: Synnovation ground rules

The premise of the synnovation technique was that each and every stakeholder has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to problem solving within their specific contexts. This would involve

allowing all stakeholders to speak freely without judgement. In this manner, the opportunity to generate ideas is facilitated. Gajda and Koliba (2007) supported this when they identified that interpersonal practitioner collaboration is an important strategy for sustained and substantive school improvement. Following the teaching session the facilitator invited the group to participate in an exercise called the most ridiculous idea which was based on the implementation of the technique. This activity involved requesting the group to select an everyday object, think of the craziest ways that you can use that object and find the benefits for using the object in that specific way. The activity permitted the group to come up with extreme and often ‘way out’ ideas and helped to show the group that there is value in all ideas. The following picture was taken to highlight the activity that the educators engaged in and the commentary also describes how they applied it within their specific context.



The everyday activities included the world of soccer and sex work and required the educators to think about ways in which each of these worlds function. From these two extreme worlds the group was required to use the examples and identify creative ideas within the school context. Various ideas were generated from this exercise namely a soccer tournament at the school, school bazaars, branding of the school and advertising, fundraising opportunities such as matinees, beer gardens and raffles and an alumni fundraising association of the school.

As a concluding session to the synnovation session, the facilitator provided the group with a see through bag filled with puzzle pieces and the instruction was for the group to work together to complete the puzzle.

The group was given seven minutes to complete the task and the following picture provides the manner in which the group addressed the task as a collective.



The puzzle activity

It was evident that the group was intrigued by the task and some decided to jump in and contribute while others decided to watch from the outskirts while some educators disengaged from the task and allowed those who were keen to get involved and drive the process of completing the puzzle. It was observed that very little communication occurred while everyone was addressing the task and the facilitator encouraged those with the corner pieces to start there. The disengagement of some teachers was explained as one teacher was pregnant and couldn't bend while another was standing on the edge and she was an older staff member. This did not however account for the lack of involvement of other teachers. My observation of this exercise was the involvement of the principal who immediately reacted to the task at hand and knelt on the floor to assist with the task. The educators followed and engaged with the activity. The discomfort that some educators had with this exercise was evident as they continued to try and complete the puzzle even after the time

was up. I observed that this was a relatively young group of educators who were eager to assist and this commitment displayed could be a valuable resource for the school.

#### **5.4.4 The science learning centre represents possibility for the school**

The launch of the science learning centre at the school was a very proud moment for all the stakeholders and I felt very proud of the fact that this action research project was able to realise this dream for the school. The potential of the science learning centre in this community could be significant for the school and with the support from the university and especially the SCLA, the educators would continue to receive training in order for science teachers to optimally utilise the learning centre. In an educational environment where school effectiveness is related to academic achievement, the science learning centre could represent possibility as it will provide learners with active learning opportunities and facilitate the development of a culture of science within a disadvantaged context.

### **5.5 What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the interventions implemented?**

#### **5.5.1 The interventions provided much needed resources which facilitated effective teaching and learning**

Each of the interventions was evaluated by the stakeholders at the school. The evaluation clearly indicated that they perceived the interventions to be of great value to the school as outlined in chapter 4. The themes that were generated from this exercise was the 1) Educators recognised that a mission and vision statement would provide them with guidance in the school learning environment, 2) Communities are empowered through experiences which affirm the role they have to play in education, 3) organisational development skills are valuable as it can contribute to the learning environment and 4) a science learning centre will enhance teaching and learning. These will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.1.1 Educators recognised that a mission and vision statement would provide them with guidance in the school learning environment

The evaluations from the educators indicated that they perceived that the collaborative development of the mission and vision statement gave them a specific guideline to which the body of educators could collectively work towards. While the process of the workshop was perceived as ‘work’ by the educators due to the scheduling of the session during the school holidays; the educators were somewhat surprised by the sense of accomplishment and achievement when they completed the mission and vision exercise. The development of the mission and vision statement was significant as the following network identified the perception that the educators had prior to the strategic session where there were not sure what the previous mission and vision entailed and how it would assist them.

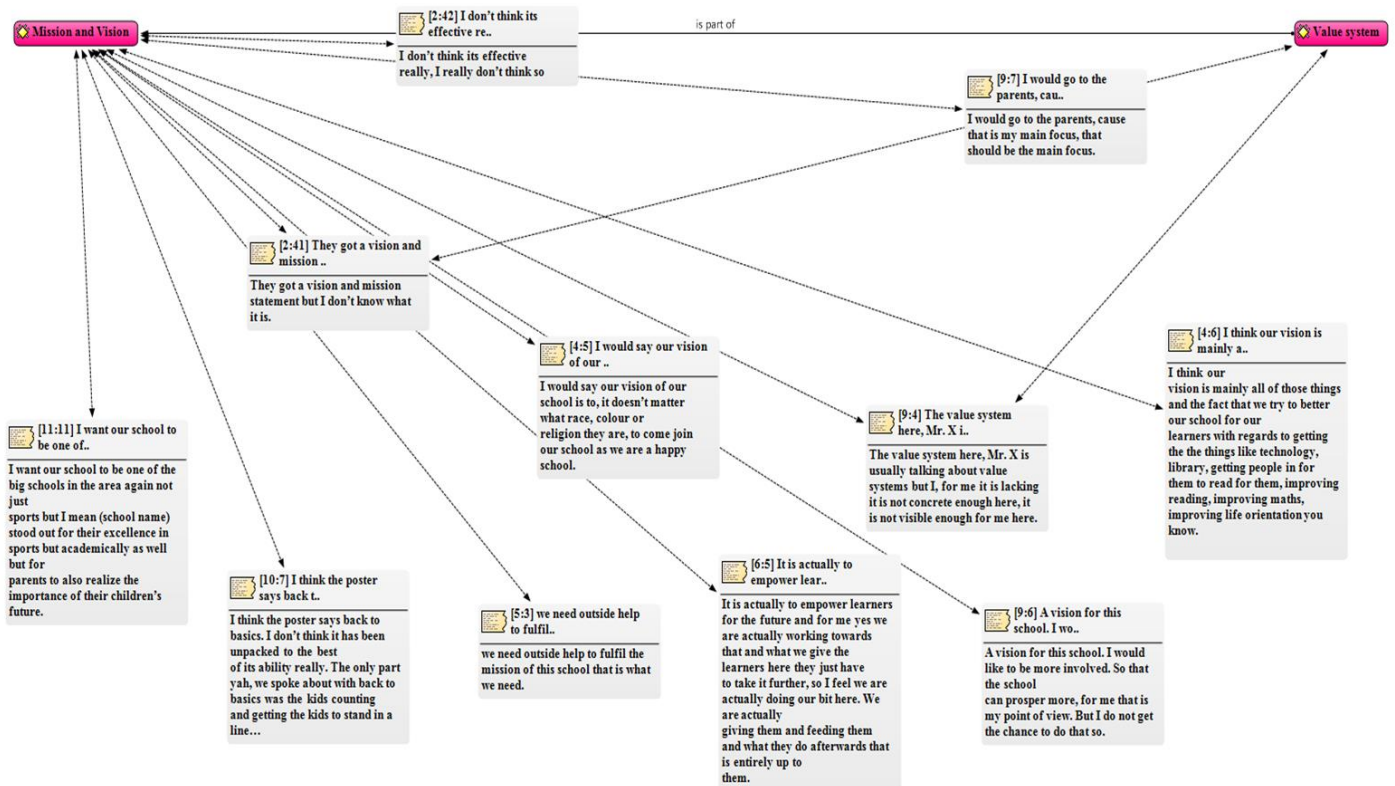


Figure 16: Mission and vision and value system at the school

The progression to the perceptions and the value that they expressed in the evaluation highlighted that the educators felt affirmed through their participation in the generation of this. The mission

and vision statement therefore provided them with a plan that they could follow which could guide their professional development plans. This is confirmed by Mestry, Hendrick and Bisschoff (2009) who stated that a professional development plan that grows out of the school vision for learner success creates meaning for all other initiatives at the school.

#### 5.5.1.2 Communities are empowered through capacity building experiences which affirm the role they have to play in education

The relationships between parents, educators, principal and key actors in the community determine the social capital which learners will be exposed to in primary school. Often these relationships beyond the school learning environment are not often explored. The capacity building workshop for parents was extended to the community due to the lack of response from parents and this generated an unintended outcome where the community valued the experience to the extent that they were prepared to plough into the school and support educators in the educational development of learners. The community volunteers reported that they appreciated the experience as it provided them with a sense of value and also enabled them with meaningful ways in which to contribute to the educational development of the learners. In this way they assisted the educators in achieving their specific outcomes as it pertained to literacy.

The leadership of the school should be affirmed in this outcome as he supported the workshop and also affirmed the volunteers in his address at the graduation ceremony. Holmes (2013) asserted that quality leadership within disadvantaged settings facilitated learner excellence despite a lack of resources. This leadership explored partnerships beyond the educators and parents to include community, and the value that this had for the school was perceived in the evaluation from educators but also the experience of volunteering had significant meaning to the community volunteers who were working with struggling learners..

### 5.5.1.3 Organisational development skills are valuable as it can contribute to the learning environment

The educators perceived the synnovation session to be useful to the development of the learning environment. The exercises which were conducted in the session provided the educators with the experience of engaging in processes where the opinions and suggestions of all participants were acknowledged. The introductory exercise of sharing your given name with a partner provided the educators with an opportunity to share their first names and one educator mentioned that it was the first time since they were working together that she had heard her partner's first name within the school setting. Educators refer to each other on their surnames. I observed that the participants were more relaxed after this activity and the facilitator went into a brief setting the scene activity which involved the participants to select a partner again and allow each one to indicate their passion to the other. While these activities were very basic, it engaged the participants in sharing and listening attentively to one another. The more intricate exercises used this basis of getting in touch with each other to collaborating with the group and allowing participants to contribute meaningfully to the task. The puzzle activity was regarded by the educators as quite a challenge as they were unable to complete the exercise. The educators perceived the session to be valuable to their development and empowered them with tools which will assist them in negotiating challenging situations and engage in adequate planning within the school learning environment.

### 5.5.1.4 A science learning centre will enhance teaching and learning

The educators perceived that the science learning centre was a valuable resource which would increase the effectiveness of their teaching practice and hence the educational development of the learners as reflected in the following quotation.

“Effective teaching and learning of science involves seeing, handling, manipulating real objects and materials.” (FG01:260917)



“The science laboratory provides a different approach to learning and teaching.”  
(FG01:260917)

There was not enough time to report on the influence of the science learning centre as it was added as an intervention towards the end of the study. Further interrogation of the value of the centre will be conducted at a later stage and could therefore not be included at this stage.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The themes that were generated from the results essentially indicated that the school should be regarded as an organisational system in which the contribution and collaboration of and between each stakeholder in the system is integral to its effectiveness. Elements of communication, capacity building of governance structures and the parent body and professional development of educators is essential to ensuring school effectiveness. The interventions implemented in reaction to the perceptions of the stakeholders were strategically planned and facilitated in response to the challenges identified by the stakeholders within their specific context. The realities of disadvantaged contexts and the challenge of resources in these settings need to be considered in the implementation of policy as neglecting to address this; will result in the system not functioning effectively.



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters in this thesis present a unique participatory action research journey which unfolded over a period of five years. My understanding of engaging this participatory action research was an empowering process which enhanced my comprehension of the approach while recognising my role as the researcher and facilitator of knowledge generation within disadvantaged contexts. This research was not without challenges of which the most important was to accept where each and every participant was in the process and to proceed at the pace of the participants in order to truly explore the possibility of transformation within their contexts. I reflected that this research was empowering for me as it was a collaborative experience where I was guided by the participants and while this was a challenge at first; it was perhaps the greatest lesson as it required me to proceed according to the pace of the group. Patience, tolerance and commitment to the process could be summarised to be the leading aspects of a change in my praxis. My understanding of the process and the acknowledgement of the influence of theorists such as Freire (1982) and McNiff (1995) in developing my own theoretical base for engaging in participatory action research is acknowledged. The following chapter will reflect on the research project and the manner in which the participatory action research process evolved as a collaborative and transformative research experience for the researcher and the participants.

### 6.2 Key elements of each chapter

Chapter one in this thesis provided the reader with the rationale for the research and delivered a description of the context within which the study was conducted and presented the research questions which guided the research. It also acknowledged my background and role in the research

process. Chapter two provided the theoretical underpinnings of the research and expanded on the key aspects of the research as published in peer-reviewed research articles and literature. Understanding the South African context based on previous research conducted in the educational arena was important in setting the scene for this research. Exploring the components of school effectiveness such as learning environments, partnerships and collaboration, parental involvement, the role of the educators within the transforming South African educational landscape and facilitating the development of social capital within disadvantaged contexts, thus was presented. Chapter three proceeded to provide the reader with the methodological approach and the rationale for utilising a participatory action research design was presented. The chapter also provided an overview of the instruments used in the data collection process, the data analysis employed for each instrument, the validity and reliability of the study as well as the ethical statement. Chapter four was structured using the research questions as a reporting framework for the data collected from the various instruments and according to the research process established in Chapter three. Chapter five provided the main themes that were developed from the data collected and explored how these themes related to the literature provided in the second chapter. Chapter six concluded the thesis with a brief overview of the research and the implications of this study as it relates to future research.

## **6.3 Major findings**

### **6.3.1 The school learning environment was influenced by the school context**

The school learning environment cannot be viewed in isolation within a community and the context of historically disadvantaged communities needed to be recognised and was therefore important. Policy level curriculum reforms which educators were expected to implement, resulted in work pressure due to a lack of resources in the disadvantaged context, the latter was perceived to contribute to ineffective teaching and learning. The role of the teacher in this school was to

implement a curriculum policy that challenged them on various administrative and professional levels in addition to ensuring the educational development of the learners.

### **6.3.2 Collaborative efforts with all stakeholders contribute to school effectiveness**

There were different levels of collaboration within this school's context. These collaborative efforts were perceived to contribute to school effectiveness however the different levels of collaboration could be enhanced through appropriate capacity building for stakeholders. The need for effective channels of communication was highlighted which would facilitate partnership development. The role of the parents in this school was to contribute to the development of the learning environment through effective participation in their child/ren's education through engaging in regular communication and feedback with educators. Their role also extended to involvement within governance structures however these roles would need to be clarified and adequate capacity building programmes would be required in order to facilitate optimal parent involvement. The parent body is therefore in need of an effective communication strategy that seeks to increase their involvement in the school which extends beyond the immediate parent-learner-educator interaction to parent committees and an active school governing body. Parents need to understand their specific role as it relates to the policy and realise that their involvement is critical to the contribution that the school makes to the community. The value that this will have for the school, community and ultimately the education department is immense as the burden on principals with regard to management of schools will decrease.

### **6.3.3 The school as an organisational system was recognised in the development of a collectively owned mission statement**

The school needed to be regarded as an organisational system where the interaction, collaboration and partnership between each stakeholder, namely the educators, principal, parents, learners and the community, were central to facilitating school effectiveness. The role of the principal is critical

in this system as his leadership employed a distributive / transformational leadership and management approach within the school setting. Organisational development skills were perceived by educators to be valuable and contributed to the learning environment as it provided educators with the opportunity to engage in collaborative, creative thinking processes and collective decision-making.

#### **6.3.4 The interventions provided much needed resources which facilitated effective teaching and learning.**

The educators recognised that the collective and collaborative strategic session generated a mission and vision statement that provided the educators with the necessary guidance in the school learning environment. The development of the mission and vision statement therefore provided educators, parents and the principal with an initial means for quality assurance. The fact that only educators and the principal were involved in the development of the mission and vision was acknowledged and a subsequent review of the mission and vision is planned where parents' input will also be required.

The reading and writing volunteers provide a human resource for the school and function as a support role for educators who are unable to provide struggling learners with increased individual contact time.

Another major outcome of this research was the science learning centre which was built at the school and represented possibility for the stakeholders as it was perceived to enhance the teaching and learning at the school. The role of the education department would be to acknowledge the school as an exemplar of a community school that explores and facilitated the development of innovative, collaborative partnerships with a higher education institution, principal, educators, parents, and the surrounding community as it seeks to be an effective school and produce successful learners, irrespective of its historically disadvantaged context.

## 6.4 Implications of the research

In this research study, I have attempted to respond to four research questions which sought to identify key role players perceptions of the learning environment as opposed to a preferred environment, how these role players could effectively work towards facilitating an effective school, what kind of interventions would facilitate partnership development between these role players and role players evaluating the interventions. I have attempted to investigate these questions through the implementation of a participatory action research process with the aim to facilitate transformation and change within the specific school context. The implications of this research for the education department is significant as it provides an exemplar of a historically disadvantaged school that was invited to engage in a voluntary participatory action research process of constructing knowledge based on their social, emotional and professional experience within a specific context. The educational landscape in South Africa has not been particularly kind to educators and principals as the demands on these role players in the implementation of educational policy are great. Authors of policy documents need to be cognisant of the demands within specific contexts and acknowledge these within educational policy. Principals and educators who are more open to scrutiny and challenge, are effective managers within disadvantaged school contexts as this openness facilitated the validation of the experiences of the staff and parents at the school. The research process aided his transition as the new principal at the primary school. His example of leadership was open to conveying his challenges within his context and embraced these as part of the leadership process. The education department could find value in this study as it provides an evidence-based approach to facilitating the transition of newly appointed principals at schools. Learning environments cannot be investigated without engaging in the elements which are involved in the development of learning environment as it contributes to school effectiveness and this includes educators, learners, parents, principal and the community.

## 6.5 Limitations

The main limitation of this research was that the research showed the process at one primary school within a specific historically disadvantaged community context therefore the findings cannot be generalized to other primary schools. While the sample is relatively small, I worked with each stakeholder group and the in-depth description and analysis provided me with the opportunity to focus on the context of one particular school. Working at the one primary school enabled me to draw on my own circle of influence in order to enable a process of transformation and resources. This study would need to be explored further, to gauge the long-term impact of the interventions. Conducting a similar process at another primary school will also ensure that parallels could be drawn between the results from this instance with that of the other primary school. The change facilitated through a participatory action research (PAR) approach can only be observed over time which indicates that PAR process is a cycle which will always continue as we seek to transform our contexts in an empowering manner.

Another limitation could be that I integrated the arguments from several theorists however I have indicated that utilising an approach that seeks to assimilate the beneficial aspects of different theories was useful to my process and I trust that I have made this clear in this thesis.

## 6.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations could be considered for further research;

- 1) In order to engage and motivate educators, a mentoring system could be initiated that pairs senior educators with younger educators at the school as this could possibly affirm senior educators particularly in a South African context where the senior educators question their value.
- 2) The emotional and psychological state of senior educators is a complex area which would require further research.

- 3) Developing the school governing body and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of parents is an important aspect that needs further investigation at the primary school.
- 4) The impact of the Science Learning Centre as an intervention could be investigated at the school by following up with the primary school learners in 6 – 7 years.
- 5) The Western Cape Education Department could initiate similar action research strategic processes for newly appointed principals and focus on the organisational context of the school and develop the key stakeholders as it facilitates the development of effective schools.
- 6) Exploring opportunities to engage postgraduate student researchers from higher education institutions within historically disadvantaged school contexts to facilitate organisational development at these schools.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Prior research has indicated that the learning environment is influenced by the school context which was confirmed in this study. Exploring opportunities for collaboration is essential to develop a learning environment and therefore the pressure is on the stakeholders within this context to be innovative and creative in facilitating the development of their respective learning environments. Establishing a mission and vision was found to be essential in ensuring common goals.

My intention for engaging in this research was to plough back into the community in a manner which responded to the challenges of the community and that would be beneficial. If I reflect on the process and the value that role players / stakeholders indicated at different times during the process as well as the research culminating in the construction and official launch of a science learning centre at the school, I have a sense of accomplishment at the value this participatory action research added to this specific primary school.



## References

- Alder, G. (2008). Transformational Leadership Practices of Teacher Leaders. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 6(2), 18 – 36.
- Aldridge, J.M., Fraser, B.J., & Laugksch, R.C. (2011). Relationships between the school-level and classroom-level environment in secondary schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 31, 127 – 144.
- Aldridge, J., Fraser, B., & Ntuli, S. (2009). Utilising learning environment assessments to improve teaching practices among in-service teachers undertaking a distance-education programme. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(2), 147-170.
- Aldridge, J. M., Fraser, B. J., & Sebela, M. P. (2004). Using teacher action research to promote constructivist learning environments in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(4), 245-253.
- Anderson, G. (2017). Participatory action research (PAR) as democratic disruption: new public management and educational research in schools and universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30(5), 432-449.
- Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H. A., Iachini, A., Bean, G., Flaspohler, P. D., & Zullig, K. (2010). Capacity-Related Innovations Resulting From the Implementation of a Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 20(4), 257-287. doi:10.1080/10474412.2010.500512
- Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2006). *The practice of social research* 6th edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, N., Crawford M., & Cartwright, M. (2013). *Effective educational leadership*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

- Bermejo-Toro, L., Prieto-Ursúa, M. & Hernández, V. (2015). Towards a model of teacher well-being: personal and job resources involved in teacher burnout and engagement, *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 36(3), 481 -501. <http://doi: 10.1080/01443410.2015.1005006>
- Bhengu, T. & Myende, P.E. (2016). Leadership for coping with and adapting to policy change in deprive contexts: Lessons from school principals. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4), 1-10. <http://doi: 10.15700/saje.v36n4a1322>
- Borkan, J. (1999). Immersion/crystallization. In B. F. Crabtree, & W. L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 179-194). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Botha, R.J. (2004). Excellence in leadership: demands on the professional school principal. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(3), 239 – 243.
- Botha, R.J. (Nico). (2010). School effectiveness: conceptualising divergent assessment approaches. *South African Journal of Education*, 30(4), 605-620. Retrieved from [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0256-01002010000400007&lng=en&tIng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002010000400007&lng=en&tIng=en).
- Botha, R. J. (Nico). (2016). Improving South African School Effectiveness through Distributed Leadership: A Study of Gender. *Gender & Behaviour*, 14(1), 6804-6813.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L.J.D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Branson, N., Kekana, D. & Lam, D. (2013). *Educational expenditure in South Africa: Evidence from the National Income Dynamics Study*. Working Paper Series No.124: South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77 – 101. ISSN 1478-0887 Retrieved from <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735>

Bush, T. & Heystek, J. (2006). School leadership and management in South Africa: principals' perceptions. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 34(3), 63 – 76.

Carrim, N. 2003. Teacher Identity: Tension between Roles. Changing Patterns of Teacher Education in South Africa, Policy, Practice and Prospects. Edited by Keith Lewin, Michael Samuel and Yusuf Sayed. Cape Town: Heinemann.

Chatterton, P., Fuller, D., & Routledge, P. (2007). Relating action to activism: Theoretical and methodological reflections. In S. Kindon, R. Pain, & Kesby, M. (2007). *Participatory action research approaches and methods: connecting people, participation and place*. Routledge studies in human geography. London: Routledge.

Colucci-Gray, L., Das, S., Gray, D., Robson, D., & Spratt, J. (2013). Evidence-based practice and teacher action-research: a reflection on the nature and direction of 'change'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39(1), 126-147. [http:// doi:10.1080/01411926.2011.615389](http://doi:10.1080/01411926.2011.615389)

Comer, J. (2015). Developing Social Capital in Schools. *Society*, 52(3), 225-231. <http://doi:10.1007/s12115-015-9891-5>

Conner, L. & Sliwka, A. (2014). Implications of Research on effective learning environments for initial teacher education. *European Journal of Education*, 49(2), 165 – 177. <http://doi:10.1111/ejed.12081>: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Crosnoe, R. (2004). Social Capital and the Interplay of Families and Schools. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 66(2), 267-280.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). How teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51, 166-173.

Darling-Hammond, L., Berry, B. & Thoreson, A. (2001). Does teacher certification matter? Evaluating the evidence. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23, 57-77.

Department of Basic Education (DBE), Republic of South Africa (2014). *The South African Standard for Principals*. Government Gazette, No.37897.7. August. Pretoria: DBE.

Retrieved from <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/37897-gen636.pdf>

Department of Education (DoE) (2001). *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education. Building on inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Government Printing works.

Retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=gVFccZli/tI=>.

Department of Education (DoE) (2005). *Teachers for the Future: Meeting teacher shortages to achieved education for all*. August, Retrieved from [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms\\_161964.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_161964.pdf)

Desforges, C. & Abouchar, A. (2003). *The impact of parent involvement, parental support and family education on achievement and adjustment: A literature review (Research Report No.433)*: Department of Education and Skills.

Du Toit, N., Eloff, I., & Moen, M. (2014). Die doeltreffendheid van die skoolondersteuningspan binne die Suid-Afrikaanse inklusiewe onderwysstelsel. *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 54(2), 341-364.

Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2015). Enacting understanding of inclusion in complex contexts: classroom practices of South African teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 3 (3), August 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>

Engelbrecht, P., Savolainen, H., Nel, M. & Malinen, O.P. (2013). How cultural histories shape South African and Finnish teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: a comparative analysis. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(3),305-318.

<http://doi:10.1080/08856257.2013.777529>

Epstein, J.L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. Caring for the children we share. *Phi delta Kappa*, May, 701 – 712.

- Epstein, J.L. (1985). Home and school connections in schools of the future: Implications of research on parent involvement. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 62(2), 18-41.
- Epstein, J.L. (1990). School and family connections: Theory, research and implications for integrating Sociologies of education and family. *Marriage and Family Review*, 15, 99-126.
- Epstein, J. (1995). School/Family/Community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, May, 701-712.
- Epstein, J.L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Epstein, J. (2008). Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Education Digest*, 73(6), 9-12.
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Esteve, J.M. (2000). The Transformation of the Teachers' Role at the End of the Twentieth Century: new challenges for the future, *Educational Review*, 52(2), 197-207.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A. & Alkassim, R.S. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4. [http://doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11](http://doi:10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11)
- Falk, I. and Kilpatrick, S. (2000). What is Social Capital? A Study of Interaction in a Rural Community. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 40, 87–110. <http://doi:10.1111/1467-9523.00133>
- Ferreira, C. & Schulze, S. (2014). Teachers' experience of the implementation of values in education in schools: "Mind the gap". *South African Journal of Education*, 34(1), 1-13, #727, 13 pages, <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>.
- Fleisch, B., & Christie, P. (October 01, 2010). Structural Change, Leadership and School Effectiveness/Improvement: Perspectives from South Africa. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 25(1), 95-112.

- Fraser, B.J. (1993). Assessing and Improving Classroom Environment. *Research Implications for Science and Mathematics Teachers*, 1, 7 – 11.
- Galetta, A. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: from Research design to analysis and publication*. New York: NYU Press.
- Gardiner, M., & Skinner, J. (2005). Changing patterns of teacher education in South Africa. *Compare: A Journal Of Comparative Education*, 35(1), 101-103.  
<http://doi:10.1080/03057920500033605>
- Geldenuys, J.L. & Wevers N.E.J. (2013). Ecological aspects influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(3).[http:// doi: 10.15700/201503070804](http://doi:10.15700/201503070804)
- George, E., Louw, D., & Badenhorst, G. (2008). Job satisfaction among urban secondary-school teachers in Namibia. *South African Journal of Education*, 28(2), 135-154. Retrieved from [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0256-01002008000200001&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002008000200001&lng=en&tlng=en)
- Gliem, J.A & Gliem, R.R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting, and reporting Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient for Likert-Type Scales. *Presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, October 8-10, 2003.*
- Gold, J. (2004). The rush to leadership: Slight complications. *Education Review*, 8, 71 – 78.
- Goldhaber, D. & Brewer, D.J. (2000). Does teacher certification matter? High school teacher certification status and student achievement. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 22, 129-145.
- Goos, M., & Jolly, L. (2004). Building partnership with families and communities to support children's literacy development. In I. Putt, R. Faragher & M. McLean (Eds.), *Mathematics Education for the Third Millennium: Towards 2010. Proceedings of the 27th Annual Conference*

of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia (pp. 279-286). Townsville, Australia: MERGA

Gorra, A., (2007) *An Analysis of the Relationship Between Individuals' Perceptions of Privacy and Mobile Phone Location Data - a Grounded Theory Study PhD Thesis*, Leeds Metropolitan University.

Greenwood, D. J., Whyte, W. F., & Harkavy, I. (1993). Participatory Action Research as a Process and as a Goal. *Human Relations*, 46(2), 175.

Grobler, B. R., Bisschoff, T. C., & Moloi, K. C. (2002). The Chaid-Technique and the Relationship between School Effectiveness and Various Independent Variables. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 30(3), 44-56.

Gronn, P. (2003). *The new work of educational leaders: Changing leadership practices in an era of school reform*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Hamzah, M.S.G., Yusof, H.B. & Abdullah, S.K. (2009). Headmasters and entrepreneurship criteria. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(4), 535 – 543. Retrieved from [http://groups.etwinning.net/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?p\\_1\\_id=176744&folderId=178127&name=DLFE-2226.pdf](http://groups.etwinning.net/c/document_library/get_file?p_1_id=176744&folderId=178127&name=DLFE-2226.pdf)

Hartley, S. (2017). *Science Learning Centres, University of the Western Cape: Faculty of Education*. Presentation at Community Engagement Colloquium Re-Thinking and Re-creating Community Engagement at UWC, Bellville, 30 - 31 October 2017.

Hawe, P., Shiell, A., & Riley, T. (2009). Theorising interventions as events in systems. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 43, 267 – 276.

Heystek, J. (2006). School governing bodies in South Africa: relationships between principals and parent governors: a question of trust? *Journal of Education Management and Leadership*, 34(4), 473 – 486.

- Heystek, J. (2011). School Governing Bodies in South African Schools: Under Pressure to Enhance Democratisation and Improve Quality. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 39(4), 455 – 468.
- Hill, H.C., Rowan, B. & Ball, D.L. (2005). Effects of teachers' mathematical knowledge for teaching on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42, 371-406.
- Hofman, R.H., Hofman, W.A.H. & Guldemond, H. (2002). School governance, culture and student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 5(3), 249 – 272.
- Holmes, G. (2013). 2011-2012 Hunter/Central Coast Region Leadership Fellowship Report, Retrieved from <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/what-we-offer/awards-scholarships-and-grants/fellowships/leadership-fellowships-2012/5-excelling-leadership.pdf>
- Howie, S.J., Combrinck, C., Tshele, M., Roux, K., Mcleod Palane, N. & Mokoena, G.M. (2017). *'PIRLS Literacy 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2016: South African Children's Literacy Achievement'*. Pretoria: Centre for Evaluation and Assessment.
- Hummell, L. (2006). Synectics for Creative Thinking in Technology Education. *Technology Teacher*, 66(3), 22-27.
- Israel, B.A, Schulz, A.J., Parker, E.A. & Becker, A.B. (1998). Review of community based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 19, 173 – 202.
- Kamper, G. 2008. A profile of effective leadership in some South African high-poverty schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 28, 1-18. © 2008 EASA
- Kim, J., & Bryan, J. (2017). A first step to a conceptual framework of parent empowerment: Exploring relationships between parent empowerment and academic performance in a national sample. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 95(2), 168-179. <http://doi:10.1002/jcad.12129>



- Lemmer, E.M. (2007). Parent involvement in teacher education in South Africa. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 1(0), 218-229. Retrieved from <http://www.ernape.net/ejournal/index.php/IJPE/article/viewFile/45/35>.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lingard, L., Albert, M., Levinson, W. (2008). Grounded theory, mixed methods, and action research. *BMJ*, August, 337, 459 – 461.
- Lopez, C.O. & Donovan, L. (2009). Involving Latino parents with mathematics through family math nights: A review of the literature. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 8(3), 219 – 230.
- Mackay, M. (2016). Making sense of critical participatory action research. Reflections on the action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research. *International Practice Development Journal*, 6(2), 1-3. [http:// doi:10.19043/ipdj.62.013](http://doi:10.19043/ipdj.62.013)
- Mafora, P. (2013). Learners' and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership in Soweto secondary schools: a social justice analysis. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(3). Art#621, 15 pages, <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>
- Mampane, R. & Huddle, C. (2017). Assessing the outcomes of school-based partnership resilience intervention. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(1), February. <http://doi.10.15700/saje.v37na1412>
- Marais, P. (2016). “we can't believe what we see’: Overcrowded classrooms through the eyes of student teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(2), 1-10, May 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>
- McDermott, P. & Rothenburg, J.J. (2000). Why urban parents resist involvement in their children's elementary education. *The Qualitative Report*, 5(3), 1-16. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol5/iss3/4>
- McNiff, J. (1995). *Action Research: Principles and practices*. London: Routledge.

Mellin, E. A., Belknap, E. E., Brodie, I. L., & Sholes, K. (2015). Opening school doors to communities and families: A social capital perspective for multiparty collaboration. *Journal for Social Action in Counselling & Psychology*, 7(1), 1-18.

Mestry, R. (2017). Empowering principals to lead and manage public schools effectively in the 21st century. *South African Journal of education*, 37(1), February. Art. #1334, 11 pages, <http://doi:10.15700/saje.v37n1a1334>

Mestry, R. & Grobler, B.R. (2004). The training and development of principals to manage schools effectively using the competence approach. *International studies in educational administration*, 32(3), 2 -19.

Mestry, R., Hendricks, I., & Bisschoff, T. (2009). Perceptions of teachers on the benefits of teacher development programmes in one province of South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(4), 475-490. Retrieved from [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0256-01002009000400004&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002009000400004&lng=en&tlng=en).

Mncube, V. (2009). The perceptions of parents of their role in the democratic governance of schools in South Africa: are they on board? *South African Journal of Education*, 29(1): 83 – 103.

Motsheka, A. (2012). Pupil teacher ratio at 30.4:1. Politics web, 12 September. Retrieved from <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/party/pupil-teacher-ration-at-3041--angie-motshekga>

Naicker, S.R. & Mestry, R. (2013). Teachers' reflections on distributive leadership in public primary schools in Soweto. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(2). Art#715, 15 pages, <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>

Newman Phillips, E., Berg, M.J., Rodriguez, C., & Morgan, D. (2010). A case study of participatory action research in a public New England middle school: Empowerment, Constraints and Challenges. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46, 179 – 194.

Newbury, D. (2001). *Diaries and Field notes in the Research Process*. Research Issues in Art, Design and Media, Issue 1, 1-17. The Research Training Initiative, University of Central England, 2001

Nicolson, G. (2015, January 30). South Africa: Where 12 million live in extreme poverty. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-02-03-south-africa-where-12-million-live-in-extreme-poverty/#.WI-HB00aKUK>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2007). Education at a Glance 2007: OECD indicators. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/39313286.pdf>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2009). Education at a Glance 2009: OECD indicators. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/43636332.pdf>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2010). Education at a Glance 2009: OECD indicators. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/educationataglance2010oecdindicators.htm>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2017). Economic Surveys South Africa 2017 Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/economic-survey-southafrica.htm>

Oswald, M. & Perold, O. (2015). A teacher's identity trajectory within a context of change. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(1). February 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>

Palys, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L.M. Given (Ed.) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (Vol.2). Sage: Los Angeles, 697-698.

Paquette, D. & Ryan, J. (2001). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Retrieved from <http://www.psy.edu/psicafe/keytheorists/bronfenbrenner.htm>

Peltzer, K., Shisana, O., Zuma, K., Van Wyk, B., & Zungu-Dirway, N. (2009). Job stress, job satisfaction and stress-related illnesses among South African educators. *Stress and Health, 25*, 247-257.

Piggot-Irvine, E., Howse, J. & Richard, V.(2013). South Africa principal role and development needs. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 41*(3): 55 – 72.

Pihie, Z. A., Lope, A.S., & Bagheri, A. (2014). Entrepreneurial leadership practices and school innovativeness. *South African Journal of Education, 34* (1), 1-11. Retrieved from [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0256-01002014000100014&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002014000100014&lng=en&tlng=en)

Prekel, T., Andrews, H., & Sobel, L. (2016). The 3 R's to Synnovation Poster. SynNovation

Prew, M. (2009a). Community involvement in school development, Modifying school improvement concepts to the needs of South African Township schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 37*(6), 824-846.

Prew, M. (2009b). The challenges facing South African education. Department of Education South Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.cepd.org.za/files/pictures/The%20Challenges%20Facing%20Education%20Interview%20Nov%202009.pdf>

Price-Mitchell, M. (2009). Boundary Dynamics: Implications for Building Parent-School Partnerships. *The School Community Journal, 19*(2), 9-26.

Rakumako, A., & Laugksch, R. (2010). Demographic profile and perceived INSET needs of secondary mathematics teachers in Limpopo province. *South African Journal of Education, 30*(1), 139-152. Retrieved from [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0256-01002010000100010&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002010000100010&lng=en&tlng=en).

Ralph, J., & Fennessey, J. (1983). Science or Reform: Some Questions about the Effective Schools Model. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 64(10), 689-694. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20386867>.

Ranson, S., Farrell, C, Peim, N., & Smith, P. (2005). Does governance matter for school improvement? *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 31(3), 305-325.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2008). Critical theory and participatory action research. In Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. *The SAGE handbook of action research* (pp. 121-138). : SAGE Publications Ltd.[http:// doi: 10.4135/9781848607934.n14](http://doi:10.4135/9781848607934.n14)

Scott, B.N., & Hannafin, R.D. (2000). How teachers and parents view classroom learning environments? An exploratory study. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education*, 32(3), 401 – 416.

Southern and Eastern Consortium for Monitoring and Educational Quality (SACMEQ). (2015). SACMEQ Project 2005-2010. Retrieved from <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/1246/overview>

Seaobi, A. & Wood, L. (2016). Improving the instructional leadership of heads of department in under-resourced schools: A collaborative action-learning approach. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4), 1-14. November. [http://doi: 10.15700/sje.v36n4a1326](http://doi:10.15700/sje.v36n4a1326)

Sedibe, M. (2011). Inequality of access to resources in previously disadvantaged South African high schools. *Journal of Social Science*, 28(2), 129 – 135.

Shumow, L., Lyutykh, E. & Schmidt, J. A. (2011). Predictors and Outcomes of Parental Involvement with High School Students in Science. *The School Community Journal*, 21(2), 81-98.

Singh, P., Mbokodi, S.M. & Msila, V.T. (2004). Black parental involvement in education. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(4), 301-307.

Smit, F., Driessen, G., Sluiter, R., & Slegers, P. (2007). Types of parents and school strategies aimed at the creation of effective partnerships. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 1(0), 45-52.

Spaull, N. (2013). *South Africa's Education Crisis: The quality of education in South Africa 1994 – 2011*. Report Commissioned by the Centre for Development & Enterprise (CDE). Available at <http://www.section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Spaull-2013-CDE-report-South-Africas-Education-Crisis.pdf>. Accessed 10 May 2017.

Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R. & Diamond, J.B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 30, 23-28.

South Africa Department of Education. (1998). *National norms and standards for school funding in terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84, 1996)*. [Online] Available: <http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/policy/norms&standards.html>

Statistics South Africa. (2010). Mid-year population estimate, statistical release, P0302. Retrieved from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/RSAPrimary.pdf>

Steinberg, C. (2013). Teachers' Emotions towards Assessment: What can be learned from taking emotions seriously? (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Witwatersrand: Johannesburg:

Steinberg, S.R. (2014). *Critical Constructivist Action Research*. New Sage Action Research Handbook. Retrieved from <http://www.academia.edu>

Stelmack, B.(n.d.) Parental Involvement: A Research Brief for Practitioners. University of Alberta. Retrieved from

[http://www.inclusiveeducationpdresources.com/documents/parental\\_involvement.pdf](http://www.inclusiveeducationpdresources.com/documents/parental_involvement.pdf)

Strauss, V. (2014). The glue that really holds a school together — and that reformers ignore. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/10/19/the-glue-that-really-holds-a-school-together-and-that-reformers-ignore/?utm\\_term=.2007517a8c25](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/10/19/the-glue-that-really-holds-a-school-together-and-that-reformers-ignore/?utm_term=.2007517a8c25)

Strydom, L., Nortjé, N., Beukes, R., Esterhuyse, K., & van der Westhuizen, J. (2012). Job satisfaction amongst teachers at special needs schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(3), 255-266. Retrieved from

[http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0256-01002012000300003&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002012000300003&lng=en&tlng=en)

Swanepoel, C. (2008). The perceptions of teachers and school principals of each other's disposition towards teacher involvement in school reform. *South African Journal of Education*, 28, 39–51. Copyright © 2008 EASA

Taylor, N., Muller, J., & Vinjevold, P. (2003). *Getting schools working: Research and systematic school reform in South Africa*. Cape Town: Maskew Mcmillan.

Taylor-Powell, E. (1998). *Questionnaire design: Asking questions with a purpose*. Wisconsin: Cooperative Extension Publications.

Theron, P.M. (2015). Coding and data analysis during qualitative empirical research in Practical Theology. *In die Skriflig*, 49(3), Art.#1880, 9 pages, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i3.1880>

Timseena, B. (2009). Participant observation in field research: an overview. *Nepalese Journal of Qualitative Research Methods*, 375-86.

Tschannen-Moran, M. & Hoy, A.W. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(6), 944 – 956.

Trim, P.R.J. & Lee, Y. (2008). A Strategic Approach to Sustainable Partnership Development. *European Business Review*, 20(3), 222-239.

Turuk, M.C. (2008). The relevance and implications of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the second language classroom. *ARECLS*, 5, 244-262.

- Van der Berg, S., Taylor, S., Gustafsson, M., Spaul, N., & Armstrong, P. (2011). Improving Education Quality in South Africa. Report for the National Planning Commission, September, 2011. Department of Economics, University of Stellenbosch.
- Van Driel, J.H., Verloop, N. & De Vos, W. (1998). Developing science teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 35, 673-695.
- Verenikina, I. (2010). Vygotsky in Twenty-First-Century research. In J. Herrington & B. Hunter (Eds.), Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications (pp. 16-25). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, transl.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Westergard, E. (2013). Teacher Competencies and Parental Cooperation. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 7(2), 91 – 99.
- Wilkinson, K. (2015, March 25). 80% of South African schools indeed 'dysfunctional' *Mail and Guardian*, Retrieved from <https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-25-are-80-of-south-african-schools-dysfunctional>
- Williams, B. & Le Menestrel, S.M. (2013). Social capital and vulnerability from the family, neighbourhood, school and community perspectives. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 138, Summer, Wiley Online Library. <http://doi:10.1002/yd.20060>
- You, S., & Sharkey, J. (2009). Testing a development–ecological model of student engagement: A Multilevel latent growth curve analysis. *Educational Psychology*, 29, 659-684.
- Young, C.Y., Austin, S.M. & Gowe, R. (2013). Defining Parental Involvement: Perception of School Administrators. *Education*, 133(3), 291-297.



Yukl, G. & Mahsud, R. (2010). Why flexible and adaptive leadership is essential. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 62(2), 81 – 93.<http://doi:10.1037/a0019835>

Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2011). *Action leadership: Towards a participatory paradigm*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## Appendix 1: PLEQ ACTUAL

### PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### ACTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire contains statements about possible perceptions that you may have about your learning environment. There are 88 items in this questionnaire. We would kindly request that you consider each statement in the context of your school and classroom. Once you have reflected on the statement please indicate to which degree these statements accurately and actually describe your experience. Indicate the answer by circling the number which best indicates your perception that provides the following options on a Lickert scale of 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree):

- 1**     ***If you strongly disagree with the statement (SD)***
- 2**     ***If you disagree with the statement (D)***
- 3**     ***If you neither agree nor disagree with the statement or you are not sure (N)***
- 4**     ***If you agree with the statement (A)***
- 5**     ***If you strongly agree with the statement (SA)***

**Example:**

*At my school, the new curriculum is being implemented. If you strongly agree with this statement you would circle number 5*

If you change your mind about a response, cross out the old answer and circle your new choice. Please note that there are NO 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Your opinion is required.

Be sure to give an answer for **ALL** questions.

Please provide your details below:

School:..... Subject:.....

Please consider the following statements and circle the option that **ACTUALLY** describes your experience:

<b>At my school.....</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
1. An adequate selection of books and periodicals are available	1	2	3	4	5	.....
2. I am under pressure	1	2	3	4	5	.....
3. I have sufficient knowledge about CAPS to be able to deal with CAPS related issues in my teaching	1	2	3	4	5	.....
4. There are disruptive and difficult students	1	2	3	4	5	.....
5. Parents show interest in what is happening	1	2	3	4	5	.....
6. I am encouraged to be innovative.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
7. Teachers discuss teaching methods and strategies with each other	1	2	3	4	5	.....
8. Decisions about the running of the school is made by the principal	1	2	3	4	5	.....
9. The curriculum advisors visit the school to support teacher's on CAPS issues.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
10. Teachers and parents work together in the learner's educational development	1	2	3	4	5	.....
11. The supply of equipment and resources is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	.....
12. I have to work long hours to complete my work	1	2	3	4	5	.....
13. It is difficult to change anything	1	2	3	4	5	.....
14. Learners are helpful and co-operative to teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....

15. The parents get involved in school activities	1	2	3	4	5	.....
16. I feel accepted by other teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
17. Teachers avoid talking with each other about teaching and learning	1	2	3	4	5	.....
18. I am expected to incorporate a variety of teaching styles in my classroom	1	2	3	4	5	.....
19. I have to refer even small matters to a senior member of staff for a final answer.	1	3	3	4	5	.....
20. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative	1	3	3	4	5	.....
21. I feel confident about facilitating learning in a CAPS class	1	3	3	4	5	.....
22. facilities are adequate for a variety of classroom activities	1	2	3	4	5	.....
23. I have to work very hard.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
24. I feel accepted by other teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
25. Learners are pleasant and friendly to teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
26. There is communication between parents and teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
<b><i>At my school.....</i></b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
27. I feel that I can rely on my colleagues for assistance if I need it.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
28. Professional matters are discussed during staff meetings	1	2	3	4	5	.....
29. I am able to teach topics that are not in the learning programme.	1	2	3	4	5	.....

30. I can act without gaining the approval of a senior member of staff.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
31. Teachers like the idea of change	1	2	3	4	5	.....
32. I feel confident about facilitating learning in a CAPS class	1	2	3	4	5	.....
33. There is sufficient space for learners to engage in group activities in the classrooms	1	2	3	4	5	.....
34. I have no time to relax	1	2	3	4	5	.....
35. There are noisy, badly behaved learners	1	2	3	4	5	.....
36. Parents attend school meetings when invited	1	2	3	4	5	.....
37. My colleagues take notice of my professional views	1	2	3	4	5	.....
38. Teachers attend in-service and other professional development courses.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
39. The rules I am expected to follow are flexible.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
40. Teachers are asked to participate in decisions concerning administrative policies and procedures	1	2	3	4	5	.....
41. There is a great deal of resistance to proposals for curriculum change.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
42. I feel confident about developing CAPS assessment tasks	1	2	3	4	5	.....
43. There are enough classrooms for all learners	1	2	3	4	5	.....
44. The principal encourages collaboration between parents and teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
45. I can take it 'easy' and still get the school work done	1	2	3	4	5	.....
46. Learners get along well with teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....

47. Parents help learners in doing assignments and projects	1	2	3	4	5	.....
48. I feel that I have friends among my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
49. The teachers show interest in what is happening in other schools.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
50. I am free to use a variety of learning support and resource materials	1	2	3	4	5	.....
51. I am encouraged to make decisions without reference to a senior member of staff	1	2	3	4	5	.....
52. New curriculum materials are implemented	1	2	3	4	5	.....
53. The principal identifies opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5	.....
<b>At my school.....</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
54. I find it difficult to use the CAPS approach when teaching	1	2	3	4	5	.....
55. Classrooms have sufficient seating or desks.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
56. We are understaffed.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
57. Learners are well-mannered and respectful to the school staff.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
58. Parents make valuable contributions to the running of the school.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
59. I feel that there is good communication between staff members	1	2	3	4	5	.....

60. Teachers are keen to learn from their colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
61. I am free to choose how much control I maintain in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
62. I must ask my subject head before I do most things.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
63. The parents have difficulty assisting their children	1	2	3	4	5	.....
64. There is experimentation with different teaching approaches	1	2	3	4	5	.....
65. I am able to interpret CAPS learning materials used.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
66. Learners have access to a laboratory	1	2	3	4	5	.....
67. The principal takes an interest in the professional interests of teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
68. It is hard for me to keep up with my workload	1	2	3	4	5	.....
69. Strict discipline is needed to control students	1	2	3	4	5	.....
70. Parents discuss learners' performance with teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
71. I receive support from my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
72. Teachers show interest in the professional activities of their colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
73. I am encouraged to implement curriculum materials in new ways	1	2	3	4	5	.....
74. I have no say in the running of the school	1	2	3	4	5	.....
75. We have developed a common vision and mission	1	2	3	4	5	.....

76. New and different ideas are being tried	1	2	3	4	5	.....
77. I feel confident in recording and reporting learner performance	1	2	3	4	5	.....
78. The supply of learner support material is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	.....
79. The principal encourages participation in decision making	1	2	3	4	5	.....
80. I have to work at home to get all of my work done.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
81. The rate of absenteeism is low	1	2	3	4	5	.....
<b>At my school.....</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
82. The School Governing Body is consulted when major decisions are taken	1	2	3	4	5	.....
83. I discuss teaching methods with other teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
84. Teachers meet to develop learning activities together.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
85. I am encouraged to experiment with different teaching approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
86. Teachers regularly hold staff meetings	1	2	3	4	5	.....
87. Teachers are excited about using the new CAPS approach	1	2	3	4	5	.....
88. The parents try to be involved in the learner's education.	1	2	3	4	5	.....

THANK YOU!!!!

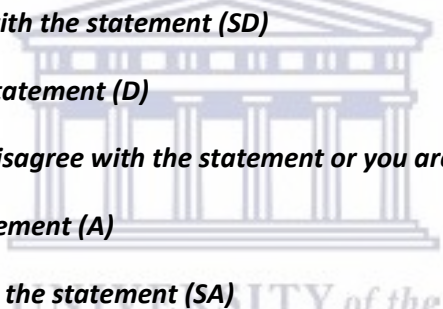


## Appendix 2: PLEQ PREFERRED

### *PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT*

#### PREFERRED QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire contains statements about possible perceptions that you may have about your PREFERRED learning environment. There are 88 items in this questionnaire. You have considered each statement in the context of your school and classroom prior to this questionnaire. We would now like to please request you to indicate your preferred perception about the following statements describe your preferred experience. Indicate the answer by circling the number which best indicates this according to the following options on a Lickert scale of 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree):

- 
- 1**     ***If you strongly disagree with the statement (SD)***
  - 2**     ***If you disagree with the statement (D)***
  - 3**     ***If you neither agree nor disagree with the statement or you are not sure (N)***
  - 4**     ***If you agree with the statement (A)***
  - 5**     ***If you strongly agree with the statement (SA)***

#### **Example:**

*At my school, the new curriculum is being implemented. If you strongly disagree with this statement you would circle number 1*

If you change your mind about a response, cross out the old answer and circle your new choice. Please note that there are NO 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Your opinion is required.

Be sure to give an answer for **ALL** questions.

Please provide your details below:

School:..... Subject:.....

Please consider the following statements and circle the option that describes your **PREFERRED** experience:

<b>At my school.....</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
1. An adequate selection of books and periodicals are available	1	2	3	4	5	.....
2. I am under pressure	1	2	3	4	5	.....
3. I have sufficient knowledge about CAPS to be able to deal with CAPS related issues in my teaching	1	2	3	4	5	.....
4. There are disruptive and difficult students	1	2	3	4	5	.....
5. Parents show interest in what is happening	1	2	3	4	5	.....
6. I am encouraged to be innovative.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
7. Teachers discuss teaching methods and strategies with each other	1	2	3	4	5	.....
8. Decisions about the running of the school is made by the principal	1	2	3	4	5	.....
9. The curriculum advisors visit the school to support teacher's on CAPS issues.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
10. Teachers and parents work together in the learner's educational development	1	2	3	4	5	.....
11. The supply of equipment and resources is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	.....
12. I have to work long hours to complete my work	1	2	3	4	5	.....
13. It is difficult to change anything	1	2	3	4	5	.....

14. Learners are helpful and co-operative to teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
15. The parents get involved in school activities	1	2	3	4	5	.....
16. I feel accepted by other teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
17. Teachers avoid talking with each other about teaching and learning	1	2	3	4	5	.....
18. I am expected to incorporate a variety of teaching styles in my classroom	1	2	3	4	5	.....
19. I have to refer even small matters to a senior member of staff for a final answer.	1	3	3	4	5	.....
20. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative	1	3	3	4	5	.....
21. I feel confident about facilitating learning in a CAPS class	1	3	3	4	5	.....
22. facilities are adequate for a variety of classroom activities	1	2	3	4	5	.....
23. I have to work very hard.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
24. I feel accepted by other teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
25. Learners are pleasant and friendly to teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
26. There is communication between parents and teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
<b><i>At my school.....</i></b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
27. I feel that I can rely on my colleagues for assistance if I need it.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
28. Professional matters are discussed during staff meetings	1	2	3	4	5	.....

29. I am able to teach topics that are not in the learning programme.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
30. I can act without gaining the approval of a senior member of staff.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
31. Teachers like the idea of change	1	2	3	4	5	.....
32. I feel confident about facilitating learning in a CAPS class	1	2	3	4	5	.....
33. There is sufficient space for learners to engage in group activities in the classrooms	1	2	3	4	5	.....
34. I have no time to relax	1	2	3	4	5	.....
35. There are noisy, badly behaved learners	1	2	3	4	5	.....
36. Parents attend school meetings when invited	1	2	3	4	5	.....
37. My colleagues take notice of my professional views	1	2	3	4	5	.....
38. Teachers attend in-service and other professional development courses.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
39. The rules I am expected to follow are flexible.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
40. Teachers are asked to participate in decisions concerning administrative policies and procedures	1	2	3	4	5	.....
41. There is a great deal of resistance to proposals for curriculum change.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
42. I feel confident about developing CAPS assessment tasks	1	2	3	4	5	.....
43. There are enough classrooms for all learners	1	2	3	4	5	.....
44. The principal encourages collaboration between parents and teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....

45. I can take it 'easy' and still get the school work done	1	2	3	4	5	.....
46. Learners get along well with teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
47. Parents help learners in doing assignments and projects	1	2	3	4	5	.....
48. I feel that I have friends among my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
49. The teachers show interest in what is happening in other schools.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
50. I am free to use a variety of learning support and resource materials	1	2	3	4	5	.....
51. I am encouraged to make decisions without reference to a senior member of staff	1	2	3	4	5	.....
52. New curriculum materials are implemented	1	2	3	4	5	.....
53. The principal identifies opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5	.....
<b>At my school.....</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
54. I find it difficult to use the CAPS approach when teaching	1	2	3	4	5	.....
55. Classrooms have sufficient seating or desks.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
56. We are understaffed.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
57. Learners are well-mannered and respectful to the school staff.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
58. Parents make valuable contributions to the running of the school.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
59. I feel that there is good communication between staff members	1	2	3	4	5	.....

60. Teachers are keen to learn from their colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
61. I am free to choose how much control I maintain in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
62. I must ask my subject head before I do most things.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
63. The parents have difficulty assisting their children	1	2	3	4	5	.....
64. There is experimentation with different teaching approaches	1	2	3	4	5	.....
65. I am able to interpret CAPS learning materials used.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
66. Learners have access to a laboratory	1	2	3	4	5	.....
67. The principal takes an interest in the professional interests of teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
68. It is hard for me to keep up with my workload	1	2	3	4	5	.....
69. Strict discipline is needed to control students	1	2	3	4	5	.....
70. Parents discuss learners' performance with teachers	1	2	3	4	5	.....
71. I receive support from my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
72. Teachers show interest in the professional activities of their colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	.....
73. I am encouraged to implement curriculum materials in new ways	1	2	3	4	5	.....
74. I have no say in the running of the school	1	2	3	4	5	.....
75. We have developed a common vision and mission	1	2	3	4	5	.....

76. New and different ideas are being tried	1	2	3	4	5	.....
77. I feel confident in recording and reporting learner performance	1	2	3	4	5	.....
78. The supply of learner support material is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	.....
79. The principal encourages participation in decision making	1	2	3	4	5	.....
80. I have to work at home to get all of my work done.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
81. The rate of absenteeism is low	1	2	3	4	5	.....
<b><i>At my school.....</i></b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Office Use
82. The School Governing Body is consulted when major decisions are taken	1	2	3	4	5	.....
83. I discuss teaching methods with other teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
84. Teachers meet to develop learning activities together.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
85. I am encouraged to experiment with different teaching approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	.....
86. Teachers regularly hold staff meetings	1	2	3	4	5	.....
87. Teachers are excited about using the new CAPS approach	1	2	3	4	5	.....
88. The parents try to be involved in the learner's education.	1	2	3	4	5	.....

THANK YOU!!!!

## *Appendix 3: Educator interview schedule*


### **INVESTIGATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT A DISADVANTAGED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS.**

#### **TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The following schedule provides a guide of the interview process. Thank you for availing yourself, it is most appreciated. This study forms part of a PhD research study which aims to develop a model which promotes a meaningful learning environment through partnership development that would contribute to school effectiveness. We have conducted an assessment previously to get some baseline information about the school learning environment and this process is an expansion of that process with the aim to conceptualize the context, levels and perceptions of collaborative partnership amongst the key role players (principal, educators and parents) in this specific school. Please note that all ethical considerations will be employed and confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study will be guaranteed to all participants.

***Purpose: To explore facets of school learning environment and perception of leadership style***

#### **Demographics:**

- 
- a) How long have you been teaching at this school?
- b) Highest qualification
- c) Age:
- d) Are you an HOD or SGB representative?
- e) What is the role and function of the HOD / SGB representative?

#### **Schedule questions:**

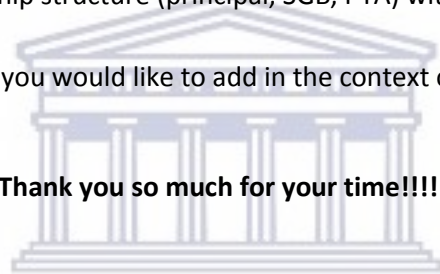
1. What would you regard is the value system / ethos of the school?
2. How does the current vision of the school align with this ethos?
3. What strategies are in place to encourage excellence in achieving the vision for the school?
4. What areas can you identify that you would like to grow? (Probe) Has this ever been articulated?
5. What is your contribution as a staff member in realizing this vision?



The following questions pertain to the school learning environment:

6. How would you describe your immediate school learning environment?
7. Describe the type of learners that are in your class / grade (are they prepared)?
8. What do you propose can aid in classroom management?
9. How would you describe the parent involvement and collaboration in the learners' development?
10. How do you think this can be improved?
11. What strategies do you have access to in order to encourage excellence?
12. How are you encouraged to work hard?
  - a. What incentives are there?
13. How would you like to express your personal staff freedom within the learning environment?
14. Staff innovation is a critical aspect in learning environments. What kind of innovative practices would you employ?
15. What would you require in order to employ these practices? (Resources)
16. How does the leadership structure (principal, SGB, PTA) within the school facilitate staff innovation?
17. Is there anything that you would like to add in the context of this interview.....

**Thank you so much for your time!!!!**



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## *Appendix 4: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE*

### **Investigating The Development Of The Learning Environment At A Disadvantaged Primary School In The Western Cape Through A Participatory Action Research Process.**

#### **PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The following schedule provides a guide of the interview process. Thank you for your cooperation in this learning process, it is most appreciated. This study forms part of a PhD research study which aims to develop a model which promotes a meaningful learning environment through partnership development that would contribute to school effectiveness. We have conducted an assessment previously to get some baseline information about the school learning environment and this process is an expansion of that process with the aim to conceptualize the context, levels and perceptions of collaborative partnership amongst the key role players (principal, educators and parents) in this specific school. Please note that all ethical considerations will be employed and confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study will be guaranteed to all participants.

***Purpose: To develop an understanding of the context of the school utilising the current vision for the school as a guide to achieve the optimal school-learning environment which contributes to school effectiveness?***

**Demographics – I need a bit of a biography of the principal:**

- a) How long have you been affiliated at this school?
- b) Highest qualification
- c) Age:

#### **Schedule questions**

1. What is the vision of your school?
2. Is your vision for the school different? Probe this: Please expand
  - a. How was this vision developed?

- b. How do you intend achieving this vision?
  - c. What is your perceived role of teachers in achieving your vision?
  - d. What is your perceived role of parents in achieving your vision?
3. How would you describe the type of learner that attends this school?
4. How do the learners interact with teachers? (Probe: Preparation of learners)
5. How can the level of interaction be improved?
6. How do you encourage collaborative participation between teachers, learners and parents?
  - a. Provide examples
7. How do you feel the current classroom environment, with specific reference to the senior phase; be improved?
8. How do you think the school can assist in classroom management?
9. How do you think improved collaboration can benefit the school learning environment? (Is collaboration limited to partnerships with direct stakeholders i.e. principal, teachers, parents & learners or does this extend to the surrounding community?)
10. What do you think can be done to improve collaboration between the teachers and parents?
11. What do you think your role is in facilitating collaboration?

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME!!!!**



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## *Appendix 5: PARENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE*

### **Investigating The Development Of The Learning Environment At A Disadvantaged Primary School In The Western Cape Through A Participatory Action Research Process.**

#### **Interview: Parents**

***Purpose: To explore facets of school learning environment and perception of leadership style***

#### **Demographics:**

Age:

Child at the school:

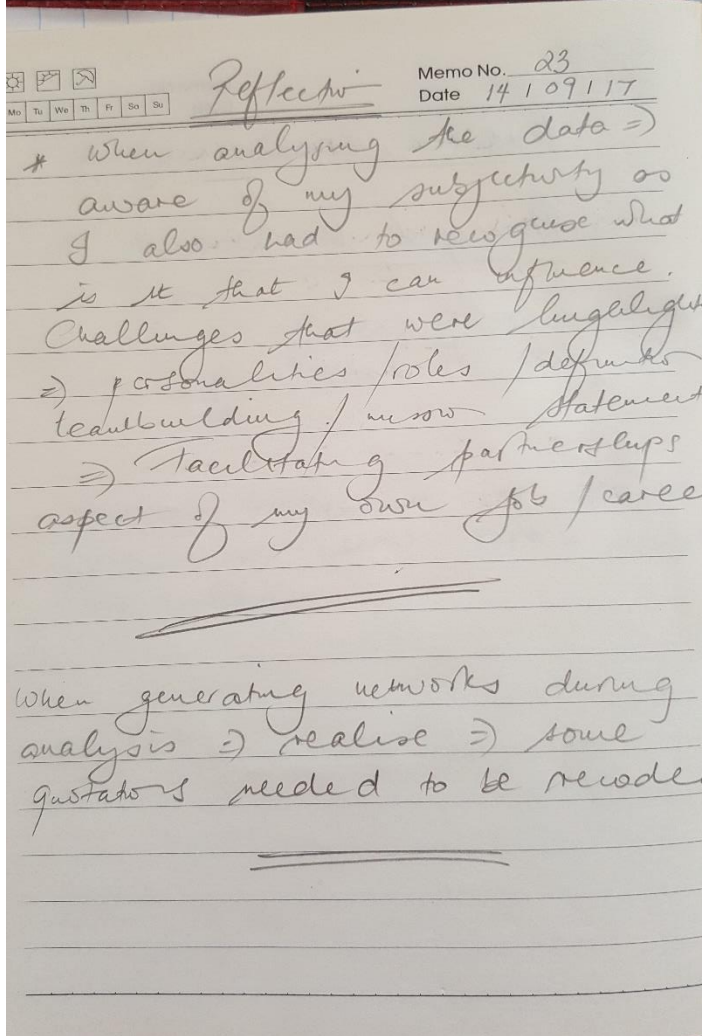
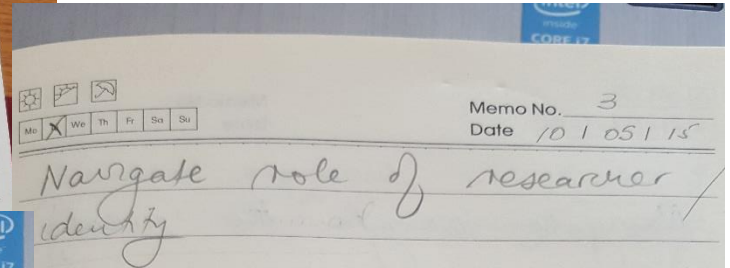
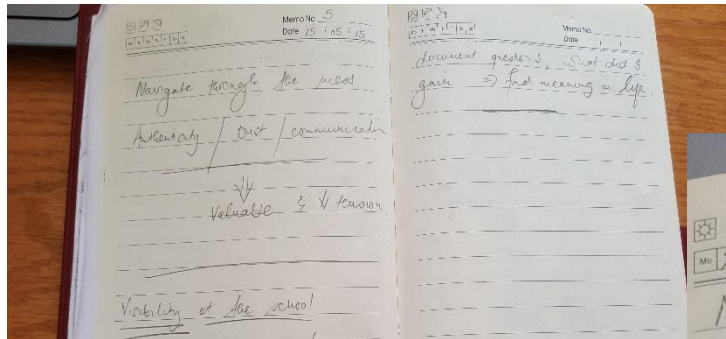
Profession:

Have you been serving on the governing body and if yes, how long? (In years)

#### **Possible questions:**

1. What is the governing body's main role in ensuring that this school is effective?
2. In your opinion what is the vision for this primary school?
3. What strategies does the principal use to encourage excellence in achieving the vision for the school?
4. What do you perceive the governing body's contribution in realizing this vision?
5. How would you describe the parent involvement and collaboration in the learners' development?
6. How do you think this can be improved?
7. What strategies do you think is effective in enhancing the school learning environment?
8. How would you like to express your contribution as a parent to the learning environment?
9. Staff innovation is a critical aspect in learning environments. How do you think the governing body encourages staff innovation?
10. What would you require in order to employ these practices?
11. How do you view the leadership structure (principal, SGB, PTA) at this school?
12. What would you regard as the most important aspect to improve the school learning environment?

Appendix 6: Example of journal entries



Constructs of my professional identity ⇒ critically learn + make change not only in research but personally as well.

The value of relationships ⇒ not based on power ⇒ notion of equity ⇒ each comes with a unique set of skills ⇒ add value in different ways.

Social construction of knowledge Values

Action research ⇒ SPIRALS / CYCLES

## *Participation Observation Schedule*

**Record the following:**

1. Type of intervention:
2. Date of intervention:
3. No. of participants:

**When observing the workshop interventions the following activities were noted**

1. Focus on the role played by facilitator
2. Focus on activities in the session
3. Use of voice
4. Use of language
5. Note the questioning from participants
6. Note the time spent on activities
7. Organisation of the session / activities
8. Participation and interaction in the group
9. What is the nature of the questions from the participants?
10. What was the purpose of the session?
11. What was the response from participants?
12. How do the participants evaluate the session?



## Appendix 8: Information sheet

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

**Project Title:** investigating the development of the learning environment at a disadvantaged primary school in the Western Cape through a participatory action research process.

#### **What is this study about?**

This is a PhD research project being conducted by Ms Tracey-Ann Adonis at the University of the Western Cape. You are invited to participate in this research project as key role player within a primary school context.

The purpose of this research project is to develop a model which promotes a meaningful learning environment through partnership development that would contribute to school effectiveness.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You will be asked to complete questionnaires, participate in semi-structured interviews and focus groups with relevant stakeholder groups i.e. educators, parents, and community.

#### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

All attempts to keep your personal information confidential will be employed. To help protect your confidentiality, I will use a locked filing cabinets and storage areas, using identification codes only on data forms, and using password-protected computer files. This will be conducted in the following manner:

- (1) Your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the survey and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your survey to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

If a research report or article is published, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

**What are the risks of this research?**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

**What are the benefits of this research?**

This research is designed to help you and your school to gain a greater understanding of the value of collaborative partnerships and the extent to which it is facilitated within your specific learning environment as it contributes to school effectiveness.

It will provide information for key role players within the primary school setting on how sustainable partnership development within your specific context can be facilitated.

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

**What if I have questions?**

This research is being coordinated by **Ms Tracey-Ann Adonis** at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact [Tracey-Ann Adonis at the University of Western Cape, Community Engagement Unit, Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535 or contact number +27 21 959 3124 or e-mail \[tadonis@uwc.ac.za\]\(mailto:tadonis@uwc.ac.za\)](#)

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Ms Tracey-Ann Adonis

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17



Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 9593124

Email: [tadonis@uwc.ac.za](mailto:tadonis@uwc.ac.za)

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## CONSENT FORM

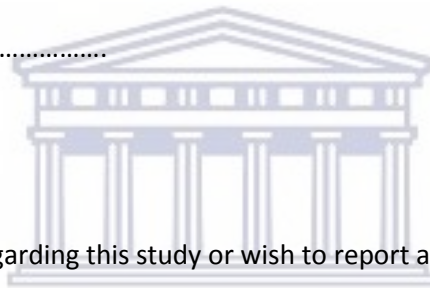
### **Title of Research Project: Investigating the development of the learning environment at a disadvantaged primary school in the Western Cape through a participatory action research process.**

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....



Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the researcher:

Tracey-Ann Adonis  
University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17, Belville 7535  
Telephone: (021)959-3124  
Email: [tadonis@uwc.ac.za](mailto:tadonis@uwc.ac.za)

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

Supervisor: Prof Shaheed Hartley  
Science Learning Center for Africa  
Private Bag X17, Belville 7535  
Telephone: 021 959 2680  
Email: [shartley@uwc.ac.za](mailto:shartley@uwc.ac.za)

# Letterhead

## Confidential: School information

U.W.C

For attention: The Research and Ethics Committee

18 May 2016

**Re: Request by Mrs Tracey-Ann Adonis to conduct research at School**

Dear Sir/Madam

The School Management Team and School Governing Body herewith grants Mrs Tracey-Ann Adonis, a student of the University of the Western Cape, reading for her PhD Degree in Education, permission to conduct the following research, '***Investigating the development of the learning environment at a disadvantaged primary school in the Western Cape through a participatory action research process.***'

Research places us at the coal-face of change and our involvement with and in such activities augers well for our School and the communities it serve. We are acutely aware of the benefits and spin-offs of studies like the one Mrs Adonis is engaging in and we know that it will add great insight and immense value to our interactions and engagements with the community. Sustainable partnerships and relationships are the bedrock of effective schools and we believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality education and learner success. Stephen Covey says it best 'synergy catalyzes, unifies, and unleashes the greatest power within people.'

We are satisfied that Mrs Adonis is aware of regulations governing research conducted at schools and has agreed to comply. We wish her well in her studies.

Yours in education

Confidential

Principal

## Appendix 10: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535  
South Africa  
T: +27 21 959 2988/2948  
F: +27 21 959 3170  
E: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)  
[www.uwc.ac.za](http://www.uwc.ac.za)

22 August 2016

Ms T Adonis  
**Faculty of Education**

**Ethics Reference Number** HS/16/5/52

**Project Title:** Exploring the learning environment at a primary school in the Kensington – Factreton area with a view to develop a sustainable partnership model between the school and the community.

**Approval Period:** 29 July 2016 – 29 July 2017

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

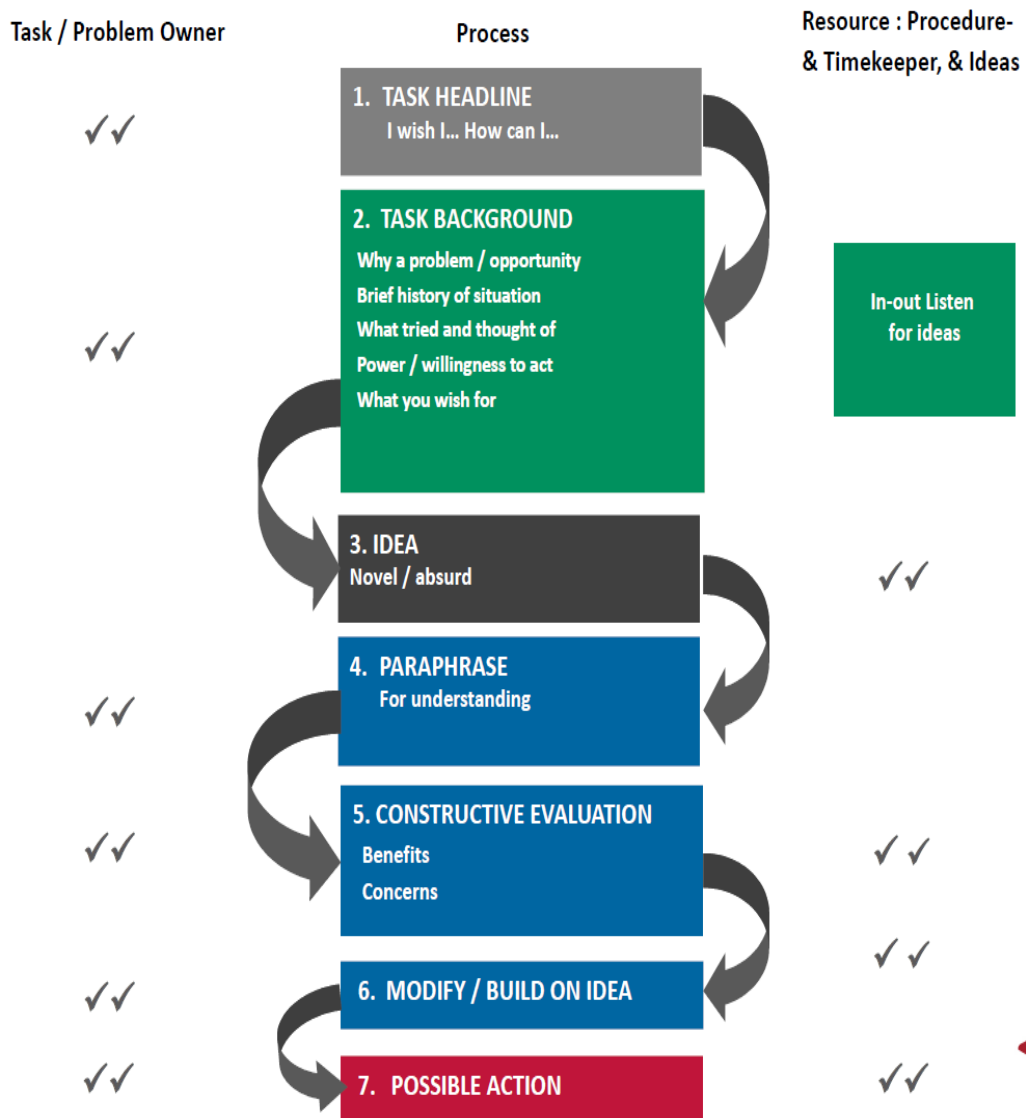
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josias', is placed over a white rectangular box.

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

**PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049**

## Appendix 11: SYNNOVATION OPEN MINDEDNESS EXERCISE

### OPEN-MINDEDNESS EXERCISE: FLOW CHART





**X Primary School  
Strategic Planning 2015**

UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

# Programme



- 1. Setting the Stage:**
  1. Why are we here?
  2. Key issues/pointers you wish to highlight?
  3. Reflection?
- 2. Vision & Mission Development (group work):**
  1. Vision Assessment,
  2. Crossing a bed of lava
- 3. Strategic Planning Model (group work):**
  1. Vision & Mission formulation
  2. Broad Categories/Divisions with goal setting per category
  3. Goal Development per Category
- 4. Way Forward & Closure**



2

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# Setting the Stage

## *Why are we here?*



- i “Failing to plan is planning to fail”
- i Good planning helps to focus limited resources; less waste & more effective
- i Developing strong vision & mission statements ensure for common understanding by all
  - i Vision = School’s goal (*Where you hope to see it in future*) & must inspire all of us to do better
  - i Mission = provides the overview of the steps planned to achieve that future



3

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



# Key Questions to Ask



Before today, during and after questions:

1. What is the need for a new vision?
2. Will I be able to live with the new vision?
3. Will I be able to support the new vision?
4. What will the new vision expect of me?
5. How will my world change as a result?
6. Will I be able to continue doing what I've always done?  
*Why or Why not?*
7. Do I believe in this new vision?
8. Do I believe in my schools ability to achieve this vision?
9. Do I believe I can make this vision happen?



4

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# Do I understand what this organization values, believes in and hopes to be?



1. ?
2. ?
3. ?
4. ?
- ?

20 Minutes



5

  
UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

# Vision Examples:



- ❏ Battlefield School students will achieve personal success and become a responsible and productive citizen
- ❏ Montgomery School will work collaboratively to ensure all learners succeed. Placing the highest priority on reading and writing instruction will support consistent learner achievement so that all learners attain higher performance levels annually
- ❏ Our vision is to inspire a passion for learning
- ❏ Potomac school students will achieve personal success in their learning and become responsible and productive citizens
- ❏ *Our vision is to build an education system that provides learners with knowledge skills and attitudes that will enhance their national participation and global competitiveness; a system that will enable our community to manage their lives successfully and with dignity*



6

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# Vision Assessment

## 15 Minutes



1. What patterns do you see in the statements?
2. What do you like or dislike in the statements?
3. Are the statements easy to understand?
4. Are the statements too vague, or are they specific enough?
5. Are they too long? Too short?
6. Do the statements express an idea or a hope for the future?
7. Are they too unambitious? Too “pie in the sky”?
8. Do they contain adjectives or goals that are more appropriate for a mission statement?
9. Do they clarify a direction for the school and for its improvement efforts?



7

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# Crossing a Bed of Hot Lava

20 Minutes

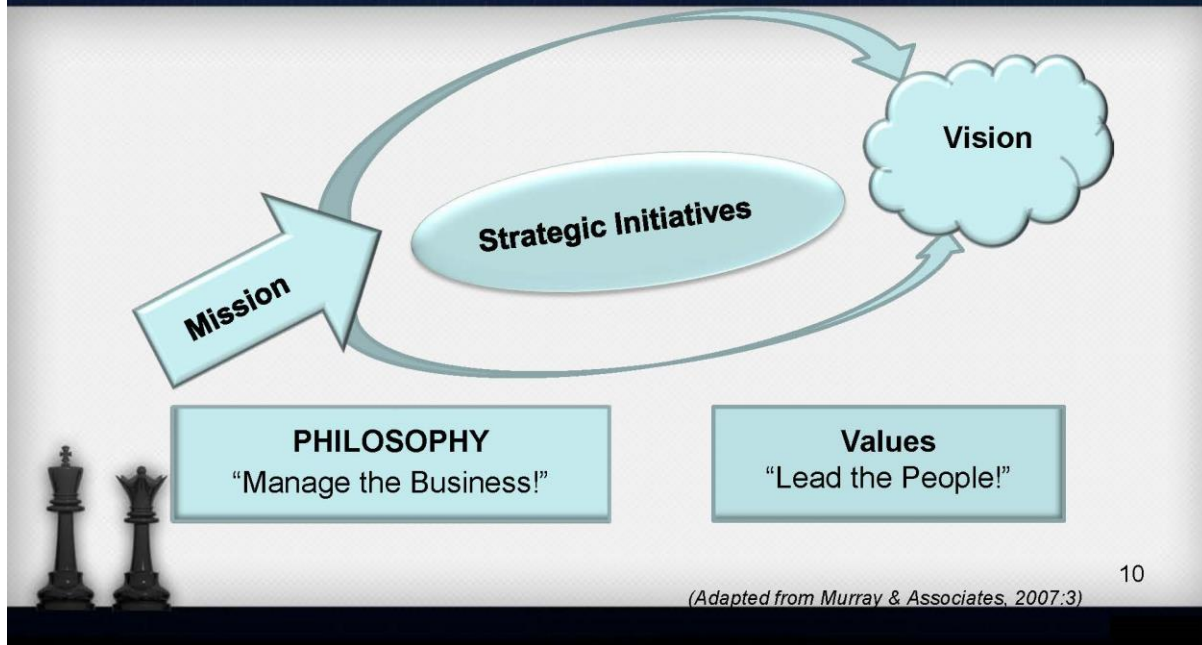
1. Goal is to cross successfully, without leaving anyone getting hurt/ behind.
2. The Rules:
  1. The entire group must make it safely to the other side in the allocated time without losing a group member
  2. No part of the persons' body can touch or step in the hot lava
  3. To cross you may use the shards of cool granite (A4 sheets) to step on
  4. The cool granite (A4 sheets) must be in contact with a human body part at all times...the granite parts must relate to the list of team qualities you just created...if not then the granite part will sink into the lava
5. A volcano protector will encourage and cheer on giving people a smiley as to what they look like AND what they should look like (x2 smiley's)



8

UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

# StratPlan Model



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

# StratPlan Model

*(Phase 1: Mission, vision, departments/divisions & goals)*



❖ **Mission:**

❖ *Statement of core purpose; what you do for whom & why*

❖ **Vision:**

❖ *Compelling picture of your organization five years in the future*

❖ **Strategies** (divisions/departments):

❖ *Major initiatives needed to achieve the goals*

❖ **Goals** (becomes future programmes):

❖ *Measurable milestones of progress towards the vision*



10

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



# Closure



11

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE